

Purpose Versus Mission in Astrology: *Part Two*

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*Version 1.4 (posted on 5 February 2019)
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*[In Part One of this Commentary series, I discussed purpose in astrology. Now we move on to **mission** — what it means and how to determine it in charts.]*

Mission is not the same as purpose. They may be separate levels of the psyche and the life, operating with relative independence. They might complement and cooperate, manifesting together harmoniously, or they could conflict in the struggle of mutual exclusivity where one denies the other. In a small percentage of natal charts, they can be nearly identical. In most, they are not.

The ways I define and interpret mission in natal charts reveal two primary levels of our lives. One is concrete and obvious; the other is less tangible and more metaphysical. When I wrote about purpose in the first installment of this Commentary series, the content was firmly within the typical approaches of modern, individual astrology. My discussion of purpose would be easily understood by most astrologers. The concrete correspondences of mission are similar. They are routinely written about in astrological textbooks. The more intangible and metaphysical implications of mission — the bottom line of this entire series of Commentaries — may be farther afield, out on the wings of the bell curve of astrological assumptions. Other astrologers may or may not agree with what I'll lay out in this series.

Astrologically, in terms of natal charts and individual lives, what I shorthand as purpose is linked with the Sun and its overall condition in the chart. Mission, however, is revealed by the Midheaven. What is the Midheaven and how is it symbolically different from the Sun?

Astrological charts are maps of the heavens, viewed from a specific moment in time and space. They contain both collective and individual frames of reference. The zodiac is more collective. Positions of major bodies in the zodiac are the same at any point in time for everyone on the earth. So, if you were born at the same moment as another person halfway round the world, the major bodies in your chart — the Sun, Moon, planets, asteroids, etc. — are in exactly the same positions in the zodiac, and the pattern of relationships between the bodies — aspects — is identical. But if you were born during the day, the sky is very different from that of someone born at the same moment on the other side of

the earth, where it was night. This means that personal space — above or below the horizon, rising in the east or setting in the west — is symbolically more individual. That factor in the chart is called the Wheel of Houses.

The Meridian is the vertical axis in our personal space. In charts, which are two-dimensional representations, that axis appears to point straight up and straight down. If everyone on the earth were to point straight up, however, we'd point in different directions — out into the cosmos, the big universe. If everyone pointed straight down, the direction would be inward toward a single point in the middle of the earth. So, up and down in astrology correspond to out and in, which symbolically represent *macrocosm* and *microcosm* — big world and little world. The up/top/outward point within a chart is called the Midheaven. The down/bottom/inward point is called the Lower Heaven.

Symbolically, the Lower Heaven is the most personal, and in some ways the most private, point in the entire chart. It's where you are the absolute center of the universe — whatever you experience personally and subjectively is the most important reality. In the other direction (outward rather than inward), the Midheaven is the most collective, and in some ways the most public, point in the chart. It's the point in the chart of greatest impersonal and objective participation, where you are part of and integrated into a larger community. What happens to the community is the most important reality, and each of us has a particular role to play.

The concrete meaning of the Lower Heaven is *personal security*: home, family, ancestry, roots, where you come from as a child. The concrete meaning of the Midheaven is *social security*: career, profession, livelihood, reputation, authority, leadership, what you'll do and who you'll become in the eyes of the world as an adult. This is revealed by the condition of the Midheaven or 10th house through its occupied and ruling planets, their signs and aspects.

If we expand community beyond business, commerce, and the marketplace, and beyond your neighborhood, town, or nation, we move into a different realm, a larger and more inclusive collectivity. No more butcher, baker, candlestick maker, no more doctor, lawyer, chief, but a more universal context, role, and function. How might that express itself?

This is where mission emerges in all its metaphysical splendor. My thoughts about mission took shape after my understanding of purpose was already well-developed. Call it speculation or theory, the idea comes out of doing astrological sessions with thousands of people. By itself, that doesn't guarantee that what I call mission in charts is correct or true, but it does mean that I didn't simply make it up out of some fever dream or loony-tunes cosmology.

Mission became solid for me as a structure of understanding after decades of talking with people about the human condition of their very real lives. It also

harmonizes nicely with much of the science and many of the spiritual traditions, influences, and narratives to which I've been exposed over my lifetime. I might say "studied," but exposure is probably a more accurate term, since I've absorbed a lot of science and spirituality by osmosis, through interaction with other people. I have in fact studied science, but I didn't really need to devote myself to a formal study of spirituality; other people brought it to me, having already done much of the heavy lifting themselves. All I had to do was add their perspectives and beliefs to the ever-growing pile of stories.

Here, in a nutshell, is what mission means to me:

Mission is what we do to be responsible to the collective. It is our contribution to the larger world around us. However we make that contribution (which can occur in various ways, from obvious to subtle, and from concrete to intangible), our missions are not motivated by self-interest. Absence of self-interest doesn't translate to selflessness, however. Selflessness is the realm of the 12th house — self-transcendence or self-sacrifice, with their twin poles of sainthood and martyrdom. No, mission operates *through* the self, is effectively *built into* the self, but is *not directed by* the self. We may or may not be aware of our particular roles in the collective. We may or may not be recognized and rewarded for our contribution. We perform our collective function naturally, automatically.

The experience of resonating to *purpose* enhances an individual's personal sense of well-being. By contrast, resonating to *mission* enhances the collective's sense of well-being. Purpose is what we do for ourselves. Mission is what we do for all of us.

[In Part Three of this Commentary Series, I'll compare and contrast purpose and mission in more depth and give interpretive examples of how they might be expressed in tandem within an individual life.]