

by Anne Whitaker, *The Mountain Astrologer*, June/July 2017

Vocation: The Astrology of Career, Creativity and Calling by Brian Clark, Astro*Synthesis, P.O. Box 111, Stanley, Tasmania 7331, Australia, 2016. Softcover—384 pp.— \$24.99 (ISBN 978-0-9944880-1-5). Available from Amazon and <http://www.astrosynthesis.com.au/vocation/>

Poetic, compassionate, imaginative, practical — these are the words which come first to mind upon reflecting on Brian Clark's fine book. He sums up vocation quite simply: "Vocation is how we attend to becoming who we are meant to be." However, as the book unfolds, he makes clear that the pursuit of vocation is not simple: It is a process, not an end point at which we arrive, wipe the sweat off our brow, and say, "Great, I've got here!"

In following the mysterious call of vocation, we are embarking on a lifelong journey. It is not a journey that can be planned, plotted, or pursued in a rational, linear manner. The call manifests "... through images, symbols, felt senses, fantasies and dreams ..." It can be ambiguous and uncertain, leading us on a merry dance at times. Brian Clark points out, towards the conclusion of his book, that although we may retire from our work or profession, "we never retire from our vocation ...," which, in later life, becomes "focused on an inner and more private relationship with our creative self."

This book is rooted in Clark's depth of understanding of the horoscope as an immensely rich lens to explore the range of options arising from the particular weave of archetypal energies that makes each of us unique. Vocation examines many facets of the subject, including the challenges that individuals' vocational journeys may bring and the creative possibilities that may flow from the dialogue between astrologer and client, which the client can fruitfully use as the quest unfolds.

The author demonstrates the horoscope's dynamic interplay of angles, nodes, planets, signs, houses, and aspects, which enable us to come gradually into an understanding of how a person's vocation may develop. For example, the North Node in the 6th house "suggests that the independent, active and pioneering approach to work and employment will support the individual's personal development." Or, for someone with Virgo rising: "Before you venture into the world of work it is important to have a plan, a programme, a list or a map; at the very least, an idea of where you are going." And with Uranus setting, "chance encounters and unusual liaisons will ... bring opportunities on the career path." Clark pays particular attention to analyzing the 2nd, 6th, and 10th — the "houses of substance" — since the signs on their cusps, the planets within, and their relationship to the Ascendant play a "major role in turning our creativity into talent and shaping a fulfilling vocation."

Chapter 5, "Destiny: The Lunar Nodes," affirms the vocational significance of the lunar nodal axis, those two points where the Moon's orbit around the Earth crosses over the apparent path of the Sun. Here, the discussion ranges from the 18.6-year nodal cycle to the

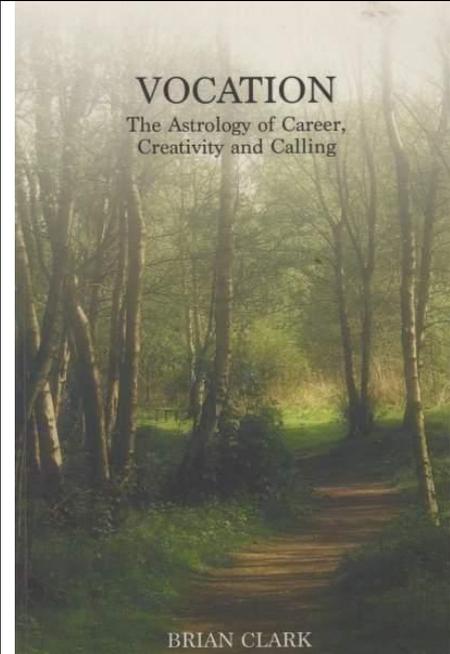
details of how the planets, Chiron, and the angles' engagement with the Moon's nodes symbolically lay out the challenges facing us all as we are pushed to become the best we can be. It would be great to have this chapter also as a stand-alone booklet introducing the Moon's nodes!

The author cites horoscope examples — including Leonard Cohen, Angelina Jolie, Germaine Greer, Lance Armstrong, and Oprah Winfrey — to demonstrate the vocational focus. There is also a fascinating in-depth case study of the life and work of Thomas Moore, who has written books on both astrology and vocation.

Brian Clark writes beautifully. His long experience as a teacher, practitioner, and student of the esoteric arts shines through the book. I would thoroughly recommend it for astrology students, for astrologers just beginning to engage with client work, and for experienced practitioners. I have certainly found that reading *Vocation* has provided me with some new, useful insights into my own wayward and diverse vocational journey. — reviewed by Anne Whitaker

