

# Purpose Versus Mission in Astrology: *Part Three*

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.3 (posted on 12 February 2019)  
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*[In Parts One and Two of this Commentary series, I discussed purpose and mission in astrology. Now I'll compare/contrast them and begin to offer examples of how to interpret them in charts.]*

I closed Part Two of this series of Commentaries by writing that *purpose* is what we do for ourselves, while mission is what we do for all of us. Another way of expressing the same thing is that purpose belongs to each of us individually, but mission belongs to everyone.

The great thing about purpose is that it belongs to each of us, meaning that purpose will be expressed in real life through our own individual will, initiative, understanding, and choices. The great thing about mission is that it does *not* belong to us as individuals, meaning that the expression of mission operates in ways where our will, initiative, understanding, and choices are not limiting factors. Purpose might succeed or fail in a given life, depending on how we live. Mission, however, will be expressed automatically, regardless of how we live.

This brings up the age-old human questions surrounding free will and fate. Does free will exist? How much of our lives lies within the realm of our free will? Conversely, does fate exist? And how much of our lives is fated to unfold a certain way or to a particular end result? If both dimensions exist, what is their relationship and do they interact? Or do all roads ultimately lead to Rome, regardless of what we understand or choose? A catch-phrase within modern, individual astrology is that *Character is Destiny*. Does that mean that we are pre-programmed with specific hard-wiring, so that free will and choice are mere illusions?

What I like most about my conception of purpose and mission is that it allows each side of the Free Will or Fate question its own technical realm within the natal chart, accounting for both, by providing information about the core meanings of each principle for a given individual, and additionally revealing (through the activation of various cycles moving through time) periods in the life where one or the other is more emphatic and center-stage. Both dimensions may comfortably co-exist in astrological interpretation. Each can be illuminated and at least partially defined.

Other elements within astrology operate on either side of the free will/fate axis. Inner planets are typically linked with individual will and personal choice, while

the outer planets can be thought of as wild-cards — like jokers in the deck — where fate, destiny, or some other larger perspective beyond our understanding intrudes into our lives. To some extent, however, that's generic. Purpose and mission are technical indicators whose correspondence to free will and fate is custom-tailored and specific to each individual.

Let me illustrate this with a story. Imagine a person whose life-purpose is to be a warrior, to demonstrate courage, and whose mission is to remind others of the importance of self-discipline. That person might become a soldier, rising through the ranks of the military, distinguishing himself in combat and leadership of troops. As he (or she) walked down the street in his spiffy uniform, fit body, confident gait, and eagle eye, other people would pass by. At some level of perception — perhaps conscious, but just as likely unconscious — those people who passed would “pick up” the vibrational resonance of the soldier's mission. They would be reminded of the essential human truth about the importance of discipline. In this way, our soldier would fulfill both his purpose and mission.

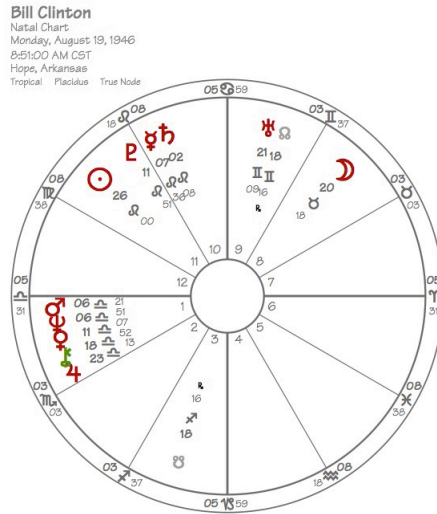
But what if the life-purpose had gone wrong? What if, for any of a thousand reasons, our warrior had failed or lost his way? What if he had been traumatized by combat in such a manner that physical or psychic wounds caused his life to unravel? Now he would be a tragic figure, shambling along the street, perhaps destitute. As other people passed him on the street, what mission-related vibrational truth would radiate from his force field? Even though our soldier would no longer be a positive example, the message radiated would still be the same: the importance of discipline.

In the first story, people might be inspired by our soldier. As they passed him on the street, they might think, *“Wow, what discipline! I've got to make sure I have some of that in my life.”* That moment could be very conscious, only a little conscious, or completely unconscious. Doesn't matter. People would still receive the transmission and get the message.

In the second, unhappy story, where our warrior's life-purpose had gone awry badly, people who passed on the street might think, *“Oh my, poor guy! How sad. I don't want to end up like that. I'd better make sure that I have enough discipline in my life.”* Even though lack of discipline probably wasn't the cause of our warrior's downfall, the message about the importance of discipline would still shine through.

To reiterate, the point of the two stories is that purpose belongs to each of us individually. In our personal lives, we may fulfill our purpose or not, depending on our choices and circumstances. Mission, however, will be fulfilled, one way or another.

I'll use the charts of three recent U.S. Presidents — Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama — to illustrate brief interpretations of purpose and mission, particularly in terms of these ex-Presidents' impact on the world, i.e., what they are mostly likely to be remembered for.



## Bill Clinton

*Purpose: Sun in Leo/11th, ruling the 11th, square the Moon*

*Mission: Cancer Midheaven, Moon in Taurus 8th, square the Sun*

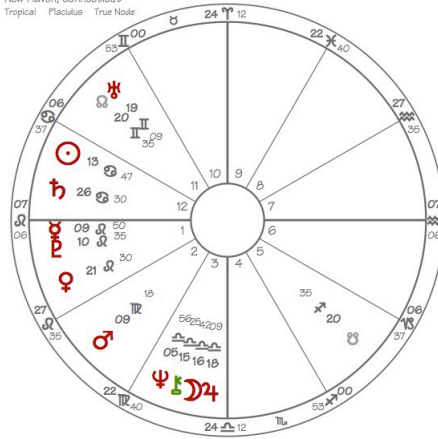
Clinton has a chart of great social charm, but his purpose and mission are in conflict. Both involve love, and both have considerable power, but they operate at odds with each other.

