

## A QUESTION OF VOCATION

*'Anyone with a vocation hears the voice of the inner man: he is called'.*<sup>1</sup>

- C. G. Jung

WORK: *What We Do or Who We Are?*

*'all work is a vocation, a calling from a place that is the source of meaning and identity, the roots of which lie beyond human intention and interpretation.'*<sup>2</sup>

- Thomas Moore

When I was a child adults would always ask 'what do you want to be when you grow up?' And like many young children I often had an answer. Having spent my childhood on air forces bases, surrounded by security fences and gates, I had always been intrigued by the man who would appear to lift the gate for my father and I to pass through on our way into the base. "A gate lifter" I would answer confidently, inspired by the magic and power of that faceless man who would wave us through the boundary zone. Today I wonder if a pre-existing vocational template did not inspire that innocent statement. As life unfolds my vocation calls me more to the Hermetic traditions of guide and gate lifter!

In the classes on vocational astrology I ask students to reflect upon their childhood and remember what they wanted to be when they 'grew up'. Through active imagination we journey back to a childhood memory of what we might be. Often the first vocational images are drawn out of the imagination, a close ally of the soul. As children we are relatively free from cultural standards and values that judge professions and are still mostly unaware of what work entails. From our childhood memory come the first images of what we wanted to be: a doctor, a lawyer, an Indian chief; a tinker, a tailor, a candlestick maker.

After the visualisation we look at personal astrological symbols to imagine what aspects of the horoscope may have contributed to these early occupational images. Also we look at what presently occupies the individual in order to explore whether these early images in some way are being fulfilled. It is always a revealing exercise. 'I wanted to be an explorer' was the reply from a woman who had a Sun-Mars conjunction on the 9<sup>th</sup> house side of her MC with Uranus rising; 'a nurse' said another woman with Moon in the 10<sup>th</sup> house trining Neptune in the 6<sup>th</sup>; a man with a stellium in Gemini and Jupiter on the MC said 'a teacher' while a woman with Uranus rising in Leo and the Sun and Venus on the MC remembered she wanted to be an actress. How we shape these inner images of who we may be in the world is our vocation and a large part of the individuation process. These images are already inherent in us and often accessible to us through early memories and certainly through images in the horoscope. However one of the main obstacles in our vocational search is literality. Mistaking an internal image for a concrete career perpetuates the myth that vocation is something existing outside of us, already

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<sup>1</sup> C.G. Jung, *The Development of the Personality* (Volume 17 of the Collected Works), translated by RFC Hull, Routledge & Kegan Paul (London: 1954), p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*, Harper Collins (New York, NY: 1994), p. 181.

established in the world for us to find, not something that unfolds and emerges over the course of our lives. The illusion that the right career path, a creative job or our own business will dissolve our job dissatisfaction hinders our process in discovering our vocation as what is already present in us.

Many external factors also influence our career choices: familial security, education, financial resources, parental support, and encouragement. Role models who we admire as children, experiences that capture our imagination, and the breadth of exposure to the world around us impress us to pursue certain goals. Another major influence on career choice is parental expectations, whether it is overt or not. The horoscope often helps to articulate the profound affect the un-lived life of the parent exerts on shaping a child's career. Throughout the first Saturn cycle we may still be strongly influenced by the pressure to conform to the expectations (both conscious and unconscious) of the parents, the ancestors, and the culture. This pressure contributes to moulding our careers whether we yield or rebel to it. We may not yet have the courage, the resources or the wherewithal to be able to forge our own path in life. However, instinctively we may be drawn to certain courses, beliefs, and theories, experiences that are all part of the process of helping the pathway unfold. Ultimately the vocation is like a large tapestry woven with the threads of all of our life experience and choices, not a well-trodden career path with a guaranteed pension.