★★★★★

by Chris Lorenz, *Dell Horoscope*, March 2017

	<p>Vocation – The Astrology of Career, Creativity and Calling by Brian Clark, Astro*Synthesis, P.O. Box 111, Stanley, Tasmania 7331, Australia, 2016. Softcover – 381 pp. (6" X 9.25") – US \$24.99 (ISBN 978-0-9944880-1-5).</p> <p>A variety of philosophers, metaphysicians and psychologists praise the value of having a vocation, which is not the same thing as having a profession or career. Ideally, one could blend one's passion for an undertaking with a professional role, so that your vocation becomes a healthy synthesis of work and profession. The deep thinkers tell us that a vocation is not about being someone, but becoming who we are. It's about living a meaningful life, having an authentic sense of self, and following our own inner calling.</p>
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Brian Clark's exceptional astrological guide to finding your own voice in the world, *Vocation – The Astrology of Career, Creativity and Calling*, shows how to find a fulfilling career that corresponds to your archetypal soul essence. Much of the material in the well-organized manual is derived from his classes on the subject of vocation as well as the Vocation Report he wrote for SolarFire. As such, the narrative is at times teaching the ropes and at other times a comprehensive reference. Beginners who study this book will

advance quickly within the field of astrology, while intermediate to advanced students will treasure the vast amount of astrological information and insights.

The only catch in putting into action what the author advises is that it requires a tremendous amount of courage and personal integrity. The problem is that our society puts a premium on status, job security, and salary. The culture in which we live values some professions more than others and gives them more respect and financial rewards. Workers put up with a meaningless job because it provides life's basic necessities. The author comments, "This meaninglessness permeates the atmosphere of daily life and contributes to an epidemic of dissatisfaction, depression, illness and insecurity in the work place."

Finding your true vocation takes strength to break away from the herd. It generally involves a struggle between corporate and social values and our own inner calling. Where Clark excels at explaining how the horoscope works is that he explores potential as well as "real-life" circumstances. He begins with the vocational houses, which traditionally are the second, sixth, and tenth, and are associated with finances, jobs, and career; however, there is no steadfast rule that says if you have X planet in Y house then your vocation is Z. The houses, the signs on the cusp, and the planets that rule the house and tenant the house each carry their own significance. They represent archetypes, which are symbolic representations of essential spiritual or psychic needs. The author quotes numerous leaders in the twentieth-century psychology movement, but relies most appropriately on Carl Jung.

Although *Vocation* is the nominal subject of this astro-guide, the numerous and accurate delineations of planets in signs, the signs on the cusps, and angular planets present a relatively easy way to understand the language of astrology. If you know the indicators for vocation (through the second, sixth, and tenth houses), it is a short step to applying these techniques to the other houses, which might include relationships, health, and creative pursuits. Actually, creativity is covered in Chapter 7, when he looks at the first, fifth, and ninth houses. It is an intrinsic part of vocation. "Creativity is like the X factor that many people feel will bring them a more meaningful life."

Vocation uses astrology's core principles, the ones that most astrologers will agree are essential to chart interpretation. In addition to describing the traditional ten planets and Chiron, *Vocation* also has chapters on the Part of Fortune in each house and the importance of the Lunar Nodes (by house, sign, and planetary aspects) in finding one's destiny. To conclude, the outer-planet transits and secondary progressions show how to understand the timing of career changes. Cases of 14 celebrities and 3 private clients are presented to help illuminate how the vocational indicators work in practice.

As a reviewer, I find *Vocation* to be among the best instruction manuals on the market, and for all levels of astrological expertise.

by Roderick Kidston, FAA Journal December 2016

Vocation is one of the bread and butter topics for any consulting astrologer, or at least it is in its everyday guise of 'my job' or even 'my money'. Vocation is right up there with love and relating in terms of importance to clients. This new text by Brian Clark is a very welcome addition to the astrologer's repertoire of references on the subject – which considering its centrality is still somewhat neglected. *Vocation* is welcome both for its content, which is comprehensive, clear and cohesive, and for its insight, depth and nuances. These latter attributes elevate it out of the ordinary and make it a text of real worth and rich use.

In discussing 'vocation', Brian is interested in all the many faces and factors involved in this complex character: for in this book the idea and ideal of vocation emerges as a Platonic Idea, or seems to evolve into a character in a play, with many hats to wear, many masks, many costumes and styles. We can understand this emergent figure, Vocation, in many contexts; it manifests many modes of impetus and behaviour. This is the astrological way of working with Vocation of course, as we conjure with all the planets, the signs of the zodiac, the houses, the modulations of the Lot of Fortune, Lunar Nodes, progressions and transits, and so many other astrological inputs and outputs. In this study, Vocation is more than a concept: it becomes more and more alive, a character of great depth and complexity, and infinite possibility.

Yet as early as the Preface, Brian frames vocation (astrologically as well as intrinsically) in the symbols and terms of alchemy when he puts it in the context of *opus*, what alchemists called 'The Work', a lifelong process of self discovery and self expression. Vocation in its Latin origins, as Brian notes, is about 'calling', but this has many meanings. Not everyone feels called to anything early, if at all, or ever. There may be more than one call, or none. For many work is work is work, but unless it answers some need of the soul it may struggle to rise above a sense of duty or drudgery or both. But in this book, Brian takes the symbols and tools of astrology and shows how these can be used to help us all understand vocation that much better, so we have more and better opportunities to answer those deep questions about life purpose and meaning which arise for all but the most complacently materialistic sooner or later, somehow or other.

So what does this character, Vocation, look like and act like?

The second chapter is devoted to the planetary characters themselves and how they influence the formation of Vocation. Nobody familiar with Brian's work will be surprised he writes about planetary archetypes. (At the risk of being reductive in this description, his approach to astrology is broadly humanistic-psychological, with a deep spiritual underpinning.) He takes the familiar planetary archetypes, plus Chiron – the Nodes of the Moon are reserved for a later chapter – and explores the vocational potentials of all.

In the third chapter, Brian explores how the planetary archetypes express themselves through the fundamental elements of astrology, the signs of the zodiac. One of the most valuable features of this chapter is the way he drills down into the needs of each sign and the possible consequences if these needs are not fulfilled.

The fourth chapter is particularly rich and interesting. Called 'Identity, Fulfilment, Individuality and Fortune' it is a meditation on the workings of the Sun, Moon and Ascendant, as discrete factors and in relationships with each other via the Lot of Fortune. He quotes the famous aphorism of Heraclitus 'character is fate', and this is nowhere more explicit than in the expression of the two fundamental Life forces, the Sun and the Moon, the core symbols of every horoscope. As well as offering pithy explanations of the meanings of the Sun and the Moon in each zodiac sign, he surveys the workings of the Lot of Fortune. (Many astrologers might still call this the 'Part of Fortune'; 'Lot' is a nod to the ancient Hellenistic tradition.) This is one of the most valuable parts of this book. Brian takes the ancient idea of the symbolic point which concentrates the interrelationship of Sun, Moon and Ascendant and explains it in a way which is modern and meaningful. This is the best description of the Lot of Fortune I have read in over forty years of astrology work.

Chapter five is called 'Destiny' and devoted to the Lunar Nodes. We can feel Brian having fun here. He enjoys the metaphors associated with the Dragon's Head and Tail and plays with the symbolism here, even while respecting the geometry involved in the Nodal cycle and the deep Vedic tradition which offers us the oldest and most potent readings of the Moon's Nodes, each thoroughly individualised with the names Rahu (North Node) and Ketu (South Node) in the Hindu system. Brian's overall approach to the Nodes as factors influencing Vocation is grounded in the idea proposed by Dane Rudhyar, that the Nodal axis represents destiny and individuation. There is a detailed yet succinct exploration of the Nodes by signs and houses and major planetary alignments.

The sixth chapter, 'Direction', explores the angles of the horoscope – here the Ascendant-Descendant axis and the MC-IC axis. There are good examples of how these play out depending on the colours they receive from major planetary alignments. I was particularly delighted to find a thoughtful discussion of the way planets linked to the IC impact on the horoscope. This is a major factor yet almost always overlooked by astrologers who are dazzled by the solar Midheaven and apparently unable to notice the silvery lunar IC. Brian is not so blind, and here helps us all to see a little better.

The seventh chapter examines the two sets of houses most relevant to Vocation: the 'Houses of Life' (1, 5, and 9) and the 'Houses of Substance' (2, 6, and 10). This is elaborated in further chapters. Chapter eight is all about the second house and its rewards, both material and spiritual. The ninth chapter explores the potential for the sixth house to reveal options for materially making a living, and the tenth chapter rather aptly focuses on the tenth house as a marker for career and profession, though ideas around career and profession are a broad tent, if not church. This tenth chapter is the most obviously relevant

of all to work and vocation, and for the Idea (and character) Vocation, both from a traditional and a modern humanistic viewpoint. One of Brian's inspired touches here is to liken the MC to the spire on a cathedral, temple or stupa, lifting attention towards the heavens.

The eleventh chapter is called 'Vocational Transitions' and looks briefly yet deftly at the impacts of progressions and the transits of the social and outer planets on the unfolding of our vocational opportunities and possible changes of direction. There is good material here about Jupiter and Saturn, and also on the quirky movements of Chiron. Brian writes more succinctly about Uranus, Neptune and Pluto (perhaps because there is so much else available about these three as transiting influences) but gives a very helpful table summarising core ideas to consider during the transits of the Nodes through the houses of the horoscope.

The final chapter pulls together all this accumulating information about Vocation and gives us a sense of the Idea or character as a rounded whole, fully alive and active. Brian offers a handful of interesting chart examples, drawn from his own files and also discussing in some depth two more familiar public figures. These are depth psychologist Thomas Moore, of *Care of the Soul* fame, and maverick poet-singer-songwriter-satirist-Buddhist and everything else he is, Leonard Cohen.

In this review I have played with Vocation as an Idea or character because of the life and integrity we find in this book, *Vocation*. I don't think Brian really intended to write a book with *quite* this slant, it is rather my way of presenting to you the richness, variety and complexity of the ideas, offerings and suggestions to be found in this text, which make Vocation come alive. Astrology's symbols help – that is one of the most essential points of them – but without a master astrologer writing at the height of his powers, there will be little life and less truth in what is being presented. When writers make their writing live, they have done all they possibly can. This book *Vocation*, on Vocation, is fully alive; I can offer no higher praise or recommendation.