

VOCATION

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– CHAPTER 1 –
A FULFILLING CAREER
An Overview of the Astrology of Vocation

In later adolescence, at the beginning of an undergraduate degree in commerce, I found myself in the university counselling office in search of guidance for my vocation. Looking for a different direction, I wanted to volunteer with the union of students working abroad. Clearly, accounting was not my path, but neither was running away from it. People-orientated, creative, helping careers scored much higher than practical, administrative or technical ones on my vocational guidance tests, but I had chosen a course I needed to complete.

We may have an inner sense of our vocation but timing plays an important role in its unfolding. While the horoscope articulates the authenticity of our vocation, it has its own schedule of development. Looking forwards into the complexity of all the vocational possibilities can be confusing; yet, when looking back over the course of our career we can see the vocational motifs and patterns that we were unable to spot when younger.

Vocational guidance can be particularly valuable when young as it often validates the inner calling. The horoscope is a useful guide in exploring choices of schools, subjects, career goals and possibilities. Discussing education, vocation and ambition with parents and their children, using their horoscopes, has proven fruitful and enormously rewarding in my practice. Vocational astrology is also very effective for adults who are questioning their chosen profession, experiencing dissatisfaction in their jobs, contemplating a career change or simply needing to discuss where they are in terms of their vocation.

Reading a chart from a vocational perspective is not static or done just once; it evolves as the individual grows, and becomes more defined as the person becomes more aware of their ambitions and desires. Hence the horoscope can be used in a variety of ways to examine vocation at any stage of the life cycle. While vocation may be the focus of the analysis, its course is affected by the individual's mental, emotional and psychological circumstances. The presenting

issue may be a vocational one, yet health or emotional and social difficulties may underpin the question of vocation. Therefore a vocational analysis is holistic in respecting the breadth and depth of the human experience. And, like the vocation itself, it is a work in process.

Let's continue by considering the horoscope from a vocational viewpoint, appreciating that, while there are many techniques and theories of vocational astrology, it is the basic principles that will ground us in developing our own style and approach.

Considering the Horoscope

Since the Greco-Roman era, western astrology has promoted techniques and guidelines for considering the horoscope from a vocational viewpoint. The techniques vary but essentially there are core principles which have remained consistent through time. In the 2nd century CE, when describing the astrological significator for a career, Ptolemy suggested that this was whichever was the strongest planet out of the ruler of the 10th house, a planet in the 10th house or the planet rising before the Sun. In medieval times, Lilly suggested that the sign on the cusp of the 10th, its ruler or its ruler's house position were strong indications for worldly work.⁸

In the 20th century astrologers pointed out the significance of the trinity of Earth houses (the 2nd, 6th and 10th), the signs on these cusps, their rulers and the planets in these houses. The Sun, Moon, Ascendant and Midheaven were also seen to be fundamental to any vocational analysis. Signatures concerning the 10th house have always been assigned importance, whereas earlier notions such as the significance of the planet rising before the Sun have diminished in importance.

Astrological trends come and go; what remain meaningful are the techniques which animate the question of vocation. These I will attempt to outline from my own experience. But first it is important to put a vocational exploration into the perspective of the individual's life stage, because a vocational analysis will be very different for an adolescent than for a retiree, or for someone experiencing their first Saturn return than for someone experiencing their second. It is also important to place the individual's personal history in the context of the vocational analysis: what is their educational background, family environment, work experience, qualifications, motivation

and life experience? While it is significant to explore potentialities and possibilities, it is also important to ground the analysis in ‘real-life’ circumstances.

There are many factors. Therefore, it is important to prioritize the most significant ones. Astrological literature will use many techniques but these are often explored out of context and are secondary, not primary, approaches. To begin we can develop a two-fold attitude. The first stage is to adopt a more general methodology to the vocation, exploring the individual’s personality, resources, talents, skills, ambitions, goals and character. While being conscious of the presenting issues, it is also imperative to listen for any mental, emotional, psychological or spiritual difficulties that may be the source of the current predicament. This wide-ranging examination places the individual in the context of their own horoscope and what it vocationally suggests. The second approach is more specific, focusing on the question of vocation by exploring career issues such as the workplace, salary, job satisfaction, co-workers and bosses.

