

**PROPHECY, COSMOLOGY AND THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT:
THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY BELIEF IN ASTROLOGY**

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Abstract

Most research indicates that almost 100% of British adults know their birth-sign. Astrology is an accepted part of popular culture and is an essential feature of tabloid newspapers and women's magazines, yet is regarded as a rival or, at worst, a threat, by the mainstream churches. Sceptical secular humanists likewise view it as a potential danger to social order. Sociologists of religion routinely classify it as a cult, religion, new religious movement or New Age belief. Yet, once such assumptions have been aired, the subject is rarely investigated further. If, though, astrology is characterised as New Age, an investigation of its nature may shed light on wider questions, such as whether many Christians are right to see New Age as a competitor in the religious market place. The academic literature on the New Age also generally assumes that New Age is a modern form of millenarianism, without investigating the connection further. If New Age is millenarian and astrology, in turn, is New Age, then astrology's current popularity may be a millenarian phenomenon.

This study sets out to establish the extent and nature of contemporary belief in astrology within the broader context of hostility from Christians and sceptics, but apparent support from New Agers and readers of horoscope columns. It investigates astrology's relationship with millenarianism and New Age culture, and explores the penetration of New Age ideas into twentieth-century astrology. It examines attempts to quantify belief in astrology, discussing the wider question of whether the quantification of belief is even possible. It then uses in-depth interviews and questionnaires to consider the nature of belief in astrology amongst both the general public and astrologers. The thesis concludes that there is no single reliable measure of belief in astrology and no necessary clash between astrology and Christianity. The question of whether astrology's survival in the modern world is an anachronism is considered and it is concluded that it is not. Astrology is part of the matrix of ideas which constitutes popular belief in modern Britain.

Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology

Chapter 1

Introduction

Astrology in the Contemporary world

Astrology occupies a prominent place in contemporary British popular culture. It is considered to be a New Age belief or practice (York 1995), paranormal (Rice 2003: 100) or an 'alternative religion' (Hunt 2003: 171-3), is seen as a potential contributor to the decline of the mainstream churches in Britain (Gill 1999) and is considered worthy of comment by the cosmologist Stephen Hawking (2001: 103). Richard Dawkins, Professor of the Public Understanding Of Science at Oxford University, believes that astrologers should be prosecuted for fraud (1998: 121), while the British television regulatory code prohibits the broadcast of 'horoscopes' except as 'entertainment' or as the subject of 'legitimate inquiry', and forbids it at times when children are likely to be watching television (ITC 2003: 1.10). Yet all women's magazines in the UK carry horoscope columns and, in December and January, both they and the 'tabloid' newspapers publish heavily promoted supplements of forecasts for the coming year. Moreover, press stories on astrology generally create the impression that it is a multimillion pound industry. For example, in August 2003 Robert Matthews (2003: 9) wrote in *The Sunday Telegraph* that,

astrology has grown to be a huge worldwide business...It seems that no sector of society is immune to its attraction. A recent survey found that a third of science students subscribed to some aspects of astrology, while some supposedly hard-headed businessmen now support a thriving market in "financial astrology"...Astrology supplements have been known to increase newspaper circulation figures and papers are prepared to pay huge sums to the most popular stargazers...[who] can earn £600,000 or more a year. A single profitable web site can be worth as much as £50 million.

Although all such quoted figures are given without reliable sources, they tend to be repeated as journalists base subsequent reports on each others' work (see for example Hale 2003). There is, in fact, little in the way of reliable information on astrology's

place in contemporary British culture. This study is a preliminary attempt to rectify this situation.

Background

This study arose in part from my personal experience over the past twenty-five years that much of the public discourse on astrology is dominated by the assumption that astrology is overwhelmingly a matter of belief. Interest in astrology is interpreted as 'belief' and students and practitioners of it are characterised as 'believers'. In the 1990s, when both the Astrological Association of Great Britain and the British organisation, the Association of Professional Astrologers, routinely referred historical and sociological questions from journalists to me, I was frequently asked both about the extent of belief in astrology and for explanations for this belief. The question of my own belief or disbelief in the subject was also often an issue for interviewers and still is, given that I am generally perceived to be a defender of, or advocate for, astrology, a role which I resist. For example, on 18 August 2003 I took part in a number of radio interviews which were part of a wide-ranging media response to the publication of an article in *The Sunday Telegraph* on 17 August (Matthews 2003), reporting on a paper (Dean and Kelly 2003) which purported to show that astrology's claims were false. Although I was introduced on both programmes as an academic, on the London station, Talk Radio, I was asked 'Are you a believer?' and, on the Irish station RTE, I was asked 'Do you believe in it?'. Of the many dozens of radio and television interviews in which I have been involved over the previous decade, I can not remember a single hostile critic of astrology being asked whether they disbelieve. My perception of such questions concerning personal belief is therefore that they are designed to expose bias, the assumption being that the 'believer' can not be trusted to give reliable statements about astrology's nature, role and function. The 'disbeliever', meanwhile, is presumed to be impartial and objective. As David Hufford wrote of religious belief in general, rather than of astrology in particular, 'we know that scholars just aren't supposed to believe

things like that', adding, 'but we have never been taught exactly why' (Hufford 1995: 71).

In response to such media inquiries, I began to investigate the problem for myself. It became clear that the nature of personal belief and the extent of public belief are more complex questions than the journalistic request for precise figures and simple 'yes/no' answers would suggest. This was brought home to me in the mid-1990s when I participated in a discussion on astrology on the British television station, Central Television. In response to questions from the presenter, ninety-nine members of the hundred-strong audience admitted to reading horoscope columns, but only one was prepared to admit to belief in astrology. Clearly, whilst some reports use readership of horoscope columns as an indicator of belief, the vast majority of people who would be so classified resist categorisation as believers, especially in a forum as public as a television studio. The word 'belief' itself would seem to be loaded with additional meaning. It seems apparent, as well, that there is a gulf between practice, in this case the readership of horoscope columns, and belief, the willingness to subscribe to a worldview in which such columns may be taken seriously.

My study will be largely confined to the astrology of the English-speaking world. This is for the simple reason that the general failure of the citizens of the USA and UK to speak languages other than English extends to the world of astrology, with the result that British and American astrologers read each others' work, but that developments from Europe tend only to have an impact in the English-speaking world when they are championed by single individuals (Harvey 1973: 1). For example, while German astrologers in the 1920s and 30s were devising ever more complex forms of interpreting horoscopes via the so-called 'Hamburg School' (Rudolph 1973), British astrologers 'were hardly aware of what was afoot in Leipzig, Munich, Düsseldorf, Hamburg and other centres of Teutonic astrological endeavour' (Howe 1967: 66). The situation is

unchanged. Since it began holding national conferences in 1968 the Astrological Association of Great Britain has held only one conference, in 1992, at which translation facilities were provided, and European speakers are rare; in 2003 only two speakers were from mainland Europe, as opposed to four from the USA, fourteen from the UK and one from Australia; a total of nineteen from the English-speaking world.

The Structure of this Study

The title of this thesis is 'Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement: the extent and nature of contemporary belief in astrology'. The prophecy examined is that which forecasts the coming of the often synonymous periods of the Age of Aquarius and the New Age. The cosmology under examination is that application of astronomy to the measurement and prediction of historical periods, particularly the nineteenth and twentieth-century theosophical revival of a neo-Platonic, teleological cosmos whose character is primarily understood spiritually. The New Age is then examined chiefly as an ideological rather than, say, a sociological, phenomenon. The specific examination of contemporary belief in astrology is then intended to illuminate wider contemporary issues concerning the supposed relationship between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' beliefs within the context of debates on the place of religion in the modern world, particularly Britain. An underlying theme throughout the thesis is a consideration of the role of millenarian thought in the modern west, especially in relation to the popularity and function of astrology.

I have four major concerns in this study.

Firstly whether astrology is a New Age discipline and, if so, what is its relationship with millenarianism?

Secondly whether, if astrology is a New Age discipline, it should be seen as a rival to mainstream Christianity.

Thirdly, if it is a rival to Christianity, whether quantification of belief in astrology may indicate the extent of that rivalry.

Fourthly, whether astrology's continued existence represents the anomalous survival of a pre-modern superstition in the modern world. Is it, as Adorno (1994: 36) claimed, 'basically discordant with today's universal state of enlightenment'?

The thesis is divided into three parts.

Part 1 will consider astrology's potential New Age identity against the background of western millenarianism, the development of the idea of the astrological ages and the question of belief in the Age of Aquarius, together with a consideration of contemporary debates on the nature and origins of the New Age movement itself.

Part 2 will examine two significant developments in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century western astrology which arose out of astrology's engagement with theosophical millenarianism in the 1890s and 1900s. The first such development was the conscious creation of an esoteric astrology, an astrology of the soul, in the 1890s-1900s. By the 1930s this new form of astrology was being integrated with depth psychology, particularly Jungian psychology, to create a psychological astrology, an astrology whose prime focus of attention was the personality rather than - as had been in the case in the nineteenth-century - the environment, life circumstances and the prediction of events. The second development was a sharply increased emphasis on the sun as the principle focus of horoscopic interpretation. By the 1930s this led to the development of the language of the twelve birth signs as a new and potent form of vernacular astrology.

It is this form of astrology on which most contemporary estimates of 'belief' in astrology are based.

Part 3 will contain two sections. The first will summarise the previous literature on the extent of, and reasons for, belief in astrology. The second will report on my own data; this includes interviews with astrologers, questionnaires distributed at astrology conferences, and questionnaires distributed to public groups and designed to reflect on previous research on public attitudes to astrology. My research is therefore divided between the quantitative and qualitative (Bryman 2001) or what Runkel (1990: 1) called 'the method of relative frequencies' and 'the method of specimens'. My purpose is to examine whether previous estimates of 'belief' in astrology are reliable.