Personal fulfillment of purpose for Clinton comes primarily through experiences implied by the 11th house — shared creativity, group involvement, social idealism, friendship, and receiving love. Clinton naturally seeks to enhance his power and leadership in all these areas. Acceptance through affection is also central — being liked. *[This is more paradoxically the case with Donald Trump.]*

Despite general popularity during his Presidency, however, Clinton will probably be most remembered for his sexual dalliances with women. In this regard, his mission is to remind the world that physical intimacy can be an emotional need driven by powerful drives and habits.

Interestingly, the Whitewater real estate investigation led directly to revelations concerning Clinton's sexual involvement with Monica Lewinsky, which eventually grew into the scandal for which Clinton was impeached. Had not the Whitewater investigation been ongoing, the Lewinsky affair might never have been revealed. Both are linked to the Moon's placement in the 8th (money, sexual union), which is the primary symbolic area of mission in Clinton's chart.

George W. Bush  
 Natal Chart  
 Saturday, July 6, 1946  
 7:26:00 AM EDT  
 New Haven, Connecticut  
 Tropical Placidus True Node



## George W. Bush

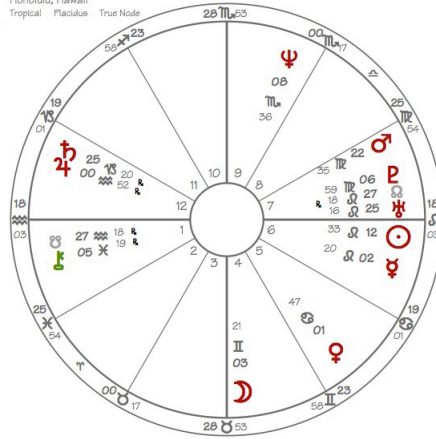
*Purpose:* Sun in Cancer/12th, ruling the 1st and 2nd, square Neptune, Chiron, Moon, and Jupiter, all in Libra/3rd, with Jupiter near the Lower Heaven  
*Mission:* Aries Midheaven, Mars in Virgo/2nd, with no major aspects

The condition of Bush's Sun reveals profound paradoxes within his sense of purpose — faith versus reason, escape versus responsibility, doubt versus confidence, and following versus leading. These questions are wrapped around acceptance or rejection of religion and the legacy of his family of origin. That struggle loomed over a rebellious early life marred by alcohol use. Bush was always conservative philosophically, but he grappled with duty and responsibility. Would he eventually assume the mantle of noblesse oblige? The conflict was apparently resolved in mid-adulthood, first by Bush's embrace of traditional Christianity and the responsibilities of adult parenting, and then by 9/11.

Having the Sun in the 12th house but ruling the 1st sets up a dilemma. Should the ego be developed or transcended? Should one step forward into social command or retreat to a monastic life of selfless devotion? Immediately following the contested 2000 election, Bush was initially more comfortable as a figurehead President, letting Vice President Dick Cheney and the neoconservatives call the shots and run the show.

Bush's mission emerged forcefully after 9/11 in much more straightforward terms than his purpose. His mission was clearly martial in tone, implied by Mars rulership of the Midheaven. Bush found his self-confidence as a War President. He will almost certainly be most remembered for aggressively initiating the War on Terror and, most specifically, for the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Barack Obama  
 Natal Chart  
 Friday, August 4, 1961  
 7:24:00 PM AHST  
 Honolulu, Hawaii  
 Tropical Placidus True Node



## Barack Obama

*Purpose: Sun in Leo on the Descendant, ruling the 7th, square to Neptune*

*Mission: Scorpio Midheaven, Pluto in the 7th opposite Chiron*

Unlike Bill Clinton, whose purpose and mission are in conflict, or George W. Bush, whose purpose and mission are starkly separate, Obama's purpose and mission are joined at the hip — sometimes advantageously, but other times to his detriment. Obama's purpose involves high ideals of personal and collective healing, which are inspiring but naïve, and based on mutuality and cooperation. His marriage to Michelle — the iron fist inside a velvet glove — has proven to be the bedrock foundation of Obama's personal fulfillment.

In terms of mission, Obama will certainly be remembered for being the first person of color elected President in U.S. history, which goes with the Plutonian symbolism of fateful endings and new beginnings. Still, three other mission interpretations from the chart leap out to me from Pluto's placement.

### 1. The importance of Obama's marriage (in both purpose and mission)

The position of Pluto in the 7th implies that Obama's wife, Michelle, was among the primary reasons for his election in 2008, and probably for the success of his entire career. That story might have further chapters yet to play out. Time will tell.

### 2. The impact of "open enemies"

Another indication of the 7th-house Pluto. Republican and extreme right-wing opposition, especially during Obama's second term, was fierce and unyielding. It was an object lesson in raw power and the refusal to cooperate. Of course, Donald Trump has done everything possible to deny or undo whatever Obama achieved.

### 3. The passage of ObamaCare

Implied by Pluto's tight opposition to Chiron, the Affordable Care Act was the signature legislation of Obama's presidency. This initial revamping of a dysfunctional American health care system pleased almost no one, but it paved the way for a more serious and radical discussion about national health care in America that is only now beginning to emerge.