

Reaching Your Verdict

A vocational guide to discerning whether or not to study law and enter the legal field

This paper addresses one of the most significant, yet unappreciated, issues that the legal profession currently faces: having the right people, who are called to the law, enter the profession, and serving to guide its future.

During my time as a unit co-ordinator of a large first year business law unit, I have been approached by more than a few confused and anguished students, who desperately wanted some advice on whether they should study law and enter the legal field. Imparting to them my own experience of the law, and the lessons that I have learned along the way, my hope was that by sharing my story, they could relate to it in a way that empowered them to write their own story in the most authentic terms, whether that involved the law or not. The sections of this paper have been crafted to respond to the primary concerns that these students presented me with. For some, the problem related to a parent/s who were directing them towards the law, when they were not sure that a career in the law is what they wanted. For others, it was wanting to do something that paid well and provided upward mobility, and whether being a lawyer could deliver that. Across the range of concerns that were presented, I had observed that the discussion always reverted back to the pivotal question that I asked of the student: *Do you have a calling to the law?*

The benefits conferred by this paper are not exclusively reserved for this group of business students however, and its offerings will be equally useful to law students who are not yet sure if a career in the law is for them. I have also received feedback from practicing lawyers that the themes discussed here have been salient for them in reflecting upon their own journeys, and helpful in presenting them with considerations to guide their future. My ability to write to the issues raised in this paper has been born of my own experiences in studying and practicing law, working within a law school for a number of years, and having engaged with members of the profession on a frequent basis. Very recently, I completed a PhD study that explored the role of a lived calling in driving leadership behaviour. The findings of this study, which were established by data gathered from a range of professionals (including a number of lawyers), also inform the perspectives put forward in this paper, and endow them with the rigour of qualitative research. Being able to occupy these different vantage points has presented me with the opportunity to provide a novel and valuable contribution to the extant literature, particularly as it concerns the intersection of a lived calling/vocation with the legal profession in Australia.

The truth is I chose to study law for reasons that are best described as dubious. At the time I made the decision to study law, good opportunities for full-time work in the area of my just completed university degree were scarce. Troubled by this inability to secure a position in a timely manner, my focus shifted to continuing with study. In deciding what to study next, the prospects of employability became a dominant factor. Based on these considerations, I chose law. By that time my mother had been working in the law for a number of years, and had many contacts in the profession whom I was sure I could draw on to secure a position. I also had studied some law units as a part of my previous degree, and I had enjoyed learning about what the law stood for, and how it seemed to come alive through the interesting court cases that were discussed in class. But could I actually immerse myself fully in the law and complete a law degree? I wasn't sure, but I wanted to find out. From this perspective, I chose the law because it presented a challenge to what I saw myself as capable of achieving at the time. Lastly, but not insignificantly, I must also admit that I was motivated to enter law out of ego. In the eyes of the world, the law is a high status profession which presents a lot of perks and opportunities for advancement. Such a lure is attractive to most of us, and perhaps fresh from the failure of not being able to secure work in the field that I was passionate about, I was more vulnerable to this lure than I otherwise would have been.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, and while I don't regret the decision that I made to study law, I believe that if I had had the opportunity to read a paper like this prior to choosing whether to do law or not, I would have experienced much more clarity and peace of mind because I would have been better informed to make a decision for the right reasons, that is for reasons that were authentic to me. What many of the students who come to see me about their career crisis have in common is that their reasons for considering the law as a career are superficial and externally focused. Not oriented towards the fulfilment of a genuine and meaningful calling, it is these questionable motivations that I will discuss in the following pages, along with the aspects of the industry that are not conducive to the living of one's calling in the law. Melican et al. put forward that law students need to be more informed about the realities of the legal profession, and I concur with this assertion.¹ Needing to present a balanced view of what studying the law and working in the legal field entails from a vocational standpoint, I will also highlight the positive aspects and benefits which flow when who one is and what they are called to do is aligned with

¹ Paul Melican; Alex Bell-Rowe; Albert Patajo; Hannah McDonald, 'The law and the legal profession in the next decade: The student's perspective' (2016) 90(6) *Australian Law Journal* 434

the law. For the purposes of this paper, a calling is defined as a consuming, meaningful passion that people experience toward a domain that is consistently expressed in their daily lives.²

Persian sage Rumi once commented that, “*If you are here unfaithfully with us, you’re causing terrible damage*”.³ When he uses the term ‘unfaithfully’, I think what Rumi is referring to is living in a way that betrays our true calling, which any of us can easily slip into if we do not listen to and honour our inner spirit and its purpose for our life. Allowing ourselves to be guided by this higher purpose, we gain greater clarity around our motivations for acting, and are better able to discern when we are being tempted to do things for the wrong reasons. With this enhanced awareness, the burden of career decision making is lightened, and we can position ourselves to utilise the best opportunities for expressing the fullness of who we are in our work. Finding this fit will facilitate our success in this important realm of life, and it is my hope that this paper will assist those who are experiencing this career tension, to actualise their true calling, whether that involves the law or not.

