

# Bernie Sanders: Dark Horse No More

by Bill Herbst

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I drew up Bernie Sanders' natal chart and graphed out his major transits weeks ago, thinking as I did so that, on one level at least, his chart might not matter. No one who embraces the dread term "socialist" has a snowball's chance in hell of becoming President. If you're running for City Supervisor in Berkeley, California, calling yourself a socialist might actually be an advantage, but not on the national stage.

For America as a whole, socialism is regarded as one tiny step away from totalitarian communism, however absurd that connection may be. Individual freedom is the most sacred of all American myths, even if all that usually means is the sense of entitlement to do whatever the hell you want to make money without regard for the collective well-being. The Scandinavian nations have had seemingly no trouble integrating capitalism and socialism, but America isn't Sweden or Denmark. More than a century of reactionary sentiment (i.e., "*better dead than Red*") goes hand in glove with the spurious assumption that America is a country that "should be" white, Christian, heterosexual, and run by 100% balls-to-the-wall, survival-of-the-fittest capitalism. Yeah, fat chance.

Oh yes, we do have socialism in this country, but it's socialism for the rich and powerful through a cultural and economic playing field tilted severely in favor of business through corporate welfare. The New Deal, with its social safety nets and legal prohibitions designed to limit financial racketeering, was an aberration in American history, a 40-year hiccup that has been mostly dismantled since 1970. Compared to Wall Street's financial "Masters of the Universe" who preside over the American landscape today like feudal lords, the Robber Barons of the Gilded Age were mere pikers by comparison.

Free markets and level-playing-field competition are the hallmarks of Adam Smith-style capitalism and function effectively in local economies, but thousands of K Street lobbyists attest to the fact that we don't have that in big-is-better America. In my view, all of the "isms" — *capitalism, socialism, communism, libertarianism, fascism, totalitarianism, etc.* — are perfect systems *in the abstract*, but none of them works worth a damn in the real world, and particularly not in mass societies, without elements of the others as necessary counterbalances. Each "pure" system is inevitably undone by the predictable failings of human nature — corruption, greed, megalomania, narcissism, etc.

Even after 11,000 years, civilization (and humanity as a whole) hasn't yet progressed much past the "Terrible Twos," with their exaltation of the personal control of resources through ownership ("*I, Me, Mine*"). Yes, Buddhist and Hindu cultures pay homage to humility, but Western Civilization barely recognizes humility as a meaningful value. Occasionally, the West applauds compassion, which is related to humility but not the same thing; in general, however, our half of the world embraces individuality and self-absorption that are too often nearly indistinguishable from narcissism. Capitalism remains the perfect system for such an infantile society, with Predatory Capitalism its fullest expression and proudest achievement.

Look at Supreme Court decisions over America's nearly two and half centuries. Time and time again, the "rights" of property owners are given immense weight in the Court's deliberations. This doesn't mean that the Little Guy never wins. Numerous "landmark" decisions have been handed down to protect the disenfranchised. Those are exceptions, however: A clear pattern exists among Supreme Court cases indicating routine deference to property and wealth.

Bernie Sanders declared his candidacy in the presidential election in April 2015, stating that the cornerstone of his campaign would be correction of the extreme income disparity and wealth inequality that are crippling American families and eroding the middle class. His orientation is unabashedly populist and progressive.

Sanders started out as the proverbial symbolic candidate whose chances of winning were considered slim-to-none. His entry into the race harkened back to Eugene McCarthy in 1968. Bernie's candidacy was expected to exert at best some leverage to force Hillary a little to the left. His early campaigning was so successful, however, that Sanders' position in the race is no longer merely symbolic.

*[Note, the rest of this page was edited or added on 10 February 2016 to keep the essay current with developments in the campaign.]*

Bernie's early popularity in the polls has now been confirmed and dramatically expanded by the Iowa Caucus vote and the New Hampshire primary, both of which occurred in early February.

Sanders finished neck-and-neck with Hillary Clinton in the Iowa Caucus polling, and he scored a smashing victory in the New Hampshire primary, winning wide majorities in every voting demographic and leaving Hillary in the dust.