As suggested, astrology can offer many techniques, but what is important is knowing how to use them to open up the analysis, not define or limit it. Astrological symbols are non-judgemental; therefore it is wise to find ways to articulate the images without the involvement of personal opinions. Archetypes also manifest in a multitude of ways. Even though astrology is very reliable in identifying the archetypal energy, the astrologer is not always able to know the countless ways in which it might manifest. Therefore exploration and participation with the images and symbols encourage revelation.

Let’s begin with where vocation is placed in the horoscope, or what we refer to as the vocational houses. Also known as the houses of substance, the 2nd, 6th and 10th houses are the spheres where we locate our ‘substance’: the resources, skills, competence and vision to promote and ‘earth’ our vocation. These areas of the horoscope are where we are involved with soul-making in the physical, incarnate world:

- The **10th house** locates the goalposts of our lives. It is the public sphere where we strive for authority over the course of our lives and in doing so find meaningfulness in the world. The Midheaven (MC) is the highest point on the ecliptic and

is symbolic of what we want to strive towards. It is significant in expanding our understanding of our professional role and what we contribute through our work in the world. Of all the many factors in a vocational analysis, the MC has always been regarded as crucial; hence the MC, the sign on its cusp, its ruler and planets in the 10th house are vital for beginning the exploration.

- The **2nd house** symbolizes the gifts and talents given by the gods, our innate assets and the value we give them. The 2nd house, the sign on the cusp, its ruler and planets in the house reflect how to naturally apply our resources and values. This is the area that tells us which innate resources are valuable and can be exchanged for material security. In a soulful sense the 2nd house may describe how we are able to ‘trade’ on our resources and assets in order to feel secure in the outer world and wealthy inwardly.
- The **6th house** honours the poetics of an everyday life. The 6th house, the sign on its cusp, the ruler and planets in the house are descriptive of employment and work. This sphere suggests how to apply ourselves to the tasks of an everyday life, how to occupy ourselves. These astrological symbols describe the rituals of daily life that help to achieve satisfaction and well-being. The 6th house is also known as a house of illness; therefore it can often be effective when addressing work-related ills, depression or stress. Workmates and routines can also be explored using 6th house imagery.

All houses are important to bear in mind in a vocational analysis, as each house is an area of our life occupied at different times.⁹ A house becomes significant when it accommodates a stellium, the ruler of the Ascendant or the MC, or when it contains the North or South Node. One way to begin taking all the houses into account is to group them into elemental trinities:

- The houses of life (1st, 5th, 9th): this spirited trinity is fiery
- The houses of substance (2nd, 6th, 10th): these three houses of matter are earthy

- The houses of relationship (3rd, 7th, 11th) are based on Air
- The houses of endings (4th, 8th, 12th) are a trinity of soul inspired by Water

A majority of planets in one of these trinities will seek expression through the vocation in its own particular way. Although the houses of substance take priority in a vocational analysis, the houses of life are noteworthy because they locate energies which urge to be expressive, creative and motivated, supportive forces which activate vocation. The houses of life focus on creation, recreation and procreation and urge us to be employed in the conception of the self.

Consider the planetary emphasis by element, modality and in the hemispheres of the horoscope.

- The **elemental emphasis** in the horoscope profiles an individual's temperament, while the dominant element articulates the spontaneous approach to life as being enthusiastic (Fire), pragmatic (Earth), logical (Air) or emotive (Water). Modalities outline the natural way in which life energy is exercised, whether that is through activity (cardinal), stability (fixed) or changeability (mutable).
- **The four hemispheres** of the horoscope are divided into two pairs: above and below the horizon; and east and west of the meridian. Each of these hemispheres supports a particular view on life. Above the horizon is the day hemisphere, which has a more objective focus on the world outside, while below the horizon is the night hemisphere which is more subjective and focused on the inner world. The eastern horizon concerns the more personal aspects of life while the western hemisphere's centre of attention is on others or interpersonal relating.

While it is important to learn to prioritize the planets that are vocationally significant in each horoscope, we can first distinguish each planet's function in the context of vocation.

Being so personal, the inner planets seek expression through our vocation. **The Sun** and **Moon** are core symbols integral to our being; vocation is part of who we are so these luminaries play a prominent role. In a vocational analysis it is vital to take into account each one's

zodiacal sign, house position and major aspects. The Sun represents central themes for self-expression while the Moon symbolizes what is needed to feel secure and fulfilled: important concerns for any career.

Mercury rules communication, ideas, versatility and mobility. His presence in any vocational analysis helps to articulate mental attitudes and ways of thinking about one's vocation. When Mercury is prominent, diversity, portability and intellect are significant.

Venus is the archetype which supports the sense of value and self-esteem as well as describing what we like to do, what we appreciate and what pleasures us. **Mars** is the principle of desire, what we want to pursue and the drive to 'go for it'. Both Venus and Mars are erotic in their urge to create life; potent archetypes that occupy and engage us. In essence, Venus and Mars vocationally help us to relate to our vocation and to experience it as a soulful aspect of our life.

Jupiter symbolizes philosophical and spiritual quests in the world. It seeks to ensoul life through wisdom and inspiration. As the ability to extend ourselves beyond an inherited or socially limiting framework, Jupiter brings its beliefs, morals, concepts and ethics to its vocation. **Saturn**, and specifically the MC, echo the calling to contribute to the world in a productive way. These astrological symbols are fundamental to locating authenticity, autonomy and integrity in the world through our vocation. Vocation in a sense demands a relationship with the authoritarian archetype since its success demands that we follow our own laws and pathway.

Chiron and the outer planets invoke more collective energies. When connected to vocation they suggest following paths outside consensus reality, beyond conventional systems or organizations. As a maverick and outsider, Chiron's calling is in the healing arts, mentoring or in socially reformative capacities. His vocational presence invites us to accept our own marginality and wounding. **Uranus**, like the spirit of Prometheus, is culturally rebellious and adventuresome, seeking its career path individualistically and atypically. **Neptune** is the archetype most linked to the spiritual calling and the creative language of the soul. Yet this archetype can also be spiritually inflated and misguided, confusing the personal calling with a calling to be a saviour. Neptune's position in the horoscope shows where we seek the divine and yearn to be creative and soulful. To be creative engages us in the calling to understand

ourselves and step beyond the constraints of convention into an ‘other’ world. **Pluto** is often associated with the ‘dark nights of the soul’ and brings intensity, depth and power into the search for a fulfilling vocation.

The angles of the horoscope mark out the directions of our lives; therefore they play major roles in the course of our lives. All four angles are equally important and should be differentiated from each other. In a vocational analysis the Ascendant and Midheaven are more overtly noteworthy; however, the Descendant is always counterbalancing the Ascendant while the needs of the IC are naturally embedded in the goals at the MC.

The Ascendant and its ruler both act as a ‘driver’ on the path of life, the spirited force of personality that enlivens the journey and helps to project the vocational urges into the world. **The MC** and its ruler play a prominent role in assessing the vocational path since they both describe the route into the world. **The IC** and its ruler are foundation stones upon which we can build enough inner security to support our vocation. **The Descendant** and its ruler symbolize both the antagonistic and compatriot inner forces that encourage us to be heroic and conscious of our life’s journey. Angular planets seek immediate expression in our lives and demand to be engaged; therefore they often seek to play a leading role in the vocation.

The axis of the Moon’s nodes is intimately connected to an individual’s path in life. The South Node may point towards the area where we are called to disseminate our instinctual talents and gifts, while the North Node symbolizes what we seek to develop through our vocation. The description of the polarity by sign and house can play an important role in what we are called to do. In a symbolic way the nodal axis and its aspects represent infinite urges seeking expression in an individual’s life.