Vocation is intimately bound up with the course of our lives. Yet because work is how we 'make a living' we often identify work as something we do rather than something we are. Because some professions can bestow such prestige and status we may be drawn to a profession because of what it can offer the ego, not the soul. Some careers offer the financial rewards that provide a wealthy lifestyle, which appeases the ego's need for self esteem, and self worth. However mid way through the second Saturn cycle it becomes evident that these career bonuses are never enough if vocational urges are still unmet. The mid-life crisis often centres on coming to terms with life's vocation. Even when all the objective criteria seem to suggest a successful career, the soul is often despondent and unfulfilled. At this point we often meet our clients, who perhaps unconsciously are drawn to astrology rather than career counselling, as the model lends itself to reflecting on the course of one's life.

Vocational analysis using astrological images can be very beneficial to identify the vocational template for an individual, what they are called to do. The astrological horoscope does not provide the main course, as that unfolds over the life, but it does offer suggestions as to the necessary ingredients to help make it successful. The vocation may also be found in hobbies, volunteer work, and courses of study and may not always present in the form of a career. When analysing a horoscope it is important to differentiate when the individual's career questions are symptomatic of a larger vocational question. If we then concretise the career we collude with keeping vocation embodied in literality and not part of a process of individuation, which uniquely unfolds through time.

## WORK AND SOUL

*'You work that you may keep pace with the earth and the soul of the earth.*

*When you work you are a flute through whose heart the whispering of the hours turns to music.*

*Work is love made visible.'*<sup>3</sup>

- Kahil Gibran, *The Prophet*

In the midst of our busy lives, worn out by the endless repetition of meaningless tasks, it is difficult to appreciate Kahlil Gibran's poetic appraisal of work as a soul-making sphere. In contemporary times soul and work seem worlds apart. The modern quest for economic productivity buoyed by materialistic attitudes numbs the inner yearning for vocational fulfillment. The outer concomitants of a career - prestige, status, vacations, salary packages, job security - have outweighed, nearly obliterated, the urge for a connection to soul through vocation. Yet a majority of individuals yearn to be satisfied through their work, crave to find meaning in what they do, and seek fulfillment through their careers. In a contemporary culture that has lost a connection to soul we no longer are anchored by values and images that remind us of a meaningful life. This meaninglessness permeates the atmosphere of daily life, contributing to an epidemic of dissatisfaction, depression and insecurity in the workplace.

Our need to tend to soul in what we do in the world is always present. Without nurturing this need an individual feels empty, incomplete, unfulfilled. An essential aspect of the self feels lacking. Out of this empty place an individual seeks answers. Astrology addresses the larger questions of fate, soul and individuation in an individual context, while also honouring transitional changes in the life cycle; therefore its wisdom is sought in times of crisis. Often the conscious agenda in making an astrological appointment is to be advised of the correct career path, what course to pursue and what choices to make. The ego often mistakenly believes that the 'right' career will be the solution to what is missing. However the answer is not simply a particular profession or a definitive course of action or even pursuing an exciting job (albeit helpful). The solution is to find meaning in work and to repair and restore the split between soul and work.

Feeling dissatisfied with work, disliking one's job or knowing there is 'something more' motivate individuals to consult an astrologer to explore the realm of vocation. So often in my consulting room individuals have described the strong sense of something they feel they were meant to do. Yet the same individual does not know what that is, or what to do about the feeling. They only know they are meant to be doing something more than what they are doing. The fantasy is generally that if the right path or the right career were to be found, these feelings would subside. The urge to find soul in the world is often projected onto the image of a profession, which seems to address some of the missing components of the individual's current life. The longing to find a soulful connection to the world is prone to becoming inflated and fueled with fantasy. James Hillman warns that 'vocation is a very inflating spiritual idea'<sup>4</sup> if it is attached to the personal ego (i.e. believing we are

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<sup>3</sup> Kahil Gibran, *The Prophet*, Alfred A. Knopf (New York: 1982), p.25.