Curiously, some polls have suggested that Trump would stand a better chance of winning against Clinton than Sanders. That said, however, the election is still ten months away, and nothing has been decided yet. The long and grueling six-month process of weeding out the also-rans and removing the casualties from the field has only just begun.

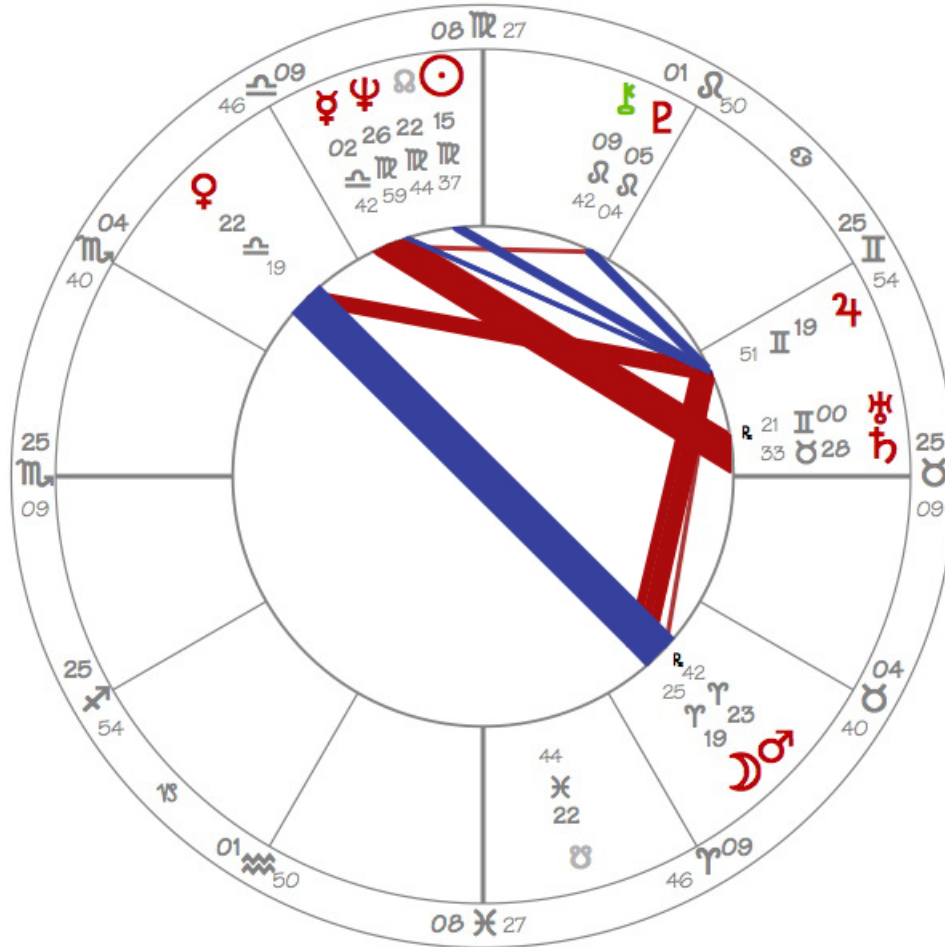
I like Bernie. He's smart, thoughtful, has unquestionable integrity, and total commitment to the causes he embraces (campaign financing and Wall Street Banking reform, to create a fairer and more level playing field for Americans and thus restore the ideals of democracy from the oligarchy of Big Money that currently dominates our society). Bernie's politics reflect the beliefs and wishes of a sizable percentage of Americans, perhaps even a majority, which is clearly not true of all those Republicans on the far right.

Below is Bernie Sanders' natal chart. The time of his birth is a matter of public record and is considered reliable:

## Bernie Sanders

Monday, September 8th, 1941  
12:27 p.m. EDT  
New York, New York

Tropical Zodiac  
Placidus Houses  
Moon's True Node



## Character

The first position to consider in Sanders' natal chart is the elevated 10th-house Sun in Virgo. Bernie was born at 12:27 p.m. daylight time — 11:27 a.m. standard time — with the Sun almost directly overhead in Virgo. The vertical axis in charts symbolizes both security and power. The area underfoot is the 4th house and points toward the center of the earth, linking it to personal security — home, family, and lineage, all elements of our inward, private world. The space overhead points outward into the larger universe, linking it to social or collective security — our place in the outer world, at whatever boundary we happen to draw: community, city, state, nation, earth, or cosmos. 10th-house types are concerned with both the well-being of the group and their personal role in managing and protecting it.