The course of one’s life is never smooth and therefore it is important to consider the horoscope’s major aspects and aspect patterns, especially if an outer planet forms a prominent angle to an inner planet. These energetic complexes will seek expression throughout the course of one’s life and can be a central theme of that life. Integrating these complex aspects into the vocation is an important consideration, although each major aspect pattern needs to be analysed from the individual’s perspective. The major themes of the chart need to be considered for how they could be effectively

integrated into a ‘lifestyle’. When these major aspects or aspect patterns receive transits from the outer planets, the individual is called to extend their self-understanding in the world they inhabit. These periods are significant vocational times or wake-up calls on the path of individuation.

A vocational analysis needs to be considered in the context of the life cycle; therefore it is imperative to recognize the individual’s life stage and whether they are at a critical phase of development. These stages are embedded in the planetary cycles, especially their squares, oppositions and returns. However, it is also important to place the analysis in the present time and essential to be mindful of major transits and progressions that refer to vocational issues or times.

When one of the four angles is transited by Saturn, Chiron or an outer planet, an encounter with one’s direction and life course is implied. The transits of the nodal axis illuminate the life path; therefore their transits through the houses can speak of vocational development. The transits of Jupiter and Saturn through the houses of vocation are key to understanding vocational shifts.

Vocational awareness can be illumined through secondary progressions. The progressed Moon is the vessel which holds *memoria*, the feeling memory, emotional responses and instincts. The vocation becomes an important focus when the Moon progresses through the 2nd, 6th and 10th houses. The progressed Sun is the development of our ego strength in the world and its aspects to other planetary archetypes suggest how we can identify this aspect of our self through our life experience. Other secondary planets may bring vocational issues to light as they change direction or progress into a new sign or house.

Planetary cycles, transits and progressions are valuable resources for monitoring vocational developments and career chapters. The stages and phases of vocational progress are reflected in the planetary passages.

The Mystery of Vocation

As an aspect of fate, vocation has its own intelligence, timing and pattern. An astrological analysis endeavours to make its mystery more conscious and gratifying by considering patterns and times both within and beyond an individual’s control.

The vocational houses focus on three important aspects of vocation: income, employment and career. Ultimately we would like all three to be experienced simultaneously but, realistically, our creative calling is not easily transferred into a profession with a guaranteed salary. Often we can work hours and hours at creative tasks we love, which totally involve our self, for modest money. On the other hand, we can work in monotonous and unfulfilling ways and be paid a secure and good enough wage. Inherent within every vocational quest is the tension between security and freedom of expression, imagination and expediency, dreams and reality. To be true to our vocation we need to be loyal to our calling, patient and prepared to participate in what life offers us. We cannot expect our possibilities to become probabilities without an extensive apprenticeship.

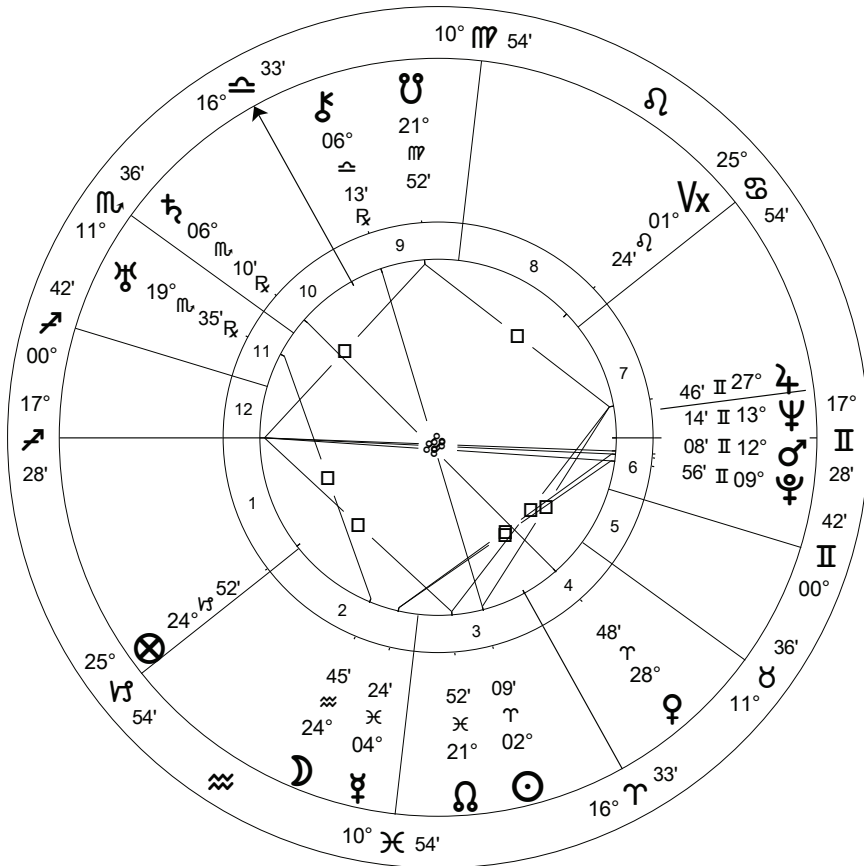
The call to vocation is not limited to a single moment or time but recurs throughout the life cycle and is often synchronous with astrological cycles such as the nodal or Jupiter cycles or life phases such as adolescence, midlife or during the decade of our fifties. However, our first experience of a calling, whether through a vision, inner voice, deep feeling, a dream or our imagination, remains evocative throughout the course of our lives.¹⁰

An Early Call

Dane Rudhyar was one of the 20th century's foremost astrologers, and he was also a painter, writer, musician and philosopher. His life is characteristic of vocation. As he participated with his calling, the course of his life led him in the direction of people and places which refined and developed his career. But it was his vision at the age of 16 which became the foundation stone and strength for his life work.

At this time he was inspired by two things which would influence the course and direction of his life work. The first was the insight that the nature of time is cyclic and that the Law of Cycles controls all existence. The second was that western civilization was in the autumn phase of its cycle.¹¹ Both themes were woven into his philosophy, astrological insights, music and art throughout the course of his life.

Rudhyar's Ascendant-Descendant axis is in the 18th degree of the Sagittarius-Gemini polarity.¹² In 1901-2, when Rudhyar was between the ages of five and seven, Uranus and Pluto opposed



Dane Rudhyar, 23 March 1895, 1 a.m.; Paris, France

each other between 15 and 19° of the same polarity. While Uranus moved back and forth across his Ascendant, Pluto slowly transited his Descendant – a potent astrological image of sowing seeds of awakening and depth realization. During this same period Jupiter and Saturn began a new cycle at 14°13 in his 1st house.

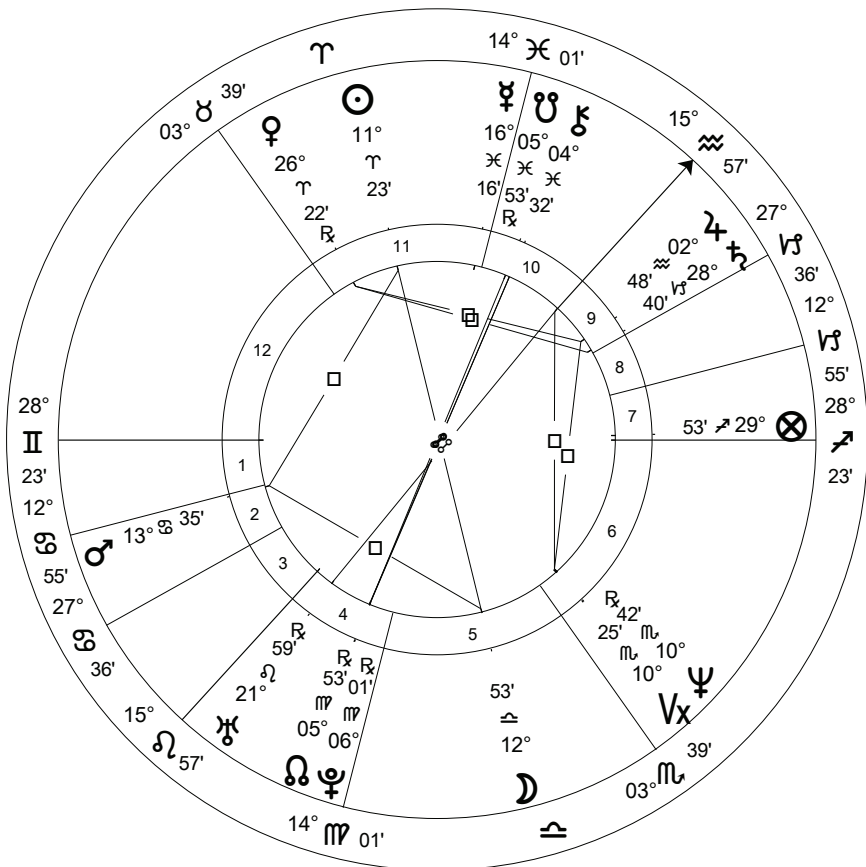
Jupiter and Saturn reached the oppositional point of the cycle in his 4th-10th house polarity when Rudhyar was between 15 and 16. Saturn had transited Venus, ruler of the MC, while Jupiter had culminated, traversing the 10th house and conjoining Rudhyar’s 10th house Saturn. Pluto was also transiting Jupiter, an indication of deep insight and internal fortune. Although transits pass, their power remains. Rudhyar’s example demonstrates the potency of the first encounter with the calling that lasted throughout his lifetime.

Vocations are also cyclical and contemporary, in that they emerge out of the spirit of the times, like the technological possibilities that

evolved with the digital age. Being archetypal, they have their own intelligence and timing which works through us; therefore they change and develop, often in ways beyond our control. Opportunities, benefactors, possibilities, choices and chances emerge at the right time to direct us forwards on our vocational search. Often this follows a life crisis, but vocation can emerge at any time.

A Later Call

Susan Boyle was 48, having just entered her fifth Jupiter cycle, when she appeared as a contestant on the television show *Britain's Got Talent*. She stepped up to sing 'I Dreamed a Dream', an emotional song encapsulating her own life experience. But how was she to know that the first few chords of this song would change her life and be the key that unlocked a lucrative career.



Susan Boyle, 1 April 1961, 9.50 a.m.; Blackburn, Scotland

During 2007, as Chiron approached the MC for the first time and Saturn transited the 4th house and its North Node-Pluto conjunction, Boyle lost her mother. Distressed, she returned to music as this gave her the solace to move through the grieving process. The following year she auditioned for the reality TV show, as her mother had always encouraged her to do while she was alive. Susan was successful; she stepped onto a path that led her to a dream she may never dared to dream.

Chiron was still transiting the MC, preparing to return to its conjunction with the South Node in the 10th. In the lead-up to the show, Jupiter transited the MC, culminating in the 10th house alongside Chiron and Neptune. From that moment, Susan Boyle voiced her calling.

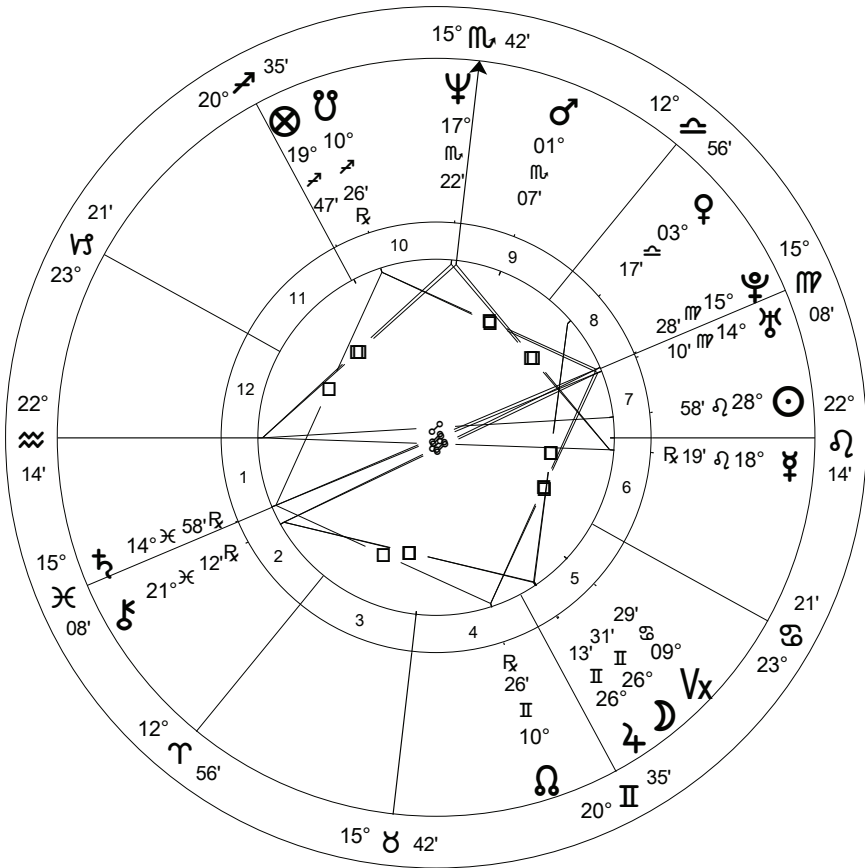
A Midlife Call

Being called can often be quite literal: a voice, a vision, a deeply felt knowing. But it is subjective. And being so deeply personal, it is important not to 'read' it factually but to allow the symbol to reveal its meaning through a more reflective and contemplative approach. The following sketch is of a client who heard a call that changed his direction in a way he could never have imagined.

For a period of three years, Jeff, a young man on the cusp of his third Jupiter return and entry into the midlife passage, consulted me about his career and life direction. He was a solicitor in a high-ranking legal firm and while his work was financially and professionally lucrative, it was emotionally and creatively unprofitable. But for a young man with family responsibilities, it was not easy to take the risk and follow his passion.

Jeff was passionate about writing and had considered journalism, but law was a more secure option. As Mercury is angular, squaring Neptune on the MC, writing fulfils this image of an imaginative thinker and storyteller. And backed up by a North Node in Gemini and a Jupiter-Moon conjunction in the same sign in the 5th house, his enthusiasm to express himself through words, ideas and language felt right. The Sun in the 7th is also angular and to date he had been identified with supporting others.

Throughout our time together, Uranus transited his Ascendant. When it was in its retrograde phase across the Ascendant, Jeff's back pain became severe, which led to an unexpected operation for



Jeff, 22 August 1965 5.14 p.m.; Geelong, Victoria, Australia

a prolapsed disc. Five days after the operation, on his last night in hospital, he awoke in the middle of the night. The room was filled with light and he heard a man's voice say, 'You are supposed to be a psychologist.' His third Jupiter return would be exact that month and later in the year Uranus would turn direct and pass over the Ascendant for the last time: the chart was indicating a new life phase.

On the phone, Jeff told me that he felt clear and motivated about his vision and was researching how he could become a psychologist. But when he was finally able to come back for appointments, his clarity had faded. We spoke about the voice and its message. Our word 'psychologist' comes from the Greek *psyche* and *logos* which together mean 'a student of the soul'. And perhaps this man's voice was a reflection of Jeff's, an inner calling of his angular Neptune-Mercury square, which Uranus was also triggering as it crossed the angle. Perhaps the voice was the clarity of knowing that he needed

meaning in his work otherwise he would continue to feel the weight of the burden on his back.

Jeff had been awoken and had been called. By the next year, when Jupiter crossed into the 6th house and Saturn transited his Jupiter-Moon conjunction in the 5th, his work had changed. Earlier in the year an unexpected opportunity to teach law at an innovative university arose. He followed the lead and moved into a new career, a new state and a new phase of life.

Astrology is a remarkable aid in helping us to understand and track our vocational quest through numerous lenses. We will continue now deepening our study, first turning to examine the planets more completely in their vocational roles.