Previous Studies

Although astrology is, as has been noted, a subject of considerable journalistic interest, there has been little academic concern with its contemporary cultural nature and function. The English-language literature on the New Age movement includes only one paper devoted to astrology (Feher 1992), while there are a handful of sociological studies which attempt to describe and quantify belief in astrology (Wuthnow 1978; Paulik and Buse 1984; Bauer and Durant 1997). Most critiques of astrology tend to concentrate on the veracity of astrology's claims and assume an *a priori* hostile position in which astrology represents either scientific ignorance (Culver and Ianna 1988; Martens and Trachet 1998) or religious error (Anderson 1988; Morey 1981), with just a few examples of general surveys by sympathetic writers (Parker 1970; Spencer 2000). There is therefore still no wide-ranging work which examines astrology's cultural locus which may be classed as academic or rigorous. As Yinger said of religious studies in 1969, 'we are still at the "natural history" level of research, trying to describe all the wonderful beasts of the jungle' (Yinger 1969: 98). Thirty-four years later this is still the case with the investigation of astrology's place in the modern world.

Methodology

My interest is with astrology's cultural status, rather than with the truth of its claims. As Gaynard observed in a study of young people's belief in the paranormal, 'it is probably of equal interest to ask, for example, why more people *believe* that they have experienced precognition than OBE¹ as it is to question why more people *have* experienced precognition than OBE' (Gaynard 1992: 179). My approach has been influenced by the phenomenological principles first set out in 1913 by Edmund Husserl, who argued that it was essential that all inquiries into any area of human endeavour touching on consciousness paid due respect to the 'I' (Husserl 1972: 7), the individual's subjective experience, rather than attempt to explain it away or reduce it to quantitative measurement. Husserl argued that the task of the phenomenologist was not to judge the phenomena under investigation but rather the "'description" [of]...the realm of essential structures of transcendental subjectivity immediately transparent to the mind'. In other words, the phenomenon - in this case, belief in astrology - may be understood on its own terms rather, say, than as a variety of some other category, such as a form of religion or science.

In view of my focus on the question of whether astrology is a New Age movement, and hence on its relationship with Christianity, I have been influenced by the extension of Husserl's phenomenological approach into the new discipline of the study of religions, and in particular by Ninian Smart. It was Smart who largely defined the discipline's approach as one of 'methodological neutralism' or 'agnosticism' (Smart 1973b: 94, 108), as opposed to the personal religious commitment which, he argued, had once assumed to be a prerequisite of the study of theology (Smart 1973a: 12; 1973b: 4). The phenomenological approach is a useful one in this study precisely because it enables me, as an insider within the field of astrology, to recognise that position and its

attendant value judgements, while pursuing the goal of as neutral as possible an understanding of the contemporary extent and nature of belief in astrology.

The phenomenological approach may be simply defined as one 'in which differing belief systems are examined as perceived in their own terms, rather than by adopting a reductionist stance' (Caird and Law 1982: 153). Thus, my investigation of the question of belief in astrology is descriptive and analytical rather than judgemental, my immediate precedents in this respect being three principal academic works on the New Age; those by York (1995), Heelas (1996) and Hanegraaff (1996).

The study of astrology's cultural identity within such a framework does not in itself suggest that astrology need be necessarily considered either a New Age discipline or a religion, for, as Ninian Smart argued, 'the study of religion is itself strategic to some of the human sciences; it also passes into the study of "non-religious ideologies" without affecting their status' (Smart 1973a: 11). In other words, the phenomenological approach developed in the study of religions may be applied to other disciplines. In addition, any consideration of whether astrology is a religion does not, as Smart continued, have any bearing upon the truth of its claims. Later in this study I have dealt at length with literature produced by hostile critics of astrology, both evangelical Christians and scientific sceptics, much of which focuses on the supposed falsity of astrology claims. In addition, I have attempted to deal with them in as neutral a way as possible by reporting their arguments without judgement.

It is also important from a phenomenological perspective to allow astrologers to speak for themselves and relate their own experience. This is a goal which I have tried to achieve through surveying the literature with an open mind, reporting on claims and assertions without personal judgment, and through semi-structured interviews. On the grounds that such people may have specialized knowledge and experience in the field, I

have therefore conducted the bulk of my fieldwork amongst those active in astrology, particularly attendees at astrology conferences. To use Ninian Smart's adaptation of Husserl's phrase, I am concerned with the astrologer's 'I-picture' (Smart 1973a: 24), the definitions astrologers use for themselves, as opposed to those which may be allocated to them by academics or external critics. As Husserl himself noted (1965: 90-1), the phenomenological study of consciousness is emphatically not the same as the psychological study of consciousness, for the researcher is seeking to observe and describe, not explain in terms of preordained categories. My fieldwork amongst the wider public, meanwhile, is more limited and is intended to cast light on existing research in order to suggest possible models for future research.

In addition, Husserl argued, the phenomenological process should begin with the investigator's reflection on their own 'I' (Husserl 1972: 7), the set of assumptions and biases which they bring to the investigation or in this case, as Smart would say, my own 'I-picture'. At the heart of this process is reflexivity, the ability to reflect on one's own motives and biases which is necessary if one is to avoid the possibility that these will unduly shape one's conclusions. Moreover, as Smart (1973a: 11) argued, reflexivity implies the existence of a dialectical relationship between the student of religion and the object of study, with the beliefs of both the student and the individuals studied liable to change. The existence of such a relationship necessarily challenges what Charlotte Davies has defined as social science's 'implicit assumption that we are investigating something "outside ourselves"', an aspiration which she doubts is possible even in 'hard' sciences such as astronomy and physics, which still, like the arts and humanities, require the researcher to evaluate evidence and reach conclusions which can never be entirely separated from questions of personal conditioning or bias (Davies 1999: 3). Reflexivity, which Davies defines as 'a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference' is, in her opinion, vital to intelligent research, but nevertheless carries potential pitfalls: it may lead to a 'form of self-absorption...in which boundaries

between subject and object disappear [and] the one becomes the other, a process that effectively denies the possibility of social research' (Davies 1999: 4-5). However, following Hufford's distinction between the 'scholarly' and 'personal' voice (Hufford 1995: 57), I have attempted to emphasise the former, observing Davies' opinion that, if the danger of 'self-absorption' is fully acknowledged, then 'genuine reflexive ethnographic research...can be undertaken from a realist perspective' (Davies 1999: 6). Reflexivity, Davies continues, is not a single phenomenon but assumes various forms, affecting the research process at every stage.

While pursuing a scholarly voice, though, I am aware of Kenneth Pike's distinction, first formulated in 1954 (Pike 1971: 5-7; Headland 1990: 15), between the two distinct modes of being, emic and etic. These are derived from the words phonemic, meaning a sound, and phonetic, the word or symbol used to represent that sound (McCutcheon 1999: 15). Pike himself defined an 'emic unit' as a 'physical or mental item treated by insiders as relevant to their system of behaviour' (Pike 1990: 28), as opposed to 'etic' units which are externally imposed or conditioned. Although there is no standard agreement over the two terms' precise definition (Harris 1990), roughly translated 'emic' means insider and 'etic' outsider (Pike 1971: 17; Harris 1990: 51; McCutcheon 1999: 17). However, it would be false to imagine the existence of a simple insider-outsider polarity, in which emic and etic function as mutually exclusive categories, for any individual may be a member of different emic subsystems, while any person in an emic situation is also bound simultaneously to be part of a real, etic, external world that is not, as the extreme reflexive position would hold, merely a personal projection (Pike 1990: 32, 34-5; see also Harris 1990: 48-9). It is important, in order to balance Hufford's personal and scholarly voices, to be able to take both etic and emic positions, a point made convincingly by James Lett (Lett 1990: 135-6). It may therefore be argued that individuals may adopt emic or etic stances at different times and in distinct situations, particularly in relation to a diverse discipline such as astrology. As Hill

wrote of the Church of England, if one defines an insider as a 'member' who shares the group's definitions of its dogma then further questions are suggested: is the member lay or clergy, what is the level of commitment and what is their personal understanding of the official dogma? (Hill 1979: 11). These variables may ultimately render generalisation extremely difficult, if not meaningless. What is important, though, is that, fulfilling Evans-Pritchard's (1967: 61, 79) first condition for the anthropologist, I speak the 'native's' language; I understand the ways in which astrologers communicate. The paradox Smart noted in relation to phenomenological studies is of importance here: they must be value-free in the sense that the phenomenon is not subject to *a priori* judgements and the researcher's own subjective experience must be 'bracketed out', yet such an approach may actually evoke a 'value-rich' appreciation of the meaning of the religion being observed (Smart 1973b: 21).

There is, therefore, the question of the value which I, as an insider, may or may not attach to astrology. As Michael Hill writes in his discussion of approaches to the sociology of religion, 'the more crystallised are the value-systems in the social phenomenon being studied...the more self-conscious becomes the problem of value in the observer' (Hill 1979: 6-7). Hill argued that one does not need to be a member of a group in order to understand it, and was critical of those 'insider' studies, such as those within Christian groups, which adopted the methodologies of social science but regarded the group's doctrine as a given. Yet, as Stark noted, 'the most important factor in creating a truly scientific study of religion' in the late twentieth-century was the entry into the field of 'persons of faith' (Stark: 1999: 54). I realise that, as an emic within astrology as a whole, if not within particular sub-groups, to an etic observer, I may well be characterised as a 'person of faith'. However, my study does not concern the veracity of astrological claims and only touches on the verdicts which have been made on those claims, both for and against, to the extent that they shape the literature on belief. Like

Hanegraaff (1996: 8 n.26) I am investigating emic statements, but with a view to investigating to what extent they correspond with existing etic judgements.