According to Earl Warren, former Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, “*It is the spirit and not the form of law that keeps justice alive*”.⁴ So while we might look at the courts, the legislative arm of government and the police force as driving forces of justice in society, Warren is challenging the superficial nature of this observation. The core of any institution will always be the people who work within it, and for that institution to thrive and continue to do good things, the spirit of those people has to be invested and engaged in their work. Without the spirit infusing the practice of law with purpose, meaning, and guiding its development into the future, the profession will ultimately suffer, as will those working within it who are forsaking their calling. What the world needs and deserves are lawyers who are engaged in the work with the fullness of their spirit because they genuinely care about justice, serving the community, and contributing to the creation of a more civilised world. If you are one of these people who have this calling, then more power to you, and as a society, we will be fortunate to have you as a member of the profession. If you don’t have this calling to the law then, to be candid, you should be directing your time and energy towards something else. Believe me when I state this with your best interests in mind, and as you proceed through these pages, it should become clear to you where

² L. Christian Duperouzel, *The role of a lived calling in driving the leadership accomplishment of a virtuous purpose* (Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, Curtin University, 2016) 13-14

³ Parker J. Palmer, *An undivided life: Seeking wholeness in ourselves, our work, and our world* (Sounds True, 2009)

⁴ Earl Warren, 'The law and the future' in Henry M. Christman (ed), *The public papers of Chief Justice Earl Warren* (Greenwood Press, 1974) 60; See also Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England, Book 3 Chapter 27, when he writes that "Equity is the soul and spirit of all law. In this, equity is synonymous to justice."

my heart is, in advocating for you to do something else if your calling is not in alignment with the law.

So, are you called to work in the law? In the following sections, I will explore the different motivations that one may have for entering the law, and shine light on the aspects of the profession that one should be acquainted with before making the decision to enter it.

Family Influence

In my experience, a common reason for people to enter the law is because one of their parents is a lawyer, or someone in their family/social circle is a lawyer, who at one time or another has given them guidance about their career options. Having this intimate exposure to the profession, either in the home or in our immediate environment over a period of years, it is understandable that it will make a strong imprint that may predispose us to taking a similar path, particularly when we are unsure about what our own path is. In the absence of this internal clarity about where we want to go, we are more receptive to allowing others to direct a path for us. Not wanting to travel down a road that we are not sure leads to anywhere, we find solace in taking a road that another has walked before us. We might even say to ourselves, “things worked out well for them”, or, “I wouldn’t mind enjoying some of what they have”, and our mentality then becomes less about thriving in our element, and more about finding and maintaining a comfortable existence, with some vague hopes that if we can enjoy some pleasures along the way, then it will all be worthwhile. The sad truth though is that taking this beaten and inauthentic path won’t make us happy or fulfilled because those treasures are reserved only for those who have the courage to travel down the unique path that is theirs to walk.⁵

This motivation to follow in our mother or father’s footsteps is suspect because it is often centred in a desire for parental approval,⁶ or may be the result of implicit or overt pressure by a parent to carry on a tradition or familial line in a particular field. The latter scenario may be very difficult for a young adult to deal with, particularly if the parent in some way withholds love, acceptance or support, if their desires for their children are not satisfied. Ultimately however, none of us is responsible for fulfilling the dreams, broken or otherwise, of those who have cared for us growing up. Parents who engage in this manipulative behaviour risk damaging the

⁵ Wayne W. Dyer, *The shift: Taking your life from ambition to meaning* (Hay House, 2010)

⁶ Nell I. Penick & David A. Jepsen, 'Family functioning and adolescent career development' (1992) 40(3) *Career Development Quarterly* 208; Eric B. Middleton & Teri A. Loughead, 'Parental influence on career development: An integrative framework for adolescent career counseling' (1993) 19(3) *Journal of Career Development* 161

relationship that they have with their children,⁷ and they would do well to reconsider their position, and learn from the wisdom of poet Khalil Gibran, when he wrote that:

*Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.⁸*

Just because our parents are involved in some field of work, this doesn't necessarily mean that we should be. Despite being their offspring, we often won't have the same traits, talents or passions that they do. This is perfectly natural, and we shouldn't indulge feelings of frustration or guilt about not 'measuring up' to our parents' abilities or expectations. The primary relationship that one has in receiving and manifesting their calling, is with the source of that calling, whether it be labelled as spirit, God, the universe or source energy.⁹ What we then need to do is nurture this relationship, which necessitates individuating from our parents, and stepping out on our own to make the pivotal decisions that life invariably presents us with. Such is the path of a lived calling, on which our maturity as human beings is forged.

Status Seeking

One of the more prominent reasons that someone might choose to enter the law is that it is culturally regarded as a high status profession. This perception has been largely driven by popular television shows, such as *L.A. Law*, *Ally McBeal*, and more recently *Suits*, which present the law in a very seductive way. In these shows we see an array of intelligent, attractive, well-dressed and well-paid lawyers who work in plush buildings, and have endless fun drinking and socialising when their work is done (unlike medical doctors, the other prominent high status profession, that television tends to present less glamorously i.e. on call around the clock, dealing

⁷ Eun-Young Kim, 'Career choice among second-generation Korean-Americans: Reflections of a cultural model of success' (1993) 24(3) *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 224

⁸ Khalil Gibran, *The prophet* (Wordsworth Editions, 1996) 8

⁹ Duperouzel, above n 2, 183

with death and other difficult circumstances, and having to wear scrubs while working). Playing their own part in propagating this alluring perception is the media, which implicitly portrays those who work within the legal system as influential agents who have the ability to right the wrongs in society, around which so many of their stories revolve.

Presented with this persuasive perception, it is easy to understand how a person might start to buy into the idea of becoming a lawyer. I think that most of us could admit that if presented with a choice, we would rather be a member of the haves rather than the have nots, if being a member of the former group meant that we would be held up, respected and treated more favourably by others. The reality is that the need for approval is a strong driver of our actions, particularly for those who live from their ego. This ego, as defined in my research, is used to mean the false self or surface identity that has been built on the transient aspects of our physical existence, for example, our affiliations, how we appear to others, the work that we do, how much money we make, and the other material things that we possess.¹⁰

Feeling the pressure to conform to external expectations of success, without having a true understanding of what success means for us, we will move by default to achieve success in the way that the world defines it, that is through material accumulation and prominent societal positioning. Whilst these symbols of worldly success may seem highly desirable at the level of ego, at the deeper level of our spirit, they are unwanted if the risk is that we will forsake its calling for a superficial lifestyle. What our spirit has the wisdom to recognise is the damage that results when we choose to live an inauthentic life. This damage, to both our being and the state of the world, is only amplified when what we believed to be real turns out to be illusory.