<sup>4</sup> James Hillman, *The Essential James Hillman A Blue Fire*, edited by Thomas Moore, Routledge (London: 1990), p. 172.

chosen or meant to do something in particular; called to do something special or definite). The ego believes that literal 'creativity' or the perfect job will nourish the longing and appease the hunger. Projecting this longing onto a particular career is often fraught with disappointment since an external position cannot fulfil such a deep aspect of the self. The expectation of the perfect and fulfilling career, whether conscious or not, is often projected onto a literal profession to appease the anxiety and the feelings of loss. So often our vocation is what we already know or simply what we already do. It is inherently a part of our character, which unfolds over time. A literal career or profession, no matter how enlightened, is not the answer for the soul's longing. Vocation is an aspect of the individuation process. Its path is not predetermined but forged through the interrelationship of the inner self with the outer world over time. Vocation demands its own set of rules and insists on its own laws.

Carl Jung suggested it was *vocation*, which induced an individual to follow his own soul and become conscious. He suggested vocation was 'an irrational factor that destines a man to emancipate himself from the herd and from its well-worn paths. True personality is always a vocation'. Jung suggested that to pursue one's true vocation takes courage as well as the strength to be able to break away from the 'herd'. The herd is the well-trodden path of what is acceptable to the consensus reality of our society, our parents and our ancestors. To follow the voice which summons one on their authentic path demands that the individual be 'set apart from the others'. As Jung reminds us: 'Creative life always stands outside convention'. Vocation demands we risk being outside of convention, in touch with our own need for individuation. Vocations do not come with job descriptions, opportunities for promotion or a guaranteed income. No doubt work and career are an aspect of vocation, but we often confuse this deeper longing for individuation and self-fulfillment with a literal job. Individuation *is* a job, it *is* a task; it *is* the 'opus' of one's life. Therefore this vocational task continuously unfolds throughout the lifetime and its success depends on our ability to be separate from the 'herd'<sup>5</sup>.

Work and soul are linked together, as the etymology of our language attests. The words we use to refer to career, work or trade all refer to a calling, a path in life reminding us of an archaic and archetypal urge to fulfill our spiritual needs through a vocation. The connection between our profession, our life work and our religious needs is an ancient part of us all. Vocation is an aspect of our fate, an integral part of our character, which seeks expression. The very roots of the words we use for this arena of our lives are embedded in a sacred and divine origin. Hence the feelings often associated with the urge to pursue our true vocation feel numinous and overwhelming. After the Industrial Revolution, which reshaped the sphere of work, our usage of these words changed. Work became something outside of us, devoid of soul and disengaged from the spiritual. When we become disconnected from the soul's intention and are no longer occupied with a meaningful path in life, the life force is depleted, and we feel direction-less, disorientated, cut off from the well springs, which renew and revitalise the self.

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<sup>5</sup> Quotes are from C.G. Jung, *The Development of the Personality* (Volume 17 of the Collected Works), translated by RFC Hull, Routledge & Kegan Paul (London: 1954), Para. 299 – 305.

To amplify the connection between work and soul let's examine the words associated with profession, which have a sacred origin. Note your astrological considerations when reflecting on the deeper meaning of these words. An astrology that respects soul can be highly constructive in addressing the loss of the sacred in work and aid in re-visioning and redeeming aspects of the self seeking expression in the everyday of work.

## THE ETYMOLOGY OF VOCATION

*"The original meaning of "to have a vocation" is "to be addressed by a voice"<sup>6</sup>.*

- C.G. Jung

**Profession** is from the Latin meaning to declare aloud or in public, to profess one's vows. Inherent in the word is the act of making a vow to the world. Its earliest form referred to the vow made by individuals entering religious orders. Later the word came to mean an occupation, which required a professed skill or qualified training, which is its contemporary meaning.

