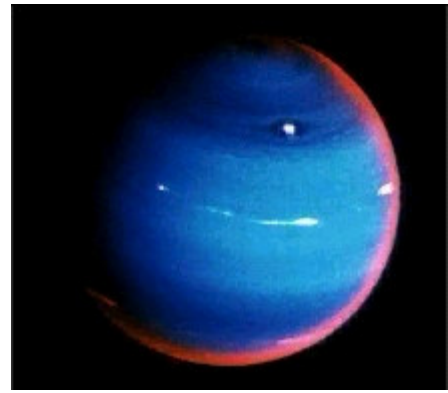


Neptune's crossing angle.

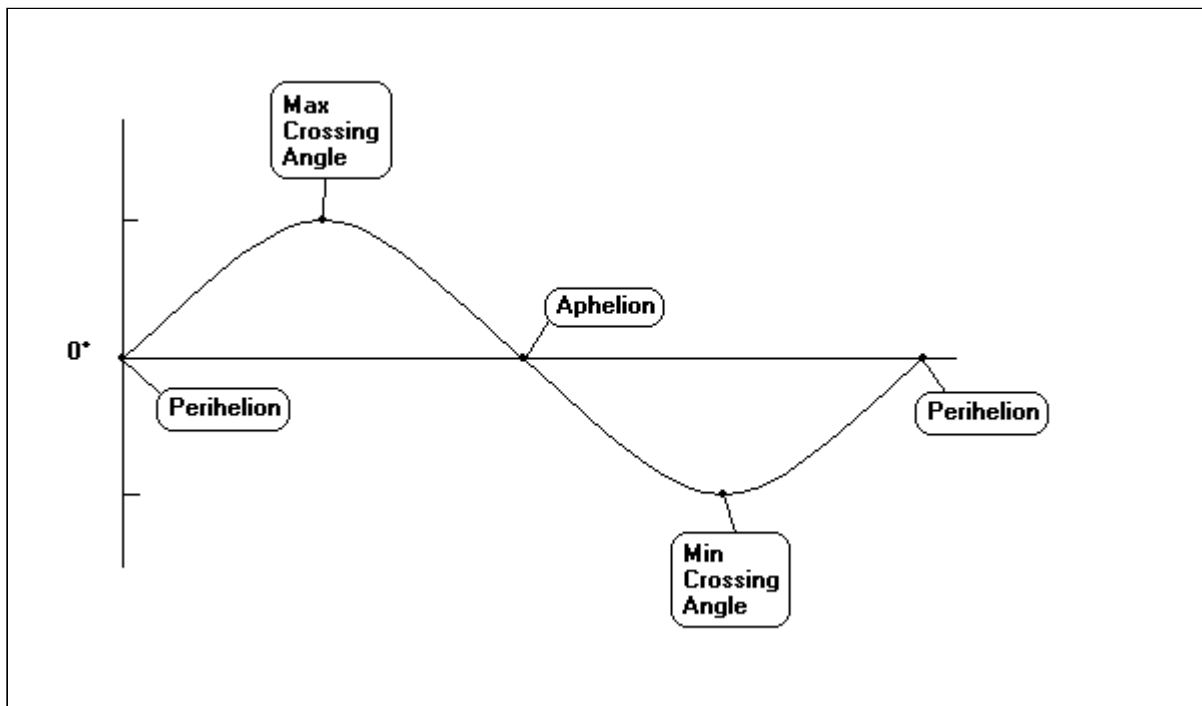
by D.H. Van den Berghe



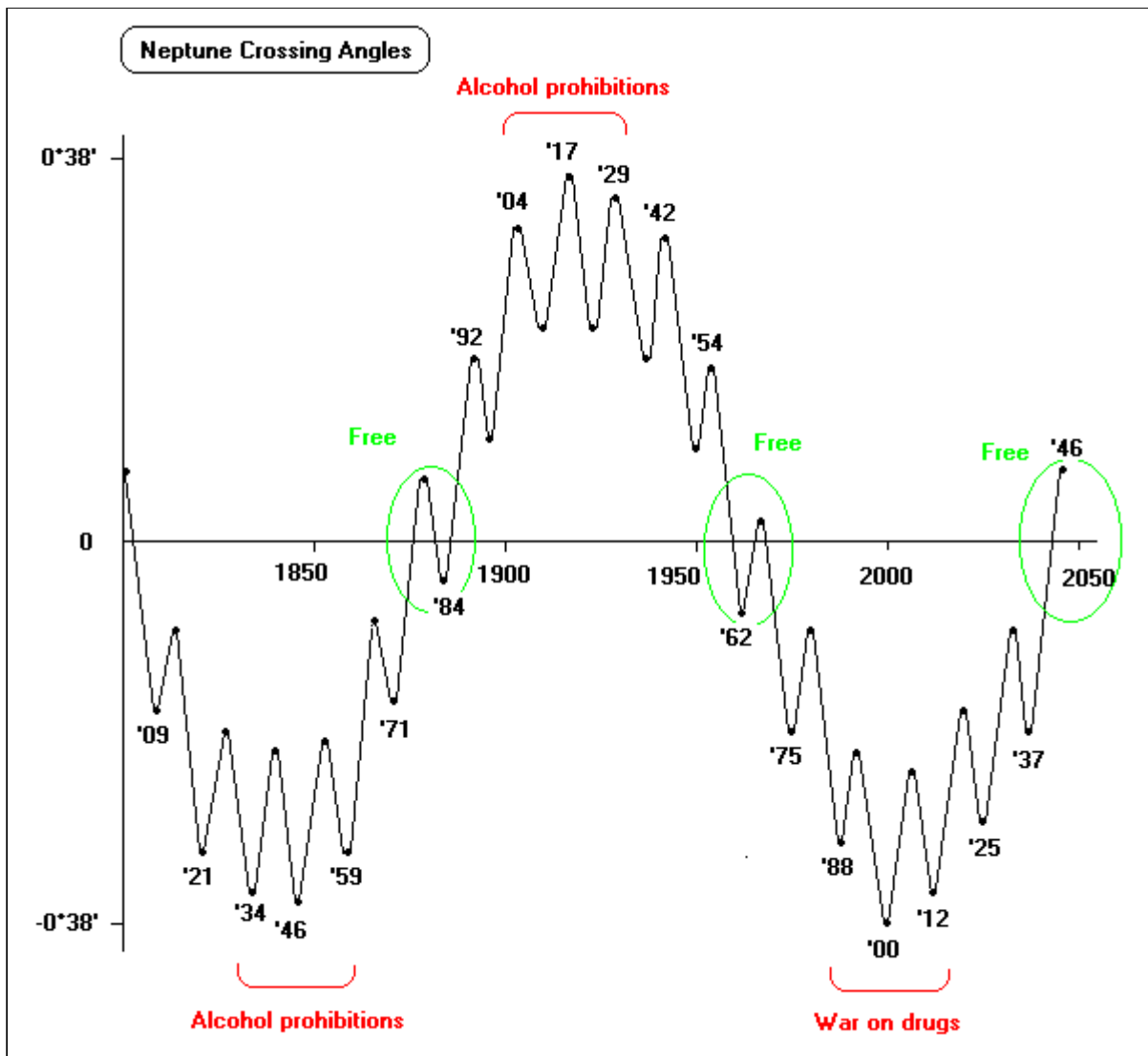
Neptune is a planet with an almost circular orbit (eccentricity = 0.01).

Its **crossing angle** is $0^{\circ}38'$ at maximum.

For most planets the crossing angle is changing in a smooth way:



For Neptune however we see different pattern.
Neptune really moves like a drunkard:



This is because Neptune is very sensitive to the gravitational pull of the other planets (mostly Jupiter and also Saturn).

There is also a very interesting correspondence between this cycle of Neptune and the periods of acceptance or prohibition of alcohol and drugs during the last centuries.

Encarta encyclopedia gives:

13 of the 31 US states had alcohol prohibition laws by 1855 (crossing angle peaks).

These laws were repealed or modified during the US civil war and by 1870 there were more than 100000 saloons , 1 for every 400 men, women and children (crossing angle close to zero).

By 1916, no less than 23 of the 48 states had adopted antisaloon laws, which in those states closed the saloons and prohibited the manufacture of any alcoholic beverages. On December 22, 1917, with majorities well in excess of the two-thirds requirement, Congress submitted to the states the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibited "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors." (Exactly when the crossing angle peaks again)

Also Brittain,Scotland,Sweden,Norway,Finland and Canada adopted similar laws at that time.

(Freely from : "Prohibition," Microsoft(R) Encarta(R) 98 Encyclopedia. (c) 1993-1997 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.)

Again these laws were repealed during the 30's (crossing angle declining) and we got a new "free" period with people experimenting with new drugs during the 60's and 70's (crossing angle close to zero).

Now we have the "war on drugs".

The crossing angle peaks in 2000, so we could see some very hard new laws in this area.

But the tide is turning and drugs will be legalised (and taxed) in many countries somewhere in the next ten or twenty years (probably after 2012 for most countries).

The next "free" period will be around 2040-2060.

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