Following Ninian Smart (1973a: 1), it is appropriate to set out certain autobiographical details. I have studied astrology since 1971. Between 1975 and 1984 I earned a proportion of my income by casting horoscopes for clients, from 1980-4 I taught the subject in adult education in London and since 1986 I have been paid to write popular books and features on astrology. I have served on the committees of a number of astrological societies, including a term (1994-9) as President of the Astrological Association of Great Britain. In terms of astrology as a whole, then, I am very much an 'insider' with an 'emic' perspective, and have been so in an institutional sense; that is, in terms of active involvement in societies and teaching, since 1978. However, although I tend to be treated as an insider within any group of astrologers, I may still feel like an outsider in terms of my inner 'emic' identity. I am not in accord with astrologers who read past lives in the birth chart, argue that classical modes of interpretation are superior to modern ones, marry astrology with counselling or routinely examine the horoscopes of their friends and colleagues. In addition, my identity is strongly shaped by involvement in other groups in which astrology may be regarded, from an etic perspective, as either a fringe activity or false and possibly offensive. For example, I have good friends who are materialist, atheists and sceptics, and close family members who are 'born-again' Christians. I myself grew up in a strong Church of England background and have experienced Christianity in different forms. For me, the emic-etic, insider-outsider relationship is therefore not a polarity but a constantly shifting set of ideas and experiences which may vary with time and location. This complexity actually accords with Pike's own view: one can be an etic observer within an emic system, but no two etics will ever interpret the same emic phenomenon in exactly the same way (Pike 1971: 44-48).

However, such is the diversity of opinion within astrology that it may be argued that, if the differences between astrologers en masse are greater than the similarities, the very notion of 'astrology' as a single entity may be, as Steven Sutcliffe has said of the New Age movement (Sutcliffe 2003: 16), no more than an 'etic' formulation useful for outsiders and even for insiders, but with little relevance to the real situation.

While it may not be necessary to take such an extreme position, it is nevertheless the case that, within astrology there are different emic groups who may believe they have little in common with each other. The fundamental disagreement between Lee Lehman, who works from a primarily medieval perspective, and Glenn Perry, whose astrology is heavily based in theosophy and psychotherapy is a case in point (Lehman 2003, Perry 2003b). Thus, while in astrology I may be an insider, there are many groups within astrology in which I feel like an outsider. My own position has always, therefore, been to be supportive of some claims within astrology but critical of others.

My position in this process is simultaneously that of insider and outsider. Clifford Geertz's model may, in this respect, be a useful one. Observing the ontological difficulties that arise from the methodological formulation of polarities such as emic-etic, insider-outsider, and subjective-objective, he cites the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut's differentiation between 'experience-near' and 'experience-distant' concepts, which may be linked by a graduated scale (Geertz 1999: 51). From Geertz's perspective, insiderness and outsidership then become questions of degree which may vary with time, place and mood. And we may all place ourselves on a scale between extreme positions. My relationship with the attitudes and concepts I am studying may therefore be summarised as 'experience-near'.

My perspective on astrology as a single entity is simultaneously emic and etic. Ultimately, in a world in which no perspective exists in isolation from any other, or

from the world around it, any individual is likely to adopt a perspective which may be considered emic and etic at one and the same time. All astrologers, in other words, are at once members both of emic groups and of a society which adopts etic views of what astrology is, does or claims. Their attitudes and behaviour are likely to be complex and contradictory. To look for simple unifying characteristics which can explain 'belief' in astrology may therefore be a project with little chance of success. As far as Smart's (1973a: 11) claim that there is a dialectical relationship in the study of religions between the student and the object of study, my own critique of certain astrological claims is already well known. I have already been critically engaged with the subject matter of this thesis. As an example, I am known to be critical both of the argument that the Age of Aquarius is imminent (Campion 1990) and of what I consider to be poor standards of argument and scholarship in astrology in general (Phillipson 2000: 116).

My personal attitude to astrology is generally pragmatic and based on its usefulness. I regard the psychological models of 'natal' astrology, the practice of casting birth-charts for individuals, as more personally meaningful than any other contemporary equivalent. I have found the application of 'horary' astrology, a divinatory use of astrology to answer precisely timed questions, analogous in its use to the I Ching or tarot, to be remarkable and, within the context of modern cosmology, inexplicable. My long-term interest, though, is in the study of 'mundane' (from the Latin *mundus*, world) astrology, the examination of solar and planetary cycles in relation to historical change.

Recent precedents for the participation of the researcher in the group - participant observation (Bryman 2001:2) - have been provided by Tanya Luhrmann and Susan Greenwood, who followed similar paths through their direct involvement in groups whose primary focus was ritual magic (Luhrmann 1989: 62-5; Greenwood 2000: 50-1). Both, though, entered the groups they studied as outsiders (even though Greenwood may be considered an 'insider' within the magical world as a whole) and then were

obliged to cope with the issues they faced as a result of the fluid boundaries between their identities as insiders and outsiders. There are a number of important distinctions between their work and mine. The worlds of magic and witchcraft, which they investigated, are based around action; the groups tend to be closed to outsiders and therefore require a much greater degree of personal commitment than does astrology (Pearson 1998: 51-54). While astrology can be invoked in the service of magical ritual (Farrar and Farrar 1984: 88-91), in the form of the calculation and interpretation of horoscopes it is an essentially solitary and intellectual enterprise, the principle shared activity being the consultation between astrologer and client, and the only collective activity being attendance at public meetings or classes which are open to strangers. In a public sense, then the boundaries between insider and outsider status in astrology are porous and difficult to define. Also, whereas Lurhmann and Greenwood focused on activity, my concern is with the etics and emics of thought rather than of action, a distinction made by Lett (1990: 135), that is, with the manner in which astrology is defined externally and with the discourses astrologers use to describe themselves.

Astrology may itself be defined as a practice, though primarily an individual one, if the casting and interpretation of horoscopes is taken as the primary locus of activity. However, the emphasis in this thesis is not on such practice, but on perceptions of astrology, both emic and etic.

An Anthropology of Astrology?

The respectable examination of astrology as a topic within the history of ideas was established by Lynn Thorndike in the early-twentieth century (1905). His major work (1923-1958) concluded with the seventeenth-century; hence subsequent histories of astrology, such as Tester (1987: 240, 243) assumed that astrology completely died out by 1700. Capp (1979: 238-269) showed, though, that while astrology was dropped from

educated society, its popular existence in the form of almanacs continued undisturbed throughout the eighteenth-century. Howe (1967) and Curry (1992) then demonstrated astrology's survival and revival in the nineteenth-century, leaving only the twentieth-century substantially ignored. Yet the study of astrology's contemporary cultural locus may shed light on the condition of modern society as a whole. As Grace Davie (1994: 68) argued, 'by looking at the way that society reacts to new religious movements and the controversy they generate, we can discover more about that society itself', while Bryan Wilson (1979: 3) pointed out that 'Religious change is...cultural change'. It is not necessary to argue that astrology is a religion in order to make the point that an understanding of the cultural milieu within which it thrives may shed light on contemporary society as a whole. Caird and Law (1982: 152), meanwhile noted that there was in the 1980s a substantial lack of empirical social psychological research into counter-cultural religious beliefs. While there has now been substantial work in some areas, astrology has been generally untouched. While this study cannot tackle the psychological, it does aim to lay the ground for social research.

In their introduction to *Astronomies and Cultures* (1993: 12), Clive Ruggles and Nicholas Saunders cite approvingly Tristan Platt's 1991 suggestion that we are in need of an 'anthropology of astronomy'. Platt's words are somewhat more radical than this quote would suggest. He wrote that,

an historical anthropology of astronomy must emphasise the interaction between different cultural perspectives on history and time, rather than subsuming them within what is still a predominantly North Atlantic "World" perspective. Hence the need to deconstruct the universalising discourse of modern professional astronomy itself (still with an inbuilt tendency to appeal to a historicist account of its own past) if we are to arrive at an approach to the subject at once sociological and ethnoscientific, which recognises the recreation of different cultural histories as a more significant and viable prospect than an absolute (and inevitably ethnocentric) Universal History (Platt 1991: S83).

If there is one folk or ethnoastronomy which is still awaiting proper study then it is contemporary astrology. Astrology has become an integral part of contemporary

popular culture via newspaper and magazine horoscopes. Through its continual borrowing from astronomy, for example in its appropriation of newly discovered solar system bodies, and its use of astronomical terminology, it is a genuine modern ethnoastronomy. Indeed, it may be the most visible expression of astronomy in culture. Whereas once anthropology was explicitly concerned with the study of 'primitive' peoples (Evans-Pritchard 1967: 77), Greenwood's 'anthropology' of contemporary witchcraft has been influential in challenging the dogma that anthropology is about 'them' rather than 'us'. This study is therefore a step towards an anthropology dealing with a different aspect of modern society: the notion that our lives and destinies are linked in some way with the zodiac.

Although this study may be classed as anthropological in the sense that it is a study of people, or sociological in the sense that it is a study of society, my primary concern is with the transmission of ideas. Also, in general, I have followed Philip Runkel's view that too great a concern with methodological dogma can sacrifice meaning to what he calls 'manner'. He argued that,

When social scientists think about generalizing, they do not use an arcane logic more potent than the logic used by the rest of us. The logic and procedure of science come simply from the efforts of ordinary people trying their best to be careful when they think about what they observe and then they tell others about it (Runkel 1990: 5).

My methodology is also influenced by my previous training as a historian. In particular I am concerned with origins, in this case of the New Age movement and of contemporary astrology as a language of birth signs, personality and psychological potential. While the foundation of my study is historical, this leads directly into an analysis of the contemporary situation, principally from a qualitative standpoint. My use of quantitative data therefore remains indicative of possible areas for future research and is designed mainly to test whether previous and, often, widely reported figures on 'belief' in astrology are accurate. I am primarily concerned with the 'emics' of

contemporary astrology, the nature of the narrative that astrologers weave about their role in society and their place in the cosmos. Following Bryman's summary of the discussion on the relationship between qualitative and quantitative research (2001: 4-5), the one focusing on subjective experience, the other on the attempt to establish objective measures of such experience, I do not see these contrasting approaches as mutually antagonistic but, when used together, supportive.

I am also concerned with four frequently stated 'etic' views on astrology: namely that it is a New Age discipline, that it is incompatible with, or a rival to, mainstream Christianity, that its existence is somehow incompatible with modernity in general, and that its popularity is both huge and steadily increasing. I approach these questions primarily through astrology's emics, its literature and the stated opinions of its students and practitioners. Following Ann Geneva (1995: xiv), who argued that 'it is first necessary to locate astrology within its own universe of discourse before historians can attempt to compare it with other explanatory systems', I am concerned to investigate astrology's contemporary 'universe of discourse'.