Here, my mind turns back to conversations that I had with some of my classmates in law school, during which they would say that they wanted to work in one of the big city firms because of the money they would earn, and the Friday afternoon drinks they would enjoy along the way to one day becoming a partner. Focusing on these lofty but narrow ends, they seemed unconcerned with the quality of the journey to get there, and blissfully unaware of the compromises that they would have to make to reach their 'goals'. Little did they know that when they finally reached that big firm, they wouldn't have the available time to spend the money they were making during the long hours they were chained to their desk, or that in time, they would come to dislike many of the work colleagues that they had wanted to ingratiate themselves with at those Friday night drinks. When I see some of these same classmates now, I am not surprised to hear that some no

¹⁰ Ibid 193-194; Wayne W. Dyer, *Your sacred self: Making the decision to be free* (HarperCollins Publishers 1995) 163

longer work at these firms, while others have become very disillusioned by the reality of their experience being very different from their initial expectations.

Let me be clear, I do not have anything against people working in big firms, and I clearly recognise that they have their place in the legal milieu, but from personal experience these firms are some of the prime culprits in marketing themselves to appeal to this notion of worldly success, to get graduates in the door, and then under delivering on claims concerning work-life balance, an enjoyable working environment, and working in accordance with the firm's stated values. As psychotherapist and former corporate lawyer Will Meyerhofer states:

It's pretty clear that firms don't care about lawyer happiness. Frankly, there are plenty more lawyers out there, you can grind one up and spit it out and another lines up...I think they've created a world where everyone from the junior associates to the senior partners are making a tradeoff - money in exchange for an unhealthy lifestyle - and it's kind of tragic.¹¹

Whilst I believe that money is an important aspect of living a good life, I don't for a minute think that making it, or working to accumulate status symbols, should be prioritised above living our calling, and finding the meaning and fulfilment which that path entails. Who one is and the unique contribution that they have to offer the world in the present, is infinitely more important and worthwhile in its expression, than whatever material possessions or titles they might strive to achieve in the future. Unlike status symbols and material possessions which exist beyond us and therefore can come and go from our lives, our ability to live our calling in the here and now cannot be taken away from us. The enduring nature of this truth teaches us what is really to be valued on this journey that we are on. No one at our funeral will care if we owned a mansion and a Mercedes, and the real questions to be asked at that time will be, *did we show up as our true self?, and, did we serve the purpose we were created to fulfil?*

Destination Unknown

One of the interesting things that I observed from the findings of my research was that out of the subset of lawyers that I interviewed, almost all of them decided to study law because they didn't know what else they wanted to do.¹² Feeling the need to continue their study beyond high school, but not knowing exactly what they wanted to do with their life, they effectively settled on the law.

¹¹ Melissa Maleske, 'How to stop hating your biglaw life' (2015)

<<http://www.law360.com/articles/680532/how-to-stop-hating-your-biglaw-life>>

¹² Duperouzel, above n 2, 114-180

Why would they do this? I think that unfortunately there is a lot of pressure on young adults to jump straight into something once their high school days are done. At that age of 17-18, we naturally feel quite restless, and think that we should be doing something to move ourselves forward so that we can make our mark on the world. The fact that our parents probably think along the same lines, and the broader societal perspective that we should be seen to be doing something with our time, rather than being idle, only adds to the pressure that we may feel.

But contrary to the societal notion that busy is better, I believe that if one is unclear about what path they want to pursue during a transition phase, the best course of action (or perhaps non-action) is to take time out and embrace solitude, to find out not only what they want, but more importantly, who they are. Taking this time out may involve travelling, trying their hand at several different things, or mixing in new social circles. The opportunity here is that with this break in routine or from set ways of thinking, will come the space from which clarity of direction and purpose can emerge. In conjunction with the practice of contemplative solitude, the utilisation of meditation and journaling can be valuable at these times because they assist in reconnecting us to our spirit and the calling which emerges from it. Vocational counsellors could also be engaged to assist with this process of discernment, as quite often we are so immersed in our life experience that we don't have the perspective or oversight to relate who we are with the details of that experience, in a way that can facilitate self-learning and guidance.

What one wants to avoid here is the making of rash decisions that are based on superficial considerations, for example, choosing to study something because their friends are studying the same thing, or because a field is currently in vogue. When we are consciously responding to what emerges from our contemplative exploration, rather than reacting to the chaotic movement in our environment, we are authentically empowered, and much more likely to choose a path that is right for us. Whether we are 17 or 70, and looking to find what our purpose is, this is sound advice. What my experience and research has taught me is that we become successful in the process of living our calling, and this journey leads inward, not outward as those who have settled for more superficial notions of success would have us believe.

The world is filled with people who are unconsciously participating in the societal rat race because they never took the time to stop and engage in the exploratory processes that I have described above. Sadly, these people may think that they know what they want, but they really have no meaningful understanding of where they are headed, or why they are headed in that direction. Their fate is not one that I wish for anybody. Nor is it something that we need to endure because that is what the status quo considers normal. The mediocre life of surviving in

the societal rat race is paltry, when compared to the opportunity that we have to thrive in our element, which is what living our calling is all about.