In standard textbook natal astrology, the condition of the midheaven/10th house indicates the career dimension of a person's life in all the ways people typically consider that: the importance of career through social recognition and respect, the resources and liabilities of a particular individual's career path, types of careers indicated, and likelihood of success or failure along the way.

While I have no trouble with those kinds of interpretations, my vision of the 10th house is slightly different. In poetic terms, I see the 10th house as repayment of a debt. A debt for what? For the gift of our individual lives. Repayment to whom? To everyone else, including the earth and the universe. Repayment how? Through demonstrating certain truths. I call this *mission*, in contrast to *purpose*.

The Sun in every chart symbolizes the organizing principle, gravitational center, and core source of meaning. It reveals our power to integrate all the disparate elements of our lives into a coherent whole, as well as describing how we go about that challenge. The term I use as shorthand for these related functions is *life-purpose*.

The condition of the Sun in our charts — by sign, house, and aspects — shows how we go about developing, expressing, and achieving a sense of purposeful life. All the other symbols in our charts carry

their own symbolic meanings and implications, but all of them finally relate back to the Sun. They may contribute to our sense of purpose or detract from it. The bottom line, however, always comes back to the Sun in our charts and our power to achieve integrity and coherence.

If the expression of our solar purpose goes awry in any of the myriad way that can happen in life, it doesn't mean that we will necessarily be unsuccessful or unhappy. What it does imply, however, is that we will be unfulfilled inside. All the goodness available in life is not enough to compensate for a lack of inward meaning and coherence. We may distract ourselves for awhile with pleasures and privileges, but we cannot escape the specter of inner emptiness. In very real ways, our spiritual connectedness depends on effective expression of our solar purpose. Not everything in life is or needs to be purposeful. If we fail to build the structures that allow us to spend a considerable amount of our time in meaningful activities, however, we lose the core sense of who we are.

Our individual solar purposes belong to us. They are ours; we may succeed or fail at their expression and fulfillment, since purpose lives in the arena of free will.

By contrast, the mission in our charts shown by the condition of the midheaven/10th house does not belong to us. One way or another, it will be expressed successfully, because the various truths embodied by our missions shine through for everyone to see and feel.

Let me offer a hypothetical example of how this might work. Imagine that my mission were to illustrate the importance of personal discipline in living well. If so, I might become a Marine Colonel, not because I'm necessarily aware of my mission, but simply because that's how my life unfolds. As I walk down the street in my clean, crisp uniform, with my fit body, my confident gait, and my eagle eye, guess what passers-by register (whether consciously as perception or just "vibrationally" as a subtle feeling)? *"Ooh, discipline! Right. That's important."*

OK, now assume that I have the same mission, but my life goes badly wrong and falls apart completely, so that I end up a drunk lying in the gutter. As people step over me onto the sidewalk, guess what they register/think/feel? *"Ooh, no discipline! Right. That's important."*

In each situation, the people who pass may think/feel/register many other perceptions or reactions, based on who they happen to be as individuals, but among those custom-tailored responses will be the truth of my mission, whether conscious or buried. It doesn't matter whether or not I live my life well, my mission will still be conveyed.

In other words, the truth that is my particular mission to illustrate will radiate forth to the world one way or another. I am the transmitter, and everyone else receives the transmission, regardless of my being on-track or not with my life, and equally, regardless of whether others are conscious or not of receiving the message.

So, in my way of looking at charts, purpose operates within the realm of free will, choice, and circumstance. Mission, however, is not a function of will, but instead operates in the realm of fate or destiny. In much the same way that ants or bees are members of a hive and receive all the transmissions of the hive-mind, so our missions are part of the collective mind of humanity. Unlike bees or ants, however, humans are also individualized beings with the chance to fulfill ourselves apart from our function in the collective.