A profession is our declaration to the world, our vow of intention. Today we mistake qualifications, degrees, networking and supervised experience for professionalism. Professionalism has become quantified and regulated and projected onto external accomplishments. Hence we become disheartened when the pursuit of degrees, or joining a prestigious and elite organisation does not satisfy a deeper yearning. In this sense, Saturn, the Midheaven and the 10<sup>th</sup> house of the horoscope are constructive symbols for vows we may need to take in the world. Gathered around the archetype of both Saturn and the MC are the complexes regarding our place and contribution to the world, as well as the urge to accomplish and perform well. Saturn reveals the urge to work hard to achieve what is integral to us. It is an inborn wisdom that understands this will unfold through time with perseverance and dedication. Over time the internal connection with our own authority is forged bolstering the determination to follow our own laws. When this archetype becomes projected onto external authoritative standards (status, degrees, financial rewards) the risk of losing integrity and an inner connection to the wisdom of one's own authority is at risk.

**Vocation** is from the Latin *vocare*, to call, and in early English this referred to a spiritual calling. The root *voca* refers to the voice and reminds us of the quest to find a voice in the world. In contemporary terms we can imagine vocation as the calling to one's authentic role in the world. It is a calling from deep inside the self, an internal voice. The language of the soul speaks through images and feelings, not with literal words. Hence this inner voice, this calling, is often felt as a yearning to fulfil one's self creatively. The language of images needs to be engaged with, not deciphered. A vocation is not a literal pathway already existing in the world, but rather something that is shaped over the course of our lives as we come to know ourselves. Vocation is the calling to attend to soul in the world, not a literal mission. When inflated this mission can become zealous and mis-guided. The call to vocation

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Para. 301.

is often accompanied by potent developments in the horoscope, namely transits of the outer planets, Saturn, Chiron or the Nodes to angles or inner planets.

*Career* is from the French meaning racecourse or a road for vehicles. In Latin it refers to a carriageway from the Latin *carrum* meaning cart (car). It implies a runway or racecourse, and later referred to a run, usually at full speed or to rush wildly, hence career off its course. Its connection to occupation did not appear in English until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Our career is the course of our life. It is the pathway we follow through the transitions and stages of our lives and like a course it is never-ending. Hence 'career' reminds us of the multi-dimensional needs on the path of our life, and how often a career may be the focal point for the journey through life. Astrologically career implies that the gestalt of the whole chart is important to consider since it suggests a fuller process of self-actualization. However it is apparent how the MC and the course of one's career became aligned. Concentrating on the houses will help us differentiate the different courses or runways of our lives, and which territories and spheres may be more prominent or demand a featured role on the path.

*Employment* is from the French, meaning to devote or to apply. Employment implies being applied to a purpose, to be involved, engaged and to be connected. Here we are reminded of the need for intensity, application, passion and Eros in our work; work which engages our mind and body. When we are employed we are focused and centered. Without the connection or engagement with soul, the mind wanders and is anchor-less. A vocational analysis needs to ascertain areas, which employ the individual's interest and focus, as well as engaging with one's creativity and life force. In an astrological sense we need to be alerted to areas of the chart, which are prominent (angular planets, planets in high focus, strongly aspected planets etc.) as well as the aspects of creativity in the horoscope.

Before 1325 *Occupation* was the act of holding or possessing land or goods, taking possession in order to occupy. In terms of vocation this is akin to occupying a place in the world or taking possession of a business. Our occupation is the place where we are occupied, either by choice or by 'fate'. In a sense the word also refers to being taken or seized which often we feel when we are not 'occupied' or involved with our job. To be seized could also suggest being carried away with our job, being fulfilled and focused in what we do.

Sometimes we may feel we have drifted into our work, and it now occupies our time and space, rather than us being occupied with it. When this occurs, the central focus for our occupation is outside us, rather than centered internally. Thomas Moore succinctly expressed it this way: 'Most people tell fate-filled stories of how they happen to be in their current "occupation." These stories tell how the work came to occupy them, to take residence. Work is a vocation: we are called to it. But we may also be loved by our work. It can excite us, comfort us, and make us feel fulfilled, just as a lover can. Soul and the erotic are always together. If our work doesn't have an erotic tone to it, then probably it lacks soul as well.'<sup>7</sup> To be occupied is a passion, which we seek through our work. To be occupied with our work is to be fulfilled by

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*, Harper Perennial (New York: 1992), p.182.

it. It is an aspect of our fate and as such exerts a powerful urge to be known. Being 'unoccupied' suggests we are not being guided by the *daimon* of our vocation. Astrologically we are alerted to the necessity to take account of the intense, creative and erotic aspects of the chart when analyzing the vocation.

*Trade* refers to a path, track or course of action (i.e. footsteps along a track). The sense of one's habitual business developed from the meaning of a way, a course or a manner of life. A trade was one's path through life. Later 'trade' became associated with the traffic of commerce, trading as in buying and selling items of value, like shares and commodities. In a contemporary sense work has become a trade for monetary reward. Without a soulful connection to one's life course one's trade cannot be satisfied without a meaningful exchange of resources.

Whether we have a trade, or trade as our career, the earlier root of the word reminds us of our path in life. Many vocations are a trade, as in trading our services or expertise; this is our way, our trade, and our course in life. Therefore it is important to remember what we are capable of sharing and trading. Astrologically we may be drawn to the parts of the horoscope that refer to exchange, like the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> houses or the dynamic polarity of ♀-♁.

The earliest root of the word *Livelihood* is also linked to a course of life through 'making a living'. This suggests the souls' quest to bring life into the world and enliven the world through our contributions. Today making a 'living' often refers to a wage rather than finding the connection to life through what we do with our lives. In a contemporary sense this is one's 'lifestyle', the urge to integrate work with all aspects of one's life.

Etymology reminds us of the deeper urges to fulfil our self through vocation. These deeper yearnings are implied beneath the client's questions about his or her career. Vocation and the urge to ensoul the world through our work is an archaic, yet potent force, which subtly demands to be part of our choices made on the career path. As astrological counselors in an age when instability in the career sector is escalating it is helpful to remember the astrological blueprint helps us to consider not only the finite images of a vocation but the infinite ones as well. The horoscope reveals more than a job description. It offers us a reflective model to address the soul's longing to be fulfilled in the world.

## A CONSIDERED VOCATION

*'Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.'*<sup>8</sup>

*-Robert Frost*

Astrological consideration of a vocation needs to be placed in the context of the individual's life cycle. Adolescents will greatly benefit from a traditional

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<sup>8</sup> "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost from *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston (New York, NY: 1969), p. 105.

examination of the vocational patterns in the horoscope to help confirm and inspire their career plans. Many of my clients have brought their adolescent children for an appointment, specifically to address the vocational strengths of the horoscope in order to help them choose subjects for their final years of high school or plan for further tertiary study. However for our adult clients, especially those on the verge of mid-life (36+), the urge to find meaning and purpose through vocation is generally more the issue. Here we need to draw on the many resources in the horoscope to help articulate what paths into the world nurture the soul best.

Fulfillment in the world is more a product of who we are, not what we do. The vocational nature implies a path of individuation, a road 'less traveled by', perhaps a road still under construction. A client's anxiety about their direction is often persuasive enough for us to delineate careers and jobs rather than exploring the larger question of vocation, which underlies their uncertainty. From a wider perspective a vocational analysis of the horoscope needs to address the spiritual implications of the individual's path in the world to help bridge the connection between their calling and the outer world.

## ASTROLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Saturn (and ♄), the 10<sup>th</sup> house 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.
- Jupiter and its derivatives (the 9<sup>th</sup> house and ♃) symbolise the spiritual quest in the world and the inspiration to ensoul our lives. Jupiter symbolises the ability to extend ourselves beyond an inherited or socially limiting framework
- The 'vocational' houses, often referred to as the houses of 'substance' 2, 6 & 10, are the spheres where we locate our 'substance': the resources, skills 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 second house and the sign that inspires it (♊) symbolise the gifts and talents given by the gods, our innate assets and the value we give them. The 2<sup>nd</sup> house, the sign on the cusp, its ruler and planets in the house indicate how to naturally apply our resources and values. This is the area that tells us what innate resources are valuable to trade. In a soulful sense the 2<sup>nd</sup> house may describe how we are able to 'trade' on our resources and assets. The sixth house and its derivate (♍) honour the poetics of an everyday life. The 6<sup>th</sup> house, the sign on the cusp and its ruler and planets 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 which when employed help to achieve satisfaction and well being. The 10<sup>th</sup> house and ♄ are the goal posts in the world, the public sphere where we strive for authority over the course of our lives and in doing so find soul in the world.
- The angles of the horoscope mark the directions on the course of our lives. The Ascendant and its ruler 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 it describes 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 symbolise 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 a vocation. When one of the four angles is transited by an outer planet (including Saturn and Chiron) an encounter with one's direction and life course, hence vocation is implied.

- The axis of the Moon's Nodes is intimately connected to the individual's path in life. The South Node may point towards an area where we are called to disseminate our instinctual talents or gifts, while the North Node may symbolise 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, which seek manifestation in an individual's life. The transits of the Nodal Axis also illuminate the life path.
- The course of one's life is never smooth and therefore it is important to consider the major aspects and aspect patterns of the horoscope, especially if the outer planets are in a prominent angle to an inner planet. These energetic complexes will seek expression throughout the course of one's life and are often a central theme of the life. Integrating these complex aspects into the vocation is an important consideration. The major themes of the chart need to be considered for how they could be effectively integrated into a 'lifestyle'. When these patterns are transited by the outer planets the individual is called to experience a greater aspect of themselves. Therefore these periods are significant vocational times, wake up calls on the path of individuation.
- The inner planets of course will seek expression through our vocation. These are important to consider. The Sun & Moon are core symbols of the self and are integral to who we are. Since the vocation is part of who we are these luminaries will play a prominent role. This is also expressed through their progression. The progressed Moon is the vessel, which holds *memoria*, the feeling memory, emotional responses, and instincts. The vocation is intuitively shaped as it progresses through the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 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. Venus is the archetype, which supports the sense of value and self-esteem as well as describes what we like to do, what we appreciate and what can occupy us. Mars is the principle of desire and what we urge to pursue and 'go for'. Both Venus and Mars are erotic in their urge to create life, potent archetypes for a vocation, which occupies and engages us. In essence Venus and Mars vocationally helps us to relate to our vocation and to experience it as a life-giving aspect of our life. By progression these planets also contribute to the engagement with a fulfilling vocation.
- 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. Wherever Neptune is in the horoscope we seek the divine and yearn to be creative and soulful. The 'opus' is to integrate these longings into the course of one's life. To be creative engages us in the calling to know ourselves and step beyond the constraints of convention into an 'other' world.
- The houses of the horoscope are important to consider in a vocational analysis as each house is an area of our life we need to occupy at different times. One of the ways to begin this analysis is to group them into trinities: the houses of Life (1,5,9), the houses of

Substance (2,6,10), the houses of Relationship (3,7,11) and the houses of Endings (4,8,12). A majority of planets in one of these trinities will seek expression through the vocation in its particular way. Consider the planetary emphasis by hemispheres of the horoscope, i.e. an Eastern or Western emphasis, the majority of planets above or below the horizon. Is there any quadrant of the horoscope, which is highlighted? We have already considered the houses of substance but also make note of the following. The 5<sup>th</sup> house illustrates the urge to create. As a house of creation its also suggests recreation and procreation, the need to be employed in the creativity of the self. The 8<sup>th</sup> house is an area where we trade our resources with others in an equal exchange. As an area, which demands intimacy and trust, it suggests where we share on the deepest levels. The 10<sup>th</sup> house has been emphasized so consider its polarity, the 4<sup>th</sup> house, which suggests our deepest security needs. Lifestyle and vocational satisfaction suggests balancing the needs of the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> polarity.