Definitions of Astrology

Astrology is occasionally categorised as a religion by its practitioners, sometimes as an art or science. Its critics though, invariably describe it in religious terms. In this study I am primarily concerned not with whether astrology actually conforms to any accepted definition of religion, but with whether it is perceived as a religion, and with the consequences of that perception. In part this is due to the difficulty of defining religion. As Stewart Guthrie wrote, 'scholars agree that no convincing general theory of religion exists' (Guthrie 1996: 412). The problem is compounded by a lack of any agreed definition of astrology. As Dean and Loftson wrote,

Dictionaries, encyclopaedias and astrology text books have defined astrology variously as a science, a supposed science, an art, a divinatory art, an art/science, a

language, a philosophy, and as a system for self-understanding (Dean and Loftson 1996: 33, 41 n 1; see also Dean and Mather 1977: 3).

However, astrology's critics tend to assume that it conforms to a definition of religion which posits supernatural agencies as causal factors within human society. In this sense such critics draw on both E.B. Tylor's definition of religion as belief in 'spiritual beings' and J.G. Frazer's as the 'propitiation and conciliation of powers believed to be superior to man' (Arnal 2000: 23). Although neither definition entirely covers the diversity of expression encountered in contemporary astrology, its critics tend to focus on its occult or supernatural aspects. Religious critics tend to see such supernatural agencies as essentially real, while scientific critics see them as inherently false. Both, though, agree that belief in them is, or can be, dangerous.

Most etic definitions of astrology include it in the general sphere of the religious. Representing sceptical scientists, the astronomers Roger Culver and Philip Ianna conclude unambiguously that astrology is 'a firmly entrenched belief system', (1988: xii). The psychologists Jahoda (1969: 25) and Plug (1975) categorise astrology as a 'superstition',² while Richard Crowe points out that 'virtually all scientists regard astrology as unfounded superstition' (Crowe 1990: 164). Gill, Hadaway and Marler (1998: 512-3) include it under the catch-all category 'occult' but also as a 'non-traditional religion'. The physicist Robert Park goes further, taking an overtly hostile position and describing it as one of 'the darkest superstitions that beset our species' (2000: 201), language that is not far removed from that of its religious opponents. Within the sociology of religion, Stark and Bainbridge refer to it as 'deviant supernaturalism' (1985: 431). In part such terminology may be fuelled by moral outrage. The astronomers Bok and Mayall quoted the attack on astrology from the 'Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues', which argued that 'faith in astrology...is harmful because it encourages an unwholesome flight from the persistent problems of real life', adding that 'when moral habits are weakened by depression or

war, bewilderment increases, self-reliance is lessened and belief in the occult increases' (Bok and Mayall 1941: 244). Returning to the theme in 1975 Bok, by that time emeritus professor of astronomy at the University of Arizona, argued that it was 'morally inexcusable' for the American Astronomical Society not to have taken a firmer stand against astrology. Stark and Bainbridge, meanwhile, define astrology as a species of magic (1987: 105) in that it makes utilitarian but unverifiable claims. Saliba (1995: 23), writing from a Christian background, argues that astrology is 'occult' and, in that it is also a New Age belief, is to be categorised as a 'new religious movement' (see also Wilson and Cresswell 1999; Barker and Warburg 2001).

Astrology is generally classified as 'paranormal' in the sense that it transcends 'the explanatory power of mainstream science' (Gray 1991: 7; see also Abell and Singer 1981; Hines 1988: 19) and is widely included in measures of paranormal belief (Plug 1975, Williams *et al* 1989; Goode 2000). Following unnamed 'American scholars', Rice (2003: 95) distinguishes two types of paranormal belief, 'traditional' and 'classical'. On the one hand there are the traditional, the 'religious' beliefs central to traditional Christian doctrine, such as heaven and hell, the devil and creationism. On the other hand there are 'classic' beliefs, commonly associated with the supernatural or occult, such as belief in ESP, reincarnation, psychic healing, UFOs - and astrology. In the sense that such classic supernatural beliefs are distinct from religious ones, they may conform to Plug's definition of a superstition, that it is a 'superstitious' belief which does not form part of the mainstream religion (Plug 1975: 169). However, although the classification of astrology as paranormal may be appropriate if it is accepted that its claims transcend scientific explanation, it may be misleading if it is then assumed that it shares the same internal nature and social status as other beliefs classified as paranormal. For example Greeley's discussion of the paranormal (1975) focuses on communication with the dead and peak mystical experiences. Thus, when Haraldsson (1985) includes astrological consultations as 'psychic or psi-related experiences', along

with sightings of ghosts and visits to mediums, the validity of his discussion, beyond the simple reporting of quantitative results, may be open to question. The lack of a clear definition, as noted by Dean and Kelly, is evident in such work and may, as Zinnbauer *et al.* (1997: 550) note in their discussion of the lack of an accepted definition of spirituality, impair communication amongst researchers. Ultimately, it may be necessary for those studying astrology's place in culture to follow the lead of those studying Buddhism, and 'recognize the diversity of belief and practice within their own traditions' (Herbrechtsmeier 1993: 16).

The differences between various definitions are more than just a matter of language and tend to suggest a reliance on different philosophical models. Dictionary definitions tend to emphasise celestial causality, as does the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1952) which describes astrology as 'the art of judging of reputed influence of stars upon human affairs'. To astrologers a more familiar definition would be that found in Margaret Hone's *The Modern Text Book of Astrology* (1973: 16) which emphasised not planetary causation but the 'interpretation of the correlation of planetary action in human experience'. According to another prominent astrologer, Robert Hand (1989: 316), astrology is a 'taxonomy of life' while to Kelly Hunter (1999: 1) it is 'an intuitive science, the full power of... [which] lies in transforming consciousness through imagery'. As Dennis Elwell realised (1986: 143), 'Astrology means different things to different people, and is big enough to accommodate many complementary, and even contradictory, opinions'. There may, in fact, be no one such single thing as astrology but rather different astrologies. These might appear to be magical, religious or scientific, can be applied to understanding the past, the management of the present or the prediction of the future, and may be used for personal spiritual development or forecasting fluctuations in the stock market. For current purposes the working definition of astrology will be 'the practice of relating the heavenly bodies to lives and events on earth, and the tradition that has thus been generated' (Curry 1999: 55). It must be

recognised from the outset, though, that there may be a profound difference of both attitude and practice between an astrologer who may be analysing commodity prices for a bank or forecasting the outcome of soccer games, and one who is counselling clients or concerned with their own spiritual development.

Within Curry's definition then, it is necessary to consider a distinction between two forms of astrology which was first identified by Cicero (1929) in the first-century BCE. Cicero identified an astrology derived from the observation of natural phenomena from one based on 'art', that is, the technical procedures of divination. In the medieval context, then, natural astrology assumed the existence of general celestial influences which may be the basis of statements of broad significance for human affairs or world events. The astrology of art, or judicial astrology, generally required the casting of horoscopes, placing a high reliance on the astrologer's ability to judge, or interpret the complex patterns in the chart.

It is clear that these are not watertight, mutually exclusive categories, and the theory and attributions of natural astrology were integral to judicial astrology. On the other hand, it was possible to accept the principles of natural astrology and be utterly opposed to judicial astrology.

A modern natural astrology might therefore include other phenomena which are not usually considered astrological, including the sun-spot cycle, circadian (daily) rhythms and lunar cycles. The notion of the solar system as a giant clock in which the planets are the hands which indicate different time periods on earth may also be included with natural astrology, even though no celestial influences may be necessary for such a model.

Modern Critiques of Astrology

Astrology has two principal sets of opponents: evangelical, fundamentalist or conservative Christians represented by such groups as the Reach Out Trust, and the positivist, secular humanists represented chiefly by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP). The latter organisation stands at the heart of modern organised scepticism and regards its mission as to eradicate all forms of the paranormal and occult, including astrology (Kurtz 2001; Hansen 2001: 148-161). Fundamental to CSICOP's perspective is the notion that astrology's survival in the modern world is historically problematic, even inexplicable. This is not a view unique to them. As Michael Hill wrote, interest in astrology seemed to be considerable 'even in the most technologically advanced areas of western society' (1979: 247) while the astronomers Snow and Brownsberger (1997: 7) wrote that 'even today' some people have faith in astrology. Glick and Snyder (1986: 20) noted that 'belief in astrology...remains as prevalent today as ever, despite the lack of scientific evidence for such beliefs'. A typical view was expressed by John Silber, President of Boston University. He argued that,

Astrology is in fact a bizarre survival from pre-scientific times. Its theories were worked out when people believed the earth was the center of the universe and that seven planets revolved around it: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. Although this view of the universe has been proven false, astrology continues with hardly a wobble (Silber 2001).

The manifesto 'Objections to Astrology', drafted by Bart Bok, Lawrence Jerome and Paul Kurtz and published in *The Humanist* in 1975, and which led to the foundation of CSICOP, pulled together '186 leading scientists' to sign a document calling for a campaign against astrology, an initiative which was to result in the foundation of CSICOP. The manifesto included an element of surprise that astrology should have survived: 'One would imagine, in this day of widespread enlightenment and education, that it would be unnecessary to debunk beliefs based on magic and superstition', while astrology's survival, it was claimed, 'can only contribute to the growth of irrationalism and obscurantism' (Bok, Jerome and Kurtz 1975: 4). The manifesto's combative

language and dualistic imagery of a society facing a struggle between reason and irrationality pervades the language of organised scepticism. For example, sociologist Erich Goode (2002: 27) regards paranormal belief, including interest in astrology, overtly as a 'threat'.

The 'Objections to Astrology' represented a conscious attempt to resist the increasing pluralism of the post counter-cultural western world, and possessed a tone of alarm similar to that found in attacks on astrology by evangelical Christians (see for example Anderson 1988: 9-11). At its worst, it is often argued, astrology's survival presents a real threat to the health of society. Michael Gauquelin (1982: 35),³ who was himself sympathetic, quoted psychologist Hans Bender's damning indictment:

It is striking that more than three hundred years of experimental sciences have not succeeded in providing an antidote to astrological beliefs. Astrology is a social reality. Its forms vary from the crudest superstitions to thoughtful attempts at connecting the astrologer's magic vision of the world with modern psychological knowledge...Therefore astrology poses a problem of social and psychological health.