Just Because You Can, Doesn't Mean That You Should

This section has to do with aligning one's innate abilities and strengths with their calling. Just because we are naturally talented at something, or possess the intelligence to take something on and excel at it, doesn't necessarily mean that we are called to do that thing. Each of us possesses a range of capacities that can be applied across different disciplines to achieve fruitful outcomes. People skills, for example, can facilitate a high level of performance in sales, journalism and teaching. But whether the person who possesses these people skills has a calling to any of those particular professions, will be determined by many characteristics that extend beyond the mere possession of the aptitude itself. The value of having an awareness of our innate abilities and strengths should not be underscored however, as there is strong evidence from my research to suggest that our natural gifts can offer useful insights about our calling, or the domain where it can be expressed.¹³

What are your natural gifts and abilities? If you have not already done so, it is worth taking the time to engage in an honest self-assessment. If you find it hard to look at yourself objectively and identify these gifts or areas of strength, you might want to ask someone who knows you well, such as a parent or mentor, for their input. Trusted colleagues, who you work with on a frequent basis, can also be valuable sources of feedback here, and can add a professional dimension to this assessment. As you conduct this self-inventory, try not to exaggerate what your best abilities are, so that you identify the wrong things, but also don't sell yourself short on the things that you are good at. Acknowledge who you are, and the gifts that you have to offer the world. Do this fully and without reservation. As you develop this self-awareness, you will find a clearer direction towards your unique calling.

Do you have an analytical mind, good writing and relational skills, an eye for detail, and the ability to form and articulate a coherent argument? If you have these abilities that are fundamental to the core work of the legal profession, that might indicate that your calling can be found in the law. Before a conclusion can be drawn concerning this however, you also need to assess your feelings about the law, and the prospect of dedicating your life to that work. The law is a consuming domain that is replete with obstacles and challenges, and if you are to find meaningful success in it and enjoy longevity, you need to possess more than just the requisite

¹³ Ibid 117

ability to do the work. You need passion, care and commitment, not just to delivering outcomes for stakeholders, but also for the journey that the work will take you on. This leads me into the next critical feature of a lived calling.

Being in Love

When we live in alignment with our calling, we experience love within, which is also manifested externally, and this love permeates not just our work, but also the relationships with the people we work with. When I say love here, I am not referring to romantic love, but more of a passionate, engaged and caring form of love, which is often referred to as *agape* love.¹⁴

For many people who are living their calling, the area in which this love is most evident is at work. When asked to describe their feelings about their work or vocation, a pervasive response from respondents to my research was, *"I love what I do and have a great passion/enthusiasm for the work"*.¹⁵ As a by-product of working with this love, not only is a higher level of work produced, but the journey in producing it is more fruitful for ourselves and others. When we work with love, we feel more energised, engaged and inspired, and that positively rubs off on the people with whom we work. As the findings of my research show, both of the qualities of passion and enthusiasm are highly infectious, and are effective in sparking passion, enthusiasm, inspiration and engagement in others.

As it pertains to our relationships with others, it was evident from the research data in my study that individuals who are living their calling demonstrate loving behaviours to those people with whom they relate. While these actions were seldom described as showing love to another (there would appear to be some resistance to accepting the word 'love' as a part of the established commercial/business vernacular), these people clearly exhibited this quality in the form of caring for others (not just professionally, but also personally), valuing others and treating them well and fairly, assisting others to grow as people, listening attentively to others and being sensitive to their needs, going above and beyond to help, support and guide others, and being empathetic and compassionate towards them.

How our relationship with ourselves is transformed by aligning with our calling to experience love, is primarily defined by greater levels of self-care, which, as my research shows, can be

¹⁴ Sir John Templeton, *Agape love: A tradition found in eight world religions* (Templeton Foundation Press, 1999)

¹⁵ Duperouzel, above n 2, 248

effected through exercise, healthier eating and spiritual practices, self-acceptance, self-kindness and compassion, and by engaging in personal development/growth.¹⁶

In the absence of love for what we do, the seeds of discontent are planted, and if the negative feelings that this produces are allowed to fester, the effects on our health and wellbeing can be severe. Much has been written about the high rates of stress, anxiety and depression amongst law students¹⁷, lawyers¹⁸ and judges¹⁹, and the self-destructive behaviour that this spawns in the profession, in the form of alcoholism²⁰ and drug abuse.²¹ This self-destructive behaviour, which is engaged in as a form of escapism, is an ineffective means of assuaging the internal turmoil that results when we deny ourselves the experience of love in our work. Before we can treat an ailment effectively, we first need to accurately diagnose what that ailment is. As it concerns the lack of love, enjoyment and engagement in our work, the ailment is being out of alignment with our spirit, and its calling for our life. To treat that malady, we need to bring ourselves back into alignment with our calling, and the love that it brings to our life.

Having stated all of this, when it comes to determining whether you should study law and enter the legal profession, a question that you need to ask yourself is, “are you in love with the law?” To help you answer that question, think about how much being in the law resonates with you. If there is a high level of resonance present, but you are unsure whether you love the law, it might be the case that you need some increased exposure to it to help you make that determination. Complicating matters to some degree is the reality that the love dimension of a calling is not always experienced at first sight. Sometimes it takes time to develop and come into awareness, like a platonic relationship that evolves into something more intimate with time. Only you can make this judgment, but to make it correctly, you will need to be in touch with how you are feeling about the prospect of a life in the law. This again requires an honest self-assessment. If you lack clarity regarding how you are feeling, it could be worth articulating those feelings to

¹⁶ Ibid 247-248

¹⁷ Matthew M. Dammeyer & Narina Nunez, 'Anxiety and depression among law students: Current knowledge and future directions' (1999) 23(1) *Law and Human Behavior* 55; Norm Kelk, *Courting the blues: Attitudes towards depression in Australian law students and lawyers* (Brain & Mind Research Institute, 2009); Kennon M. Sheldon & Lawrence S. Krieger, 'Does legal education have undermining effects on law students? Evaluating changes in motivation, values, and well-being' (2004) 22(2) *Behavioral Sciences & the Law* 261

¹⁸ Joan E. Munteer, 'Depression among lawyers' (2004) 33(1) *The Colorado Lawyer* 35; Colin James, 'Lawyers' wellbeing and professional legal education' (2008) 42(1) *The Law Teacher* 85

¹⁹ Michael D. Kirby, 'Judicial stress – An update' (1997) 71(10) *Australian Law Journal* 774; Michael D. Kirby, 'Judicial stress and judicial bullying' (2013) 87(8) *Australian Law Journal* 516

²⁰ Connie J.A. Beck et al., 'Lawyer distress: Alcohol-related problems and other psychological concerns among a sample of practicing lawyers' (1995) 10(1) *Journal of Law and Health* 1

²¹ Rick B. Allan, 'Alcoholism, drug abuse and lawyers: Are we ready to address the denial' (1997) 31(1) *Creighton Law Review* 265; Laura Rothstein, 'Law students and lawyers with mental health and substance abuse problems: Protecting the public and the individual' (2008) 69(3) *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* 532

someone that you trust, as oftentimes when we verbalise our thoughts and feelings, we are able to see where we stand in a new light. In addition to this, your confidant may pick up on something that you can't because you are too involved in the process of discernment. Be open to this, and if you trust that these confidants have your best interests at heart, then listen to what they have to say. As some of the respondents to my study offered as a piece of advice to living your calling: "*Listen to and follow your heart*".²² This is sage advice, for where our heart is, love is sure to be present.

Security

If you are like I was, thinking that a career in the law provides job security, then you need to think again. Research conducted by Graduate Careers Australia in 2015 shows that one quarter of law graduates could not find work in the industry within four months of graduating, and this figure has trended upwards in recent years.²³ Influential factors which have contributed to the difficulty in finding work in the legal industry include a constricted economic climate, the decision by law firms to dramatically reduce their graduate intake, and a significant oversupply of graduates.²⁴ Exacerbating these challenges is a changing legal environment in which lawyers no longer have a monopoly on the practice of the law.²⁵ As Kane notes, the emergence of new technologies has created a market for legal document technicians, virtual law offices, and legal self-help websites/mobile applications, with the effect that today's lawyers face competition from a variety of non-lawyer sources.²⁶ Perhaps the biggest threat however, is posed by artificial intelligence, which has already been adopted within legal systems in different jurisdictions to perform legal research, provide legal advice, and help judges with setting bail and deciding whether to grant parole in criminal cases.²⁷

²² Duperouzel, above n 2, 173-177

²³ 'GradStats: Employment and salary outcomes of recent higher education graduates' (Graduate Careers Australia, 2015) <http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/GCA_GradStats_2015_FINAL.pdf>

²⁴ Felicity Nelson, 'Law graduate unemployment hits record high' (2015) <<http://www.lawyersweekly.com.au/news/16023-law-graduate-unemployment-hits-record-high>>

²⁵ S. Stuart Clark; Robert Leeder and Nicholas McBride, 'Change drivers and their likely effects: Shifting sands beneath Australian solicitors' (2016) 90(6) *Australian Law Journal* 413

²⁶ Sally Kane, '10 worst things about a career as a lawyer' (2016) <<https://www.thebalance.com/lawyer-career-drawbacks-2164594>>

²⁷ Jason Koebler, 'Is artificial intelligence making lawyers a disappearing profession?' (2017) <<http://www.afr.com/business/legal/is-artificial-intelligence-making-lawyers-a-disappearing-profession-20170418-gvmzbs>>

Coming back to the issue of money, and how it might factor into one's desire for job security, I think it is really important to understand that working as a lawyer will not make you rich. As one of the respondents to my study, a distinguished law professor, advises his students on this point:

You can make a reasonable living in the law, but I always emphasise, if you want to be a millionaire, you're never going to make it as a lawyer. The ordinary lawyer might be comfortably off, but will never be a millionaire. The lawyers who become millionaires are the ones who go away from the law and start to set up some business in something or other else. So don't go into it thinking you're going to, you know, be a millionaire, because you're not. You know, maybe the very high flyers at the Bar might earn a lot of money, but they're exceptions, not the rule.²⁸

While I have observed some firm partners/principals and barristers who earn significant amounts of money in the law, it needs to be appreciated how long and hard they work to earn that money. Where the average lawyer in private practice would work in the range of 55 hours per week (this might be a conservative estimate),²⁹ the hours put in by firm partners/principals and barristers can easily reach 75-80 hours per week.³⁰ That is a lot of time spent at work, and a lot of sacrifices that are made to the other areas of these people's lives.

Please don't misunderstand what I am putting forward here. It is wonderful to devote oneself to a calling, and worth investing significant amounts of time and energy engaging in it, but when we give so much time and energy to something that is not our calling, in an attempt to achieve a level of financial or job security, I do not think that is a wise or healthy thing to do. Burn out, a non-medical term used to describe people who have no fuel left, is all too prevalent in the legal profession,³¹ and if you are one of those people who work themselves to the point of exhaustion, having nothing left to give, not only will you have to take time away from work to recover, but you also run the serious risk of compromising your long term physical and mental health, which is a trade-off that you shouldn't be prepared to make, when compared to the monetary rewards that you receive through your work.

²⁸ L. Christian Duperouzel, 'Interview 10 transcript' (2013) 9

²⁹ Sally Kane, '5 myths regarding the practice of law: Realities of law practice' (2017) <<https://www.thebalance.com/myths-regarding-the-practice-of-law-2164697>>

³⁰ Jennifer Alvey, '80-hour weeks, key to lost productivity and living for lawyers' (2012) <<https://leavinglaw.wordpress.com/2012/04/19/80-hour-weeks-key-to-lost-productivity-and-lost-living-for-lawyers/>>; 'Law firm hours - The real story' (2012) <<http://abovethelaw.com/career-files/law-firm-hours-the-real-story/?rf=1>>

³¹ Kate Mayer Mangan, 'Keeping the fire burning: Stopping lawyer burnout' (2016) <<http://www.lawpracticetoday.org/article/stopping-lawyer-burnout/>>

Earlier, I raised the notion of self-care which was found to characterise individuals who are living their calling. Valuing the journey just as much, or even more than the destination that they are working to reach, these individuals demonstrated the habits of finding balance in their life and keeping a proper perspective, from which they were unwilling to compromise their wellbeing for any external form of perceived security. Finding joy, purpose and meaning in the pursuit of their calling, financial or job security was not seen to be a dominant motivation.³² Relieved of the burden of having to undertake something for that end, they found their journeys to be all the more fulfilling. The greatest security that one can find is in being true to oneself, and doing what one is uniquely created to do. From this, we can reap the richest rewards that life has to offer, without having to chase them in the world, under the guise of 'security seeking'.

Learning and Growth

Two of the great things about the law are that it equips one with a variety of useful skills and allows for continuous learning. Every year, a multitude of court judgements are handed down, and pieces of legislation are created and amended, which impact on how the law operates and applies to client matters. This keeps things interesting and challenging for practitioners, who must stay on top of these changes in their respective areas to best serve their clients. Among the respondents that I interviewed for my research, many of them reported being motivated by the challenges and problem solving opportunities presented by their work, primarily because they had an intrinsic interest in the work that they were engaged in.³³ In the absence of having this intrinsic interest in our work, we will be more inclined to see the problems presented by our work, not as challenges that we desire to overcome, but as burdensome and demotivating obstacles to our progress. While having an interest in something can be symptomatic of having a calling to it, we must bring more to our involvement, in terms of passion, a willingness to engage and commitment, to come into alignment with our true calling. As renowned management scholar Kenneth Blanchard notes, "*There is a difference between interest and commitment*".³⁴ Given this distinction, another question that you need to ask yourself is, "can you commit to the law, and the continuous learning that it requires to excel in the profession?"

You can choose to become a lawyer, but not really give yourself to the process of learning or growing, and even if the law is your calling, you will be betraying it to some extent if you resist learning and growing through your involvement. What my research found was that one of the

³² Duperouzel, above n 2, 120-123

³³ Ibid 120-123

³⁴ Kenneth Blanchard & Steve Gottry, *The on-time, on-target manager: How a "last-minute manager" conquered procrastination* (William Morrow, 2004) 82

core characteristics of people who are living their calling is that they are ‘actualisers’, who strive to evolve and become all that they can be.³⁵ As this intersects with their calling at work, these people actively engage in the process of growth, by continuing to learn more about the intricacies of what their work entails. In this sense, they cultivated intimacy in the relationship that they had with their work, which could be seen to account for many of the intrinsic benefits that they reported deriving from it.

Concerning the development of skills, it makes sense that the more that we give to our work, the more that we will get out of it. The law provides a solid grounding in practical skills such as public speaking, communication and writing, problem solving, project management and dealing with people. Each of these skills, and many others that can be developed in the law, are transferable, and can be put to use in other non-legal roles or careers. I know many people with whom I studied law, who went into practice for a period of time, before moving into some other career that their time and experience as a lawyer equipped them very well for. Other examples of this happening, can be found in the well-known fiction writers (John Grisham, Scott Turow, and Erle Stanley Gardner, the creator of the Perry Mason television character, among them), who honed their writing skills in the legal profession, before stepping out to fulfil their callings as writers.³⁶ So even if it is the case that like me, you only get clarity on your calling after you have studied law and/or practiced for a time, the skills that you have gained up to this point are not going to be lost to you as you move forward. You will just have to find a more authentic outlet for them, in which they can flourish like they never could before, when what you were doing was not aligned with your true calling. This, I experienced personally when I transitioned from the practice of law to my calling as an educator. The skills of public speaking, written communication and dealing with people, which I had developed by studying law and practicing for a time, were able to find fuller expression in a role that was authentically aligned with who I found myself to be.

As I reflect back on my time practicing the law, there is much learning which I take from that. While many of those learnings have been positive, and others have been not so palatable, ultimately that experience taught me that I didn’t want to dedicate myself to that type of work moving forward. So while someone from the outside might look at that time as wasted in relation to what I am doing now, I know that none of these experiences are really wasted if we

³⁵ Duperouzel, above n 2, 152-155

³⁶ Patrick Anderson, 'Lit or miss' (2010) <<https://www.dcbbar.org/bar-resources/publications/washington-lawyer/articles/april-2010-lawyer-author.cfm>>; Geoffrey Gibson, 'Once were lawyers' (1999) 73(1) *Australian Law Journal* 52

commit to learning from them. When it comes to finding our calling, sometimes we come to it through a process of elimination, which is why I advocated earlier for trying a variety of things, and then moving away from those things that don't resonate with us. Coming to our calling is more often than not a zigzagging journey, not one that travels in a straight-line, so instead of resenting or regretting these 'detours', we should learn to be grateful for them as teachers that can facilitate our growth as human beings.

Doing good

One of the primary drives of the human spirit is to make a difference in the world, by improving in some way, the quality of life that we and others experience. As it concerns the law, this would involve working to create a more just and civilised society. As you read this last sentence, how strongly does the prospect of serving this end resonate with you? The stronger that it does, the greater the likelihood that your calling may be found in the law. What my research found was that those respondents who felt called to the law, held justice as a core value, which drove their service in the profession.³⁷

Our values (the core principles which drive our actions) can offer useful clues about where our calling may lie. For example, someone who values creativity will be drawn to endeavours that provide an outlet for that value, whether in the arts, or in a more defined organisational role that allows for creative input. The insights offered by our values, and how they may indicate a calling, are particularly impactful when we are living in alignment with our spirit. Here, my research findings suggest that when a person lives in alignment with their spirit and manifests a calling, the values which drive and guide that calling will be intrinsically good in nature i.e. being honest and authentic, and serving others, for example.³⁸ Where we risk getting into trouble by allowing our values to inform our career choices, is when we are living from our ego, and the values which we hold in its company are artificial and inauthentic i.e. to gain recognition or to make money. This again requires discernment to understand where our values originate from, and we cannot just assume that the values which we hold are reflective of our spirit because often times they are not.

Just because we want to do good, doesn't mean that the law is the right place for us to do it. There are many ways and places in which we can do good, so we need to be careful not to get side-tracked by the idea of doing good, if the domain in which we are seeking to do that doesn't

³⁷ Duperouzel, above n 2, 149-152

³⁸ Ibid 245-246

align with our true self, and its purpose for our life. Wanting to be seen by others as a good person who does good things can cross into the territory of the ego if we are not vigilant, and this is why some people may trumpet their good deeds to others, or be righteous in their condemnation of others 'bad' behaviour, so that they can be looked upon by the world as virtuously superior. Being good and doing good are natural outcomes of living our calling, and blooming where we allow ourselves to be planted. Goodness therefore, is nothing that we need to strive towards, nor seek attention for. Genuine goodness speaks for itself in the deeds which give expression to our spirit. Everything else is just clatter which detracts from the purity of our offering to the world.

Pivotal moments

Many of the respondents to my research recalled instances or pivotal moments that clarified their calling, or provided it with an opportunity to come forth. For some, these pivotal moments were adverse circumstances, such as the loss of a job or a valued relationship; for others, these defining moments were revelatory i.e. realising the social importance of the work that needed to be done, or encountering someone who set them on their true path in life.³⁹ These individuals knew that these particular moments were pivotal because they changed the course of these people's lives, and brought them into alignment with their calling. Not all of these individuals perceived that at the time of these events happening, and it was only with the benefit of hindsight that they could see how significant those events, or people they encountered, were. My hunch is that, if members of this group didn't recognise these moments to be significant at the time of them happening, they probably weren't as attuned to their calling as they could have been. Other respondents, whose responses suggested that they were more attuned to their spirit in these pivotal moments, described an internal shift or the arising of positive feelings such as excitement, joy or purpose, which they intuited to mean that this new path which was opening up for them was the right one to travel down.

What have been the pivotal moments in your life that may have impacted you powerfully, or pointed you in a direction that felt more authentic for you? These moments may have involved you being exposed to the law in some capacity. For example, you might have experienced a situation where someone you care about suffered an injustice that you wanted to play a part in remedying. Encountering proximal circumstances such as these, may play a significant role in uncovering your calling to the law. Alternatively, their happening may have taught you that you

³⁹ Ibid 170-173

can help the affected person in a number of ways without going to law school and playing the role of a lawyer in that situation.

Regardless of the direction that these experiences may prompt us to take, the blessing they provide is that they allow us the opportunity to learn more about who we are, what we deeply value, and ultimately, what purpose we are meant to serve in the world. Our feelings and internal responses to these events will tell us much about what we need to know, so we have to be attentive to our state of being in these moments, and receptive to the promptings of our spirit, if we are to learn what it is trying to teach us, and position ourselves effectively for the next stage of our lived calling journey.

The challenging thing about callings is that they require the responsiveness and discernment of the person who is called, before clarity can be gained. If only it was as easy as getting someone else to do the work, or paying a fortune teller to discover what our calling is. Callings though, don't work that way. As the old adage goes, *'Only those who seek will find'*. Therefore, before we can find what our calling is, we need to accept the responsibility of conducting the search within ourselves, while also being open to cues from the outside world that provide guidance. The practice of reflection can serve a valuable role here, in helping us to draw connections from what our past experiences have presented to us as potential learnings. Looking back over the landscape of our life with an open mind and heart, new meaning can be discovered to bring forth new life. Start first with the question that I have posed above. *What have been the pivotal moments in your life that may have impacted you powerfully, or pointed you in a direction that felt more authentic for you?*

Studying Law v The Practice of Law

Studying law is a very different experience than practicing law. Where a law school environment is centred in learning, and sharpening the skills such as research, writing and mooting that one will need in the profession, the practice of law is where those skills and knowledge are put to use in servicing clients. While there is a certain amount of pressure in law school to meet assessment requirements and achieve good grades, in order to graduate and attract interest from a prospective employer, the pressure and demands that are placed upon lawyers in practice is exponentially higher. In practice, a lawyer's job security is dependent on them billing for a set number of hours worked per day, meeting strict deadlines in the handling of client matters, and being responsive to the needs of their firm's partners and clients. This amounts to long and stress filled days in the office. Add to this, the risk that lawyers routinely face of being sued by

their clients for negligence, if the advice that they provide to their clients is incorrect, and leads these clients to suffer loss.

While these aspects of the work role impact lawyers to different degrees, they are ingrained features in the functioning of the profession, and are unlikely to change any time soon. Although some law firms have reduced the number of hours that their lawyers are expected to bill, and others have introduced more flexible working arrangements, these are the exceptions and not the norm. The dominant motivation of these firms still remains the generation of profit and claiming a greater amount of market share, so if you sign up to work at one of these places, you will need to accept that these imperatives mould the workplace culture of which you are a part, and how your work is expected to be performed.

If you feel called to the law, but are not motivated by this monetary imperative to the same degree, chances are that you will be better suited to working for a more service oriented legal entity, such as a community legal centre or Legal Aid. Each of these options do not generally pay as well as private practice, but working within them can be much more rewarding in other ways, for example, by providing client contact with disadvantaged members of society who genuinely need the service, and more reasonable working conditions which allow for a greater work/life balance. As it pertains to these intrinsic rewards, research conducted by Sheldon and Krieger has shown that even despite their lower income, service job lawyers are happier than money job lawyers.⁴⁰

Another significant difference between studying law and practicing law can be the support structures that are available to facilitate your progress. Typically, the environment of a law school is collegial and supportive, and while there is a competitive element to law students looking to stand out to land their desired job,⁴¹ students do bond with other students, or form study groups to help each other out, and they have ready access to a variety of teaching staff to provide them with feedback, or offer guidance when needed. The practice of law is not always that nurturing or accommodating, particularly in the profit oriented private firms. In this competitive world where the mentality of the ego plays a dominant role in shaping a firm's culture,⁴² it is often

⁴⁰ Kennon M. Sheldon & Lawrence S. Krieger, 'Service job lawyers are happier than money job lawyers, despite their lower income' (2014) 9(3) *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 219

⁴¹ Harrison Barnes, 'Law school is highly competitive: Only the fittest survive' (2017) <<http://www.lawcrossing.com/article/900011280/Law-School-Is-Highly-Competitive-Only-The-Fittest-Survive/>>; Melican; Alex Bell-Rowe; Albert Patajo; Hannah McDonald, above n 1, 434

⁴² David Beech, 'Why partners need to stop putting their income and ego first' (2015) <<http://www.bdlm.com/law-firms-run-as-business-income-ego/>>; Donald C. Langevoort, 'Ego, human behavior, and law' (1995) 81(3) *Virginia Law Review* 853

people who resonate strongly with that mentality who are drawn to work in these firms. This is not to say that you don't encounter some good and service oriented people in this sphere. The problem is that the influence of culture is very strong, and when it is shaped by the focus on making a profit, and competition for advancement is incentivised within these firms, then that will give rise to dysfunctional workplace behaviour. Examples of this have been highlighted by Bagust, Quine and Han, who have reported respectively on the prevalence of lawyers being bullied,⁴³ and feeling isolated and stressed as they go about their work.⁴⁴

For the reasons highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, you need to make the most of opportunities to gauge the fit between who you are and where you might want to work. Clerkships that are offered to law students by many of these legal organisations are a good way for them to experience what life in the law is like, in either the for-profit or not-for-profit/government sectors, although it must be acknowledged that these programs do have their limitations. Presenting only a thin slice of the work to be undertaken, the culture of the organisation, and the people who work within it, the presentation and subsequent experience of these factors can be manipulated to more favourably market the organisation to the student. The experience of clerking at a firm can be, and often is, different from working full-time in that firm, when people will reveal more of who they really are, and the demands of the work are given time to take hold. Therefore, it would be wise to keep your eyes open, and dig below the surface of what you are being told about the firm, to get a better idea of what you want in relation to what they are about, and have to offer you.

If your applications for clerkships are unsuccessful, there is nothing stopping you from seizing the initiative by approaching other firms which do not offer clerkships, and asking them for work experience. As long as you don't expect to be paid for this work, and make clear your desire to offer some mutual benefit to the firm, you will have a chance of being presented with an opportunity. If you have contacts within these firms, do not be afraid to use them, as a personal recommendation from someone who you have a relationship with, can open doors that would have otherwise remained closed to you. Think laterally when it comes to gaining work related experience, and remember that the whole experience of working somewhere for a brief time benefits you just as much as it does the firm, in that it allows you to try the experience out before committing years of your life to the industry.

⁴³ Joanne Bagust, 'The culture of bullying in Australian corporate law firms' (2014) 17(2) *Legal Ethics* 177; Stephanie Quine, 'Bullying 'pandemic' in law firms' (2013) <<https://www.lawyersweekly.com.au/news/11420-bullyingpandemic-in-law-firms>>

⁴⁴ Misa Han, 'Hourly billing causes stress in legal firms' (2015) <<http://www.afr.com/news/hourly-billing-causes-stress-in-legal-firms-20150629-gi0uuw>>

Whether your calling is in the law, or independent of it, the sooner that you can get clarity on your life purpose, the richer your life will be, and the greater amount of time that you can dedicate to something that is meaningful to you. In this paper, I have presented different considerations that can assist you to come into conscious contact with your calling. While these processes of discernment and discovery are testing in the discomfort and bewilderment that they may subject you to, the journey of living your calling is more than worth it. Profiting both yourself, and the world which needs you to fill the function for which you were created, this is what Frederick Buechner acknowledged when he eloquently stated that, *“The place you are called to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet”*.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Carl Frederick Buechner, *Buechner 101: Essays and sermons by Frederick Buechner* (Frederick Buechner Center, 2016) 69