OK, that's a lot to read through, but here's where it gets interesting. What does all this discussion about purpose and mission imply for people born in the late morning, between about 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., depending on location, season, and daylight or standard time? See, for the majority of people — almost 90% — purpose and mission are separate and different, according to their natal charts. Put very simply, that means that the Sun is not located in the 10th house, but in one of the other eleven houses (each of which represents particular dimensions of life-experience). As a result, purpose and mission are different.

For those of us born in the late morning — meaning people who took their first breath when the sun was overhead in the 10th house — purpose and mission fuse together. They are, if not completely identical from an astrological perspective (for reasons too technical to go into here), at least very closely related. This group is comprised of less than 10% of the population.

Bernie Sanders is in that group. According to his natal chart, his purpose and mission are essentially the same: to maintain and enhance the public good through leadership, by the acceptance of responsibility for others' welfare and the power or authority to make that happen. That is sometimes thought of in spiritual dimensions as a "vocation." Most commonly, however, "career" is the operative term. Whether as mayor of Burlington, Vermont, or President of the United States, Bernie's career is always the central and primary source of meaning and coherence in his life. The well-being of the collective is not separate from his personal fulfillment.

Those two levels of concern and ambition may not always be identical, but they work in tandem, hand-in-glove. Technically, Sanders' mission is to find or create ways to convert social ideals into the pragmatic structures of real life expressed through the policies and institutions of culture. Bernie believes that all institutions should serve the greater good, and he sees government as the only watchdog that can prevent organizations from "going rogue," and serving themselves at the public expense.

While capitalism holds that the creation of profit serves everyone, and conversely, that government regulations tend to destroy wealth, Bernie considers the welfare of the public more important than the profit motive, a stance that often puts him at odds with the business community.

Augmenting Sanders' 10th-house Virgo Sun is a Moon-Mars conjunction in Aries opposite Venus in Libra on the 5th/11th house axis. The Arian Moon-Mars gives him fire, passion, and a certain spontaneous aggression that complements the calm reasoning of his Virgo Sun. Bernie doesn't shy away from a fight, and — like Donald



Trump — he relishes performing on the public stage. (Hillary is much more suited to behind-the-scenes deliberations and covert operations.)

The Moon-Mars opposition to Venus in the 5th/11th houses imply that, had Bernie's life unfolded differently, he might have been an artist or actor. The ambition of his purpose fused with the social idealism of his mission, however, make politics and public service natural arenas for him. Bernie remains an enthusiastic performer, though, especially when questioned or challenged. (The Moon and Venus are both receptive symbols, with the Moon showing our immediate temperamental reaction to stimulus and Venus revealing our more graceful responsiveness. Add Mars to that mix and we get a man who reacts very quickly. It's easy to trigger Bernie's passion or get his dander up. Sanders is no shrinking violet.)

Mars and Venus in their natural signs and tight opposition imply that Sanders is both a tireless warrior who fights for what he believes, but also a person who values fairness and diplomacy. How can one be uncompromisingly assertive and willing to gracefully compromise? By going back and forth from one to the other. Fight to win, but if you can't win, negotiate as good a compromise as possible, and thus live to fight another day.

Two other pairs of planetary conjunctions highlight Sanders' chart: Mercury conjunct Neptune and Saturn conjoined Uranus. Both pairs are called "dissociative," since one of each pair is at the end of a sign, with its partner at the beginning of the next sign. Mercury-Neptune bridges Virgo-Libra, while Saturn-Uranus spans Taurus-Gemini.

These two pairs add complexity to his chart, and presumably to his character, since they tie together different archetypal layers — rationality with intuition and the conservative with the revolutionary. Bernie's life-experience doesn't fit into neat or didactic categories, but instead defies simplistic labels — his approach to governing is more gray shades stark blacks-and-whites. Bernie is likely to see the world as "us" more than as "us-versus-them." Conflicts between people,

and possible resolutions of those conflicts, are approached in atypical fashion.

The greatest paradox of Sanders' chart is that, while he's willing and temperamentally equipped to fight aggressively for what he believes, he wins only when we all win, which is a more impressive and idealistic outcome than mere personal victory, but infinitely more difficult to achieve.

## **Transits**

The current pattern of active cycles in Bernie's chart reflects and amplifies this paradox. Mission and purpose, opportunity and resistance, predictable and unexpected, traditional and radical — all these apparent dualities are active in his chart now.

## **Jupiter**

Starting in October of 2015, Bernie's chart entered a period of potent Jupiter activity, with Jupiter conjoining his natal Sun and in first-quarter-square to its own natal position. Those transits correspond to attitudes of permission, confidence, and optimism, and will continue through mid-summer 2016, with other Jupiter transits carrying him through September. So far, Sanders' self-assured performance in the campaign has reflected those transits. The influence of Jupiter drops out of Sanders' chart in October and November, however, leaving one to wonder whether his momentum will carry him through, or if his campaign might falter as the election draws near.

## **Saturn**

Jupiter's opposite, Saturn, is also a major archetype in Sanders' chart this year. As a pair, Jupiter and Saturn refer to the social realm of real life, tangibly and pragmatically, with Saturn representing the hard work of investing in fundamentals by building a solid infrastructure, while Jupiter symbolizes the payoff of such hard work through profits and dividends. Throughout most of 2016, from February until the end of November, Saturn is moving through a first-quarter square to Bernie's natal Sun. Of all the many cycles in our charts, the 29-year Saturn-Sun cycle is the most central, since it tracks the development and progress of core meaning in our lives.

In 1950, at the age of eight, Bernie's first Saturn-Sun cycle began. During that first life-purpose cycle, while growing up in a working-class family, young Sanders developed a sensitivity to politics, social justice, and economic equality. 29 years later, on the eve of turning 38 in 1979, his second life-purpose cycle began, and with it his career in elected office, starting as Mayor of Burlington, Vermont, and progressing into the U.S. Congress, where he served long tenure in both the House and Senate. In 2009, Bernie's third and culminating Saturn-Sun cycle kicked off.

In poetic or metaphorical terms, the past seven years of Sanders' life have represented the spring season in planting his third garden of core life-meaning. Now that garden is moving into summer, and the challenge is to shift from preparing the soil and planting the seeds to tending the growing plants in the garden. In real life, this means that seven years of emotional preparation and laying groundwork must now shift into literal activities that embody and expand the meaning by giving it tangible form.

The theme of core meaning in Bernie Sanders' life is to maximize our collective well-being through his responsible leadership in ways that simultaneously protect what works and reform what doesn't. If that purpose was expressed through diverse but persistent social activism during the first Saturn-Sun cycle in his youth, and then in his second cycle through of elected office including decades in the U.S. Congress, then what is left for the third cycle? How about the presidency?

The period of the actual Saturn-Sun first-quarter transit (2016) corresponds to a time of potent conflict. Bernie needs to move forward, to give concrete form to his current ambitions, but overcoming inertia requires him to push harder. Literally, this means that his bid for greater leadership authority will be opposed by powerful forces, especially since his long history as a cantankerous independent means that he's not exactly a member of the club.

## **Uranus**

Of the three outer planets, only Uranus and Pluto are provocatively active now. A Pluto first-quarter trine to Sanders' natal Sun is a steadying influence, but not a major event. Uranus, however, is very active as it passes over the tight natal opposition between the Moon and Mars in Aries/5th house and Venus in Libra/11th. This passage extends from mid-2015 through early-2018, and implies that Bernie's emotions are electrified now. Sanders is moving through a unusual period of impassioned concern for people. He doesn't simply speak to his constituency, he courts them with gusto and great energy. We can't know if Bernie is more in love with his audience or with the thrill of performance on such a huge stage, but, either way, the effects are compelling. Bernie is acting less like a 74-year-old and more like a young stallion.

## **Neptune**

As the Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus transits are unfolding, Neptune is also active, passing over the Midheaven at the top of Sanders' chart, which corresponds to a period of profound inspiration about his mission but possible delusions about the viable options. Insights and illusions intermingle in Neptunian symbolism, and separating one from the other is a very difficult task, since they appear identical to the person experiencing them. Insights are clear visions of reality as it is or can be, while illusions are fantasy escapes from reality.

Fantasies are not inherently evil, they're just so far from reality that bridging the gap is not possible. Fantasies may certainly be enjoyed as fictional entertainment, but trying to turn them into reality will result in disappointment. Too much investment into fantasy (or belief in dreams) puts us at risk of "dis-illusionment" and even despair as they evaporate, as they invariably do eventually, leaving behind only cold, stark reality. Some people never awaken from their dreams. For them, reality's inevitable intrusions seem unspeakably cruel, since they believe the alluring sweetness of their dreams.

## **Beyond the Campaign**

That two-year transit of Neptune over Bernie's Midheaven in 2015-2016 ends after the election, but will be followed by another equally important Neptune transit in 2018-2019, when Neptune opposes Sanders' natal Sun. Should that be a concern for us? Are Americans more at risk with a President whose chart is undergoing enervating and potentially confusing Neptune activity as reality intertwines with fantasy?

Major Neptune transits are not rare among U.S. Presidents. In fact, they are so commonplace as to be almost routine (which is true for everyone), and the developments or events to which they correspond range throughout the spectrum of Neptunian symbolism, from inspiration and high idealism to scandal and diminishing effectiveness.

After studying the charts of all 43 U.S. Presidents' and the real-life histories of their performance in the White House, I can state that the presence of major Neptune transits doesn't prevent election or ascension to office for first-time candidates running for our highest national office. On the other hand, Neptune transits do seem to correspond to difficulty or vulnerability among serving Presidents, as well as the distinct possibility of failure in their bids to be re-elected.

Neptune was active in the charts of two recent Presidents when they were defeated for re-election: Jimmy Carter in 1980 and George H.W. Bush in 1992. Many other Presidents have seen their popularity or effectiveness dissipate during Neptune transits while in office. Bill Clinton is a perfect example. President Clinton was debilitated by revelations that surfaced in his second term. Neptune opposite his natal Saturn was the culprit in the Lewinsky sex scandal. Clinton limped to the end of his time in office, only to see Republicans take back the presidency in the bizarre and contested 2000 election that followed.

All Presidents experience both adulation and scorn. They are adored by some and loathed by others. That comes with the territory. All Presidents govern as best they can, given their talents, philosophies,

and the times in which they serve. No personal cycles in charts offer us anything even remotely like a simple or reliable acid-test for predicting success or failure in the Executive Office.

So, given that Bernie Sanders is hinging his campaign on progressive reforms based on an appeal to the ideals of democracy, perhaps the active presence of Neptune in his chart now and for years to come represents consistency rather than vulnerability.

Questions remain, however. Can Bernie's "political revolution" gain enough support among the American people to win the Democrat nomination, and then afterwards carry the election? At the age of 74, is Sanders' vitality strong enough to serve a four-year term in office, especially during a time in history that may be (and probably will be) marked by profound and shocking turbulence? As President, would he be able to translate his broadly populist ideals into effective legislation that could successfully navigate passage through the take-no-prisoners gauntlet of combative politics on Capitol Hill?

Only time will tell. Right now, Bernie clearly relishes his role as the Uranian reformer boldly challenging the Plutonian powers-that-be.

## **Author's Notes**

**#1:** In the earliest version of this essay, I incorrectly stated Bernie Sanders' current age as 77 years old, but he is actually 74. I apologize for that factual error and have corrected it.]

**#2:** This essay concludes my trilogy of early commentaries about major candidates in the 2016 presidential election. With the exceptions of Trump, Clinton, and Sanders, none of the other Republican nor Democratic party candidates has any publicly-available birth times, whether those birth-times are certain, possible, or purely speculative. All the other candidates' birth-times are listed as "unknown."

I am not inclined to write about any candidate for whom I cannot erect a full natal chart, since charts without birth-times apply to every human being born on that day/month/year and are therefore much more generic than individual. In addition, the transit patterns provided by such "solar" charts are incomplete in ways that can omit critical information.

**#3:** Since I've chosen to update this essay weeks after posting the first version, I may do the same with the earlier two essays on Trump and Clinton. I've never tried this updating-over-time approach with other essays I've written, and I can't tell how effective it might be, but it's worth a try, especially with these essays about a presidential election that promises to be one of the most compelling spectacles in the recent history of American politics.