In its milder form scepticism retreats from the argument that astrology is a danger to civilisation and regards it as merely ridiculous. The astronomer, George Abell, one of the most prominent sceptics, mused that astrology seems 'incredible' and an 'absurdity' (Abell 1981: 73, 94) and, following the general sceptical argument, a note of incredulity was sounded by the sceptic Lucy Sherriff (2001: 7), who wrote,

Nearly all woman's magazines publications carry horoscopes. Most of us really do only read them for a laugh, and let's face it, the horoscope debunking has been so thorough that the people who actually take it seriously are few and far between. So, why are they still there?

The journalist Robert Matthews sounded similarly bemused when he wrote that astrology's popularity has been maintained 'despite the scepticism of scientists' (2003: 9). The unspoken assumption is that sceptical scientists somehow speak for the modern

world as a whole. This is, perhaps, a natural product of belief in the law of progress, an application of evolutionary theory to the human intellect that assumes humanity has evolved from a state of superstition to one of reason in the historic period, over the last four millennia, and that rational, materialist, secular humanism is the highest state of intellectual development reached by humanity. This point of view was criticised by Baillie (1950) and Bowler (1989). According to J.B. Bury, by the 1870s the 'idea of Progress' had become 'a general article of faith' (Bury 1932: 346) and, as Sklair (1970: 65) demonstrated, was regarded as synonymous with evolution. He added that,

When Mr. Frederic Harrison delivered in 1889 at Manchester an eloquent discourse on the "New Era", in which the dominant note is "the faith in human progress in lieu of celestial rewards of the separate soul", his general argument could appeal to immensely wider circles than the Positivists whom he was specially addressing (Bury 1932: 346).

To argue that the positivist-evolutionary view of history can be demonstrated aside from the value judgments of the historians who write that history is, as Butterfield showed, unsustainable (Butterfield 1965: 105 - 6). Progress mythology holds that, because secular humanism is the highest state of human consciousness yet reached, all other world views must, by definition, be anachronistic. They represent survivals of earlier forms of thought which have survived by accident and are involved in a struggle with science which is envisaged as a titanic battle of light against dark. Carl Sagan's (1995) image of science as 'a candle in the dark' is widely quoted (see for example, Goode 2002: 24) yet, while contemplating the apparent rise of belief in the paranormal, Sagan adopted the language of medieval Christianity and wrote that 'the demons begin to stir' (1995: 27).

The belief that western culture can conform to a single set of intellectual values may itself be a vain one. As Bilgrave and Deluty argued, in their discussion of psychologists' religious beliefs, 'the current Weltanschauung in the west is a curious amalgam, consisting of religious, humanistic, scientific, and romantic elements' (1998: 329) and

secular humanism, from this point of view, has no special claim to pre-eminence in the modern world. Romanticism, which has every much a claim as secular humanism to modernity, stresses 'subjective, immediate experience, the cultivation of affect and intuition, and the creation of personal meaning through authentic choice' (Bilgrave and Deluty 1998: 329). Romanticism's vigour throughout the nineteenth-century, into the origins of the contemporary New Age movement, has been well-documented by Joscelyn Godwin (1994). The question of whether astrology is anachronistic, therefore, may be a biproduct of Whig historiography, the term devised by Herbert Butterfield (1965) to describe what he regarded as the mistaken theory that the history of the last five hundred years represents the triumph of reason, including science, over unreason, including astrology.

Modernism and Post-modernism

Looking at the context within which astrology thrives, Hess considers the New Age movement as a whole to be post-modern (1993: 36), although he offers no explanation for this. Paul Heelas, meanwhile considers the New Age movement in its counter-cultural aspects, and hence astrology, which he includes as New Age (1996: 23, 34), as an aspect of 'modernity in crisis' (1996: 138). However, he neither defines modernity nor explains why the New Age might not in fact be an aspect of modernism. Robert Bellah, however, did point to the crisis in modernity and the consequent shift in spirituality, which he identified as arising, in the USA at least, from 'the massive erosion of the legitimacy of American institutions - business, government, education, the churches, the family' (Bellah 1976: 333). Hexham and Poewe point out that the distinctions are not clear-cut and argue that the counter-culture of the 1960s contained elements of both modernism and post-modernism (1997: 149-151), while Patrick Curry has discussed astrology as a post-modern discipline (1994). Elsewhere some developments within astrology, such as the recovery of former traditions, are identified as post-modern (Campion 1994: 3) while others – such as the argument that astrology is

a science that can be proved, or the New Age proposition that its widespread acceptance will change the world for the better - are clearly aspects of modernism (see for example Hand 1990: 15). The problem, of course is one of definition, for there is no universally accepted meaning of the terms modern and post-modern. Williams (1989: 33) notes that aspects of culture defined as modern, such as avant-garde art, are taken to be representative of 'modernity' as a whole while being quite clearly not representative of the entire modern world, while Jameson (1991: 55) asks whether it is even possible to say that the post-modern exists. If modernism is characterised by the self-confident creation of the future and, if modernists think 'compulsively about the New...(try) to watch its coming into being and look for 'new worlds' (Jameson 1991: ix), then the development of psychological astrology, the most influential development within modern professional astrology, may be an indicator of a modernist trend within twentieth-century astrology (Hand 1990: 15). If, though, modernity is defined as 'the social condition of living in an urban, fast-changing, progressivist world governed by instrumental reason' (Jencks 1996: 8) and postmodernism 'is what you have when the modernization process is complete' (Jameson 1991: ix), one could argue from a variety of different positions. The sociologists of science John Bauer and Martin Durant discussed the matter, agreeing with Heelas' view that astrology is encouraged by the crisis of modernity. They consider that astrology,

may be regarded sociologically, as one among a number of potential compensatory activities that may be attractive to individuals who are struggling to come to terms with the uncertainties of life in late modernity...Belief in astrology is rather a matter of the moral fabric of modern society than of scientific literacy. It seems that in Britain, as in Germany or France, belief in astrology is prevalent among particular social groups; groups which, as we have indicated, may be experiencing difficulty in accommodating their religious feelings to life in an uncertain post-industrial culture. Paradoxical as it may seem, therefore, we conclude that popular belief in astrology may be part and parcel of late modernity itself (Bauer and Durant 1997: 69).

The purpose of this thesis is to consider whether astrology's continued existence in the modern world is an anomaly, a legacy of the past which has survived in spite of the

Enlightenment and scientific revolution, or whether it may be considered a natural part of the modern world.

Notes

1. 'Out of the body experience'.
2. The usual definition of superstition is an 'irrational or unfounded belief' (Plug 1975: 169), although, following Yahoda, Plug notes that this is problematic in view of the assumption it makes concerning the veracity of the belief .
3. Citing Schmidtchen, G. 'Soziologisches über die Astrologie, Ergebnisse einer repräsentativ-Befragung', *Z.f., Parapsychologie u. Grenzgebiete der Psychologie*, 1957, 1.47.

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Part 1

Millenarianism and the New Age

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Part 1

Chapter 2

Millenarianism

Chapter Description

It is widely argued that the New Age movement is millenarian in character (see for example Miller 1990: 27; Hanegraaff 1996: 96, 98-103; Sutcliffe 2003:9. 11. 17), and forms part of a broader cultural tradition which extends from the modern west back through Christian millenarianism to the ancient near east. In this chapter it will be argued that astrology has been closely linked to millenarian prophecies, both in terms of bringing warning signs of the coming of the millennium and of measuring the length of historical epochs and hence of predicting the date of the millennium. The origins and main relevant features of millenarianism will also be discussed. Karl Popper's theory of historicism and activism will be introduced as a means of reconciling the paradox inherent in the astrological view of history; that, although the future is as predetermined as are the stellar and planetary motions which measure and punctuate historical change, individual action, freely and voluntarily made, is essential to the fulfilment of that future.

Millenarianism

The word millenarianism, first used in the fifth century CE by St. Augustine (1972: XX.7), is derived from the Latin millennium, a thousand, and refers to the Persian (Boyce 1987, 1983, 1984, Hultgard 1989) and, subsequently, Christian belief that world history is divided into periods of one, two or three thousand years (Cohn 1957, 1993; Campion 1994). The classic text of Christian millenarianism is the Revelation of St. John, which sets out a historical template in which moral collapse climaxes in political and military strife, accompanied by the *parousia* (literally 'arrival' or 'presence'), that is

Christ's return. In the first century CE this was believed to be imminent (Mark 13.30, Revelation 22.12). Christ, it was believed, was then due to triumph over Satan and reign in splendour for a thousand years, that is, the millennium (Revelation 20.2-7), described elsewhere as the 'age to come' (Matthew 12.32). This period, the prophecy continues, will culminate with Satan's release and the final battle between good and evil, God's victory and the inauguration of a 'new heaven', 'new earth' and 'new Jerusalem' (Revelation 21.1-2). This final state would then complete the prophecy set out in Isaiah 66.22-23: 'For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me'. Some Christian theologians retrospectively refer to this new era as 'the New Age' (see for example Chance 1988; Ziesler 1991: 65).

There is an additional terminology associated with millenarianism (Ziesler 1991: 65-6). From the Greek word *eschaton*, the end, derives eschatology, which literally means the study of ends, but is also used to imply actual belief in the end of the world. From *apocalypse*, the Greek for revelation, is derived the word apocalyptic to describe the vision of the end of the world which was revealed to St. John. Traditions of apocalyptic thought can be traced back to late third millennium BCE Mesopotamia (Ringgren 1989). In the first centuries BCE and CE, apocalyptic ideas permeated the Hellenistic world and formed a part of Gnostic (MacRae 1989), Jewish (Collins 1989; Lebram 1989; Sanders 1989) and Christian (Fiorenza 1989; Meeks 1989) historical theory. All partook of a common tradition, shared with the Greek-speaking world (Hengel 1989: 2).

Even though they may have specific connotations, and some argue that the distinctions are important (see for example Hanegraaff 1996: 98), the terms millenarian, eschatological and apocalyptic may also be used interchangeably. Although the term millenarian has strictly Christian connotations, it may be applied to all beliefs that the world is about to enter a major new phase. In its looser definition, therefore, any

political or religious movement or ideology which expects, prophesies, or fights for, an imminent historical crisis and return to, or inauguration of, a golden age or state of purity may be described as millenarian (Wilson, 1975; Daniels 1992; Robbins and Palmer 1997; Hall *et al.* 2000; Stone 2000).

In Revelation St. John combined the supernatural eschatology and millenarian chronology of the Persians with an existing Jewish eschatological tradition (see Russell 1964, Hanson 1983) which had itself provided a powerful foundation to the prophetic literature of the Old Testament and envisaged an eschaton that could be either naturalistic and local (Ezekiel 38.19), anticipating a restored earthly Kingdom of David (Amos 9.11), or supernatural, prophesying a new heaven and new earth. It was certain, though that the promised 'Day of Yahweh', when the crisis eventually erupted, would be terrible (Isaiah 2.12-22). In Jewish eschatology, then, the promise of a wonderful new era was inextricably bound up with the threat of a cataclysm: salvation and punishment were inseparable in a formula inherited by Christianity.

Astrology in Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature

The astrology of Mesopotamia, from which modern western astrology is ultimately derived, is distinguished by its reliance on celestial signs or omens (Reiner 1985), which provided the means for the pantheon of divinities to communicate with humanity, as a form of 'writing in the sky' (Gadd 1980: 57). The Jews never developed an indigenous astrology comparable to that in Mesopotamia which, however, they became aware of by the eighth-century BCE (McKay 1973: 45-59) and imported by the first century BCE (Greenfield and Sokoloff 1989). A simple astrology of celestial signs does, though, exist in the Old Testament and may relate to a pre-Akkadian astrology in Mesopotamia (see Koch-Westenholtz 1995: 15), that is prior to 2,200 BCE. Isaiah (13.10; see also 61.19-20; Amos 8.9; Jeremiah 4.23; Habakkuk 3.3-6), for example, forecast that, at the Day of Yahweh,

...the stars of the Heavens
and their constellations will not give their light;
The Sun will be dark at its rising
And the Moon will not shed its light' (Isaiah 13.10)

Such prophecies were repeated or paraphrased in the New Testament, carrying basic near-eastern celestial divination into Christianity. Mark (13. 24-26) prophesies that

in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man, coming in clouds with great power and glory.

In Luke's gospel (21.10-11) Jesus predicts that

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

Greek Apocalyptic Thought: the Golden Age

The earliest indications of apocalyptic thought in the Greek world occur in the *Works and Days*, the major historical work attributed to the eighth-century BCE poet Hesiod, though, it has been argued, with influences from wider near-eastern apocalyptic traditions (Baldry 1956; Lambert and Walcot). Hesiod set out a five-fold scheme of historical periodisation which involved a progressive decline through the successive ages of gold, silver, bronze, heroes and iron (1917: 89-201). Although the notion of a primeval paradise is found in both the Jewish Garden of Eden (Genesis 2.8) and the Sumerian Dilmun or Shubur (Kramer 1943), Hesiod's story of a golden race has become the model for the nostalgic western longing for a lost golden age. Although Hesiod's hint that the golden race would return suggested a repletion of the five-race model, what Eliade (1954) was to call 'the eternal return' first appears in the work of Empedocles (c.495 BCE), who postulated a dualistic, cyclical process according to which first love and then strife in turn reached a position of dominance in the cosmos. At each extreme the wild world dissolved into its constituent elements, only to reform and initiate another cycle of experience (O'Brien 1969).

Apocalyptic Astrology in Greek and Medieval Thought

The simple astrology of the Old Testament prophets relied exclusively on unexpected events in the sky as warnings that God's divine order was about to break down. The alternative system, which appeared in Greece by the fourth century BCE, saw political or global collapse as integral to the divine order as expressed through predictable, mathematically ordered planetary cycles. Plato developed Empedocles' model of periodic destruction in the early fourth-century BCE, borrowing from the Egyptians the concept of periodic global conflagrations (*Timaeus* 22B-D) and formulating the period known as a 'complete' or 'great' year, the period of time which separates the beginning of the world from its end. At that point the sun, moon, stars and planets all return to the point of their creation (*Timaeus* 39D). In his account of around 280 BCE, the Babylonian astrologer Berossus developed Plato's scheme, arguing that, when the sun, moon and planets formed a conjunction at 0° Cancer the world would be destroyed by fire and when the conjunction took place at 0° Capricorn the destruction was to be by water (Berossus 1978). Berossus' theory was accepted by most classical authors (see for example Seneca 1971: III.c29); it retained wide currency in Medieval and Renaissance Europe and was repeated as late as the world history composed by Louis Le Roy, Regius Professor of Greek at the Collège de France in the 1590s (Le Roy 1594: 1-2). For Le Roy Platonic and Berossian astrology provided the measurable framework within which God's plan unfolded. In his eschatology, though, the end was final. Even though apocalyptic Christianity formalised Berossus' eternally alternating destructions into one in the past, the great deluge (Genesis 6-9), and one in the future, the global conflagration (I. Peter 4.12), the cyclical theories of the classical writers survived as a permissible heresy.

In the first centuries CE the Sassanian Persians noticed that the total sequence of possible Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions took 960 years, just forty years short of the

significant thousand year periods which were the basis of Zoroastrian historical periodisation (Pingree 1997). After this work entered medieval Europe in 1140 when Herman of Carinthia translated Abu Ma'shar's ninth-century work the *Maius Introductorum* (Tester 1987: 160-1), there were two principle astrological means of predicting the coming of the millennium. On the one hand, there were signs and wonders, the disorderly events of the Old Testament such as comets and, on the other, the predictable, orderly sequence of planetary conjunctions which could be predicted hundreds of years in advance. Combining Jewish and Greek cosmologies and demonstrating their application to eschatology, Nicole Oresme (c.1320-1382), bishop of Lisieux, wrote,

Again, this lower world is governed by the heavenly bodies and their movement, as Aristotle says, for they are the instruments of God, by means of which he governs nature, and which incline the hearts of men to various fortunes, without violence of necessity, and to know these bodies and these movements, astrology has been especially ordained, that great science which would be, as it were useless, unless by its aid we could know the things of the future. And of these the sun, moon and stars, are signs as our Lord said when he made them, according to the exposition of St. Augustine on Genesis (Coopland 1952: 67).

Notable examples of predictable planetary patterns occurred in 1484 (Thorndike 1923-58: IV.438-484), when it was predicted that the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction in Scorpio would bring the demise of Christianity, and the conjunction of 1523 in Pisces which, coming during the first revolutionary wave of the Reformation, was widely used to predict a repetition of the great flood (Thorndike 1923-58: V.178-233). The closeness of astrology and apocalyptic thought in the sixteenth-century was best indicated by the fact that Philip Melanchthon, Luther's deputy, was one of the leading astrologers in Europe (Thorndike 1923-58: V.378-405; Maxwell-Stuart 1999: 93-4). The search for celestial signs and wonders continued to be a major feature of millenarian Christianity up to the nineteenth-century (see for example Brooke 1996).

The Main Features of Millenarian Thought

In addition to catastrophism, astrological timing and golden age nostalgia, there were a number of other features of millenarian thought in the Hellenistic world.

Education

Plato's concern was not solely with the measurement and analysis of history, but with the active integration of the individual with the historical process. This proposition he elaborated in the *Republic* (esp. Bks. VI-VIII) and *Laws* (esp. Bk. VI). Following Hesiod, he believed that the current phase of history, through which he was living, represented a tragic collapse of civilised values, that a major cataclysm was approaching, that the golden age would then return and that it was the duty of every citizen to encourage this preordained plan to fulfil itself. The prerequisites for a return to the Golden Age, Plato specified as a disciplined lifestyle combined with a rigorous programme of education. According to Plato the philosophical man lived an austere life and dedicated himself to the pursuit of truth via the study of the abstract arts; chiefly music, mathematics, geometry and astronomy. The insistence in Platonic eschatology that an educational programme was central to individual participation in the historical process was echoed in what Ziesler (1991) has argued was the Hellenised Christianity of St. Paul. Paul wrote in relation to the historical shift of his time that,

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification (I Corinthians 2.6-7).

Moral Collapse and Nostalgia

It has been remarked that both Hesiod and Plato believed that they lived in the most decadent period of history. The prophets who laid the basis of Jewish apocalyptic thought likewise condemned the corruption of their society. As Isaiah (1.10) proclaimed, 'Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of

our God, you people of Gomorrah'. This sense of widespread moral collapse which Herman (1997) argues distinguishes the millenarian from their society. For at least four thousand years, since the Sumerian 'Golden Age' tablet (Kramer 1943), people have been looking back to the past as a time of bliss, and complaining about the standards and morals of the people around them. This endless repetition of regrets, fears and complaints was noted by Nicolo Machiavelli over five hundred years ago,

Men always, but not always with good reason, praise bygone days and criticise the present, and so partial are they to the past that they not only admire past ages, the knowledge of which has come down to them in written records, but also, when they grow old, what they remember having seen in their youth (Machievelli 1970: 265).

Cyclical Time

A commonly expressed view on the classical world, one closely associated with the Stoics and with astrology, of which Stoics were generally keen supporters, was that time is cyclical, always returning to the same point and usually at regular intervals (Eliade 1954, Trompf 1979). This, it is said, contrasts with the linear view supposedly pioneered by Jewish historiography, in which the world moves from a single creation to a once-and-for-all destruction. Most beliefs about the nature of time are a combination of the linear and cyclical, in which time operates according to an underlying cyclical law, but is simultaneously moving forward (Gould 1987). The result may be rhythms, waves or spirals. According to the Orphic tradition recalled by Plato, God completes his cyclical course in a straight line (*Laws* 715E-716E). The effect of the survival of Greek and Babylonian eschatology alongside Christian millenarianism in the European Renaissance was to maintain awareness of the doctrine of a perpetually recurring cycle of creation and destruction as an alternative to the standard Christian version in which history was framed by a unique creation and a once-and-for-all destruction. Stanley Frost identified the root of this compromise in two distinct strands in Jewish eschatology: one prophesied the complete end of the world, the other its renewal. He described Jewish eschatology as,

a congress of beliefs and ideas which are marked by the expectation of a future event which is the effective End in the mind of the one using the term. There is an eschatology which is concerned with an eschaton in history, rather than of history; there is an eschaton which is conceived to be the end of history altogether' (Frost 1952: 32).

Perpetual recurrence found a common expression in a diluted form in the concept of the seasonal rise and fall of states and, sometimes religions, within the overall well defined construct provided by Genesis and Revelation. Such ideas experienced a revival in Europe in the wake of the translations of the Platonic texts in the fifteenth-century. In the words of the Elizabethan poet Fulke Greville in his 'A Treatise of Warres' (see Manuel 1965: 52),

Needfull it therefore is, and clearly true,
That all great Empires, Cities, Seats of Power,
Must rise and fall, waxe old, and not renew...
States have degrees, as human bodies have
Springs, Summer, Autumn, Winter and the grave.

Historical and Astrological Theory

Theories which assume a purpose in history tend to be bound up with concepts of order in nature and the cosmos. From this simple assumption it follows that if this order can be understood, history's purpose will become clear. Once its purpose is revealed, the future can be prophesied. There is a persuasive argument that the discipline of history emerged in Mesopotamia as an adjunct to astrology's role on the harmonious regulation of the state (Dentan 1983; Van Seters 1983; see also Finkelstein 1963, 1981). The origin of historiography, literally the writing of history, is deeply bound up with political imperatives and religious devotion, as is clear from the historical texts of the Old Testament. The future then, can only be understood by reference to the past, and study of the past is necessary in order to know the future. According to this argument astrology shares common roots with eschatology.

The relationship between historical and astrological thought was encouraged in the fifteenth century by the translation of the Platonic corpus. One common view was put forward by Eugenio Garin, who considered that Renaissance astrology constituted 'a precise philosophy of history based on a conception of the universe, and characterised by a consistent naturalism and a rigid determinism' (Garin 1976: 16). He added,

As one can see, the theme of 'newness', of a new life, a new age, new worlds, new heavens, new earths - which would run so eloquently through the centuries of the Renaissance...was originally nothing more than an astrological commonplace (Garin 1976: 18).

Keith Thomas also considered whether astrology had a function in the development of historical thought. He concluded that it did, adding that the sociological world view has at least partial roots in the astrological,

During the Italian Renaissance astrological doctrines about the recurrence of planetary conjunctions had helped to form the concept of a historical 'period...In their [the astrologers] confident assumption that the principles of human society were capable of human explanation, we can detect the germ of modern sociology (Thomas 1971: 386-7).

Ernst Cassirer concurred in this. He compared some modern historical literature, such as Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* to Renaissance astrological theories (Cassirer 1967: 291 - 4). David Spangler, one of the most prolific of late-twentieth century British New Age writers, acknowledged astrology's role as the basis for belief in the coming New Age: 'as the term Age of Aquarius suggests, one source was astrology.' (Spangler 1984: 18).

Modern and Ancient Historical Thought

It has been persuasively argued that there is a direct continuity between ancient and modern eschatology. Norman Cohn (1970: 108-9; see also St. Clair, 1992: 223-337) argued for a direct continuity between ancient, medieval and modern millenarianism and hence that Marxism and Nazism, the most powerful political ideologies of twentieth century Europe were both secular forms of millenarianism. For Schwartz

(1980) and Godwin (1994) the revolutionary and esoteric millenarianism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provided the link between the medieval and modern worlds. The most pervasive form of secular millenarianism in the modern world, though, according to Baillie (1951: 64-5) is belief in progress. This was first set out by the Marquis de Condorcet in 1795 in the optimistic view that the condition of the world must necessarily improve (Condorcet 1955). Baillie's argument, though, is that progress theory evolved directly out of Jewish and Christian millenarianism's message of hope that a new world will be born. Bury (1932: 1-36) made a similar argument but put forward Platonic apocalyptic thought as the basis of progress theory.

R.G Collingwood: Substantialism

In the 1940s R.G. Collingwood, considering the close links between ancient and modern historiography, wrote that,

We have so far gone back to the medieval view of history that we think of nations and civilisations as rising and falling in obedience to a law that has little to do with the purpose of human beings that compose them, and we are perhaps not altogether ill-disposed to theories which teach that large scale historical changes are due to some kind of dialectic working objectively and shaping the historical process by a necessity that does not depend on the human will. This brings us into somewhat close contact with the Medieval historians (Collingwood 1946: 56).

Collingwood had in mind the cyclical theories of two twentieth century historians Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee, but his main target was Karl Marx, the giant of nineteenth century historical theory. Marx's theories, he believed, were deeply indebted to the ancient Greeks, especially to Plato and the Platonists, by common devotion to a philosophy of history which he defined as substantialism. Yet he appears to have been unaware of the Platonism which underpinned theosophy and the New Age movement. According to the theory of substantialism, the superficial events of history - its wars, battles and revolutions - are governed by an underlying reality, which he named the substance. The laws which derive from the substance are then manifested in historical patterns or cycles, and these in turn are generally seen to be gradually pushing the

world towards the fulfilment of a long-term purpose (Collingwood 1946: 42-5, 47-8; Löwith 1965: 1). Collingwood identified three forms of history, two of which he defined as 'quasi-history', and only one of which was true history (1946: 14-15, 18). Quasi-history came in two forms; firstly, theocratic history, in which the record of events reveals the manifestation of God, or the gods, in nature and, secondly myth, in which the characters are often divine and the events take place outside the normal flow of time. Proper, 'scientific' history, on the other hand, seeks to understand humanity by asking rational questions about its past actions, seeking the answers in verifiable evidence.

Karl Popper: Historicism and Activism

Collingwood's definition of substantialism was published one year after Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* in which Popper developed a similar idea which he defined as historicism, and which, agreeing with Collingwood, he saw manifested primarily through the historical theories of Plato and Marx. Popper's historicism was similar in its broad characteristics to Collingwood's substantialism: the belief that the events of history were arranged into patterns and regulated by laws according to a deeper unfolding purpose. According to Popper (1957) historicist theories have two central characteristics. They all take it for granted that historical change develops according to underlying laws, which suggest in turn a broadly predetermined pattern and a purposeful goal. However, while history is predetermined, human beings paradoxically possess the capacity to make free choices. The only free choice to be made in relation to history is to help it on its way and serve its greater purpose. This active participation he termed activism. Thus, Christian activism demands that the faithful evangelise the gospels to prepare for the second coming, while Marxism requires the politically aware to form a revolutionary vanguard and prepare for the revolution. The New Age movement, it may be argued, exhibits the same paradox: while, in the form of the Age of Aquarius, the New Age is inevitable, just as the

movement of the vernal point into Aquarius must happen, still it is necessary to prepare for the Age. As Louis Le Roy wrote, in relation to Platonic millenarianism,

As character potential comes from the stars, so does collective potential. It is possible to deviate from destiny, but the cause of events will automatically revert to it. The best thing is to wisely help destiny run its course (Le Roy 1594: 11).

Pre and Post-millenarianism

The failure of apocalyptic prophecies is a major problem for millenarian groups, as discussed in Stone (2000), and is a factor in the development of Desroche's (1979: 93-4) identification of two forms of Christian millenarianism. The first, 'premillenarianism', or 'premillennialism' (Wessinger 1997: 48-9), argues that Christ will come before the millennium, typically accompanied by the violent upheavals prophesied in Revelation. This may also be commonly referred to as catastrophic millenarianism. The second form, postmillennialism, assumes that the 'kingdom of God is progressively installed by an evolutive process' (Desroche 1979: 93). Wessinger (1997: 50-1) uses the alternative 'progressive' millenarianism. However, strict typologies are sometimes difficult to sustain when the phenomenological perspective is considered. As Ninian Smart (1973a: 93) put it,

The authority of the original event helps to explain why it is that so many myths look back to primordial or founding events. But there is no reason in principle why the same 'real presence' should not flow from the future as well as from the past. Indeed this is the function of eschatological myths. The final overcoming of evil by God for example, is a future event in which we can participate now.

The paradox inherent in such statements is one of a series which pervade millenarian thought. Schwartz (1980: 5) sums these up as 'active-passive, rational-irrational, premillennial-postmillennial, prepolitical-political, conservative-radical'. Post-millennialism, though, may be seen as a direct reaction to the failure of pre-millennial prophecies for, by shifting part of the responsibility for the *parousia* on to human activism, humanity rather than divinity can take the blame for the continued delay of the kingdom of God. This point was examined in the 1950s by Festinger (1964) who, by extending his theory of cognitive dissonance, showed that 'disconfirmation' of the

prophecy could actually deepen the faith of the millenarian believer. This is a critical problem for those modern groups whose teachings predict a specific, tangible salvation (Robbins and Palmer 1999; Hall 2000; Stone 2000).

Given that no millennial movement may include the same combination of beliefs in the same balance as any other, it is often impossible to define such movements, except by acknowledging the paradoxes they contain and the tensions these generate. In addition, like any other cultural, social or political force, millenarianism constantly adapts to changing circumstances. As Schwartz (1980: 6) put it, 'millenarian moods and perceptions change as believers battle to keep their footing'. Moreover, as Desroche (1979: 99) argued, 'the millenarian tradition is cumulative', with later forms both arising out of earlier ones and looking back to them for authority. If the New Age is to be considered as a millenarian movement, it may be possible to identify internal coherence in aspects of it over short periods of time but, if it is examined in its totality or over larger periods of time, diversity, incoherence and contradictions may be anticipated.

Astrology

Hilary Carey posed two questions in her study of medieval astrology (1992); firstly what motivates and sustains belief in astrology and, secondly, what intellectual function does it serve? A possible answer was suggested by Karl Popper who noted that astrology's practice is based around the paradox that, although the future is predetermined, knowledge of what is to come enables human beings to amend it. He argued that,

Astrology, it should be realised, shares with historicism the belief in a predeterminate destiny which can be predicted: and it shares with some important versions of historicism (especially with Platonism and Marxism) the belief that, notwithstanding the possibility of predicting the future, we have some influence upon it, especially if we know what is coming...All astrology, for instance, involves the apparently somewhat contradictory conception that the knowledge of our fate may help us to influence this fate (Popper 1986: I.210, 244).

In this scheme astrology is sustained by the need for security and order in a world beset by potentially threatening change and instability, a fact on which academics and critics agree with astrologers working within the theosophical tradition, though the latter would add the quest for personal meaning as an important additional motive. Security is to be obtained through the manipulation of a future which, once forecast, can be turned to human advantage. The fundamental political-astrological belief that the futures of heavenly cosmos and terrestrial state are equally fated, can be contrasted with astrology's attempt, via the detailed examination of horoscopes to manipulate the future. It is the astrologer's task to enhance human freedom of choice as much as possible within the limits set by historical and cosmic law. Carey (1992: 3-5) suggested a similar conclusion. Citing Malinowski's theory (1954: 25-36) that one of magic's primary functions is to provide a means of influencing forces and events normally outside human control, she raises the question as to whether astrological forecasting, combined with the rituals which often accompanied it, may be seen as ways of intervening in historical order. Astrology's function, as a particular application of activist divination to the cosmic state, may therefore be understood within the differing frameworks of competing historicist narratives. If the underlying purpose of historicism is to control change then astrology, within the terms set by Karl Popper, may be seen, within the millenarian framework, as a principal activist discipline.

Millenarianism: Summary

It has been argued that the millenarian tradition, as currently represented in the New Age movement is not only rooted in Judeo-Christian thought, but also in Greek, especially Platonic historical theory, and may be traced back to Persian and Mesopotamian sources. It has also been argued, from the existing literature, that the legacy of the millenarian tradition is expressed in such diverse political and ideological movements as nineteenth-century esotericism, Marxism, Fascism and the theory of progress. There has also been a close relationship between millenarian thought and

astrology, the latter acting either as a warning system, enabling God or the gods to speak to humanity, or a measuring device, using planetary cycles to predict the *parousia*.

Combining the Greek, Jewish and Christian systems, and adapting Cohn's summary (1970: 13), the following main characteristics of European millenarianism are:

1. Prior to the beginning of the next phase of history human society will have reached a state of terminal decline. This will culminate in a global trauma, either man-made, natural, divinely inspired, or a combination of the three.
2. That this trauma is imminent is self-evident from the moral and political decay of the current period. That is to say, the approaching historical trauma and the consequent return to the golden age must take place during the lifetime of the believer.
3. The coming age, which follows the trauma, will be a distinct improvement on the present one, although in some theories it is forecast that decline will eventually return.
4. In the Judaeo-Christian version and, in some pagan accounts, such as Virgil's fourth 'messianic' eclogue (1916: 4.4-10), the coming phase will be inaugurated by the appearance of a world saviour, messiah or son of God.
5. The entire historical process moves forward according to a plan that is in outline preordained, in some cases divinely inspired. The coming salvation is collective but there is a tension between the Judeo-Christian belief, on the one hand, that only the faithful will collectively enjoy the millennium and, on the other, that the whole world will benefit.

6. It is the duty of every citizen of the world to actively prepare for the next phase of history. Thus Christians must prepare for the second coming of Christ through a combination of devout lifestyle and the conversion of unbelievers.

7. The coming age will, in large measure, restore desirable features of the past, which predated the present state of decline.

8. The coming crisis is imminent.

However, while such themes are clearly evident, it would be a mistake to identify any single pattern that combines all forms of millenarian belief. It is clear that some are more violent, others more peaceful, some envisage an earthly golden age, others a heavenly paradise. A general belief in an inevitable improvement in the condition of the world in the near future, though, is universal.

Chapter Summary

It has been argued that millenarian beliefs, postulating an imminent upheaval in world history, make use of two astrological timing mechanisms. The first, the sending of celestial warnings by God, or the gods, is evident in ancient near-eastern historiography and was encapsulated in the scriptural tradition. The second, the projection of measurable planetary cycles into the future in order to anticipate the crucial moment, is contained in the Greek tradition and was summarised by Plato in the fourth-century BCE. The European millenarian tradition later relied on both timing mechanisms. In later chapters it will be argued that belief in the Age of Aquarius is a new variation in the tradition of millenarian astrology. Karl Popper's model of historicism and activism has also been established and a recurring theme in future chapters will be the development of astrology as an activist discipline, within the overall context of Aquarian Age historicism.

Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology

Part 1

Chapter 3

The Age of Aquarius

Chapter Description

Since the early part of the twentieth-century the terms New Age and Age of Aquarius have often been used as synonyms. As an astrological phenomenon, the Age of Aquarius is based on the idea of the gradual shift of the stars and constellations in relation to the sun's location at the spring equinox, 21 March, a phenomenon known as the precession of the equinoxes (see Mitton 1993: 306-7). Modern astrological theory holds that the major shifts in human civilisation conform to major movements of the constellations or zodiac signs in relation to the equinox. The next age, the Age of Aquarius, often corresponding to the New Age, will be inaugurated when the sun rises in Aquarius on 21 March. In this chapter the development of the idea of the Age of Aquarius will be examined. It will be argued that it is a modern phenomenon which can be traced back to no earlier than the 1880s amongst British astrologers. Earlier than that its roots date back to parallel but related strands of Enlightenment and radical thought in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries: firstly, the theory that all male divinities, including Christ, were originally solar in nature and, secondly, that the forms of religious worship evolved over time in line with the shifting of the stars relative to the sun's position at the spring equinox. These ideas were adopted by H.P. Blavatsky who popularised them through the Theosophical Society and her books *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888).

Precession of the Equinoxes: astronomy and history

The zodiac developed by the Babylonians in the first millennium BCE was defined according to the position of the stars and is therefore known as sidereal. Because the stars shift in relation to the equinoxes, the entire sidereal zodiac changes position in relation to the seasons. In around 25,872 years the sidereal zodiac goes through one complete revolution in relation to the equinoxes. One sidereal sign of the zodiac therefore takes 2156 years to precess over the spring equinox. This is defined in the modern astrological literature as one astrological age. The sidereal zodiac is still used by Indian astrologers.

However, since the second-century CE western astrology has fixed the zodiac to the seasons; the first point of Aries, the first sign, is defined as the sun's position at the spring equinox on March 21st. This is known as the tropical zodiac. The tropical and sidereal zodiacs now diverge by about twenty-five degrees. Whereas on March 21st the sun enters Aries in the western, tropical zodiac, in the sidereal zodiac it is in Pisces.

As was discussed in chapter 2, apocalyptic events were traditionally measured by planetary cycles, chiefly Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions. There is though, not a single example of the use of precession of the equinoxes by astrologers until the late nineteenth-century. Arguments that precession was used by astrologers in the ancient world (see for example Ulansey 1989) are based entirely on circumstantial evidence and lack any textual support. Indeed, precession was consistently used as a means to attack astrology, on the grounds that the signs of the zodiac no longer occupied the same part of the sky as did the constellations which bore the same names. During the Middle Ages, when it was believed that one complete cycle of precession lasted 36,000 years, the figure defined by Ptolemy in the second century in the *Almagest*. This was the same period as, it was thought, one Platonic great year, and it was therefore believed that precession did have a role in history and was therefore connected to the

periodical cataclysms which punctuated Platonic years. Yet there are no extant classical or medieval astrological texts which attribute any astrological or historical significance to precession. Instead the increasing separation between the tropical and sidereal zodiacs was used to discredit astrology, on the grounds that the planets no longer occupied the parts of the zodiac claimed by western astrologers.

The earliest extant example of precession being used to undermine astrology was penned by the Church father Origen (c.185-254), evidence that precession was used against astrologers, not by them (Tester 1987: 54). In the late middle ages and during the Renaissance the shift of the constellations away from the signs of the zodiac was regarded by some of the most notable astrologers, such as Guido Bonatti in the thirteenth century (Shumaker 1979: 40) and Thomas Campanella in the sixteenth century (Tester 1987: 214) as a major problem. At no time was it considered a possible source of astrological forecasts.

The Origin of the Idea of the Age of Aquarius

The origin of the belief that the Age of Aquarius is imminent can be traced to three strands in eighteenth-century European thought. The first was the attempt, central to Enlightenment ideology, to establish a common origin to religion. The means by which this was to be accomplished was the study of comparative religion, the deliberate aim being to diminish Christianity's claim to unique status (Sharpe 1975: 1-6; Stark 1999: 41-5). The second was the use of the apparent shift of the stars caused by the precession of the equinoxes as a means of dating the history of the Indian sacred texts, the Vedas. This project was underway as early as the 1760s (Costard 1764) and expanded into an examination of the history of astronomy as a whole. An essential component of this investigation was the examination of Indian chronology, particularly the use of long periods known as yugas (Dowson 1995: 381-3). The third strand was increasing respect given by the Romantics to eastern, especially Persian and Indian, religion and the sun as

a potent symbol of divinity. The study of comparative religion and the 'Oriental Renaissance' have been identified by Hanegraaff (1996: 404) as components of the secularisation which is a major feature of modern esotericism and hence of the New Age.

'The Sun is God'

In the visual arts one of the leading English Romantics was the painter J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851). According to Turner's biographer, John Ruskin, just a few weeks before he died the painter had remarked 'the Sun is God' (Gage 1989: 39). Turner was well-versed in classical mythology, had studied Hinduism and was therefore aware that the Christianised imagery of the west was just one way of representing the sky as an allegory. He may have picked up this idea from Alexander Dow's 1768 *History of Hindostan* or from Payne Knight's essay in comparative religion, the sensational *Account of the remains of the Worship of Priapus lately existing in Isernia*, published in 1786. Knight, for whom Turner worked in 1808, was deeply anti-religious but the orientalist William Jones, who greatly influenced Turner, was both a devout Christian and respectful of Hinduism. Jones' work on oriental languages which spanned the years 1770-94 stated that there must be a relationship between the Hindu and classical Greek Pantheons, and that both were fundamentally expressions of the sun. He concluded,

It seems a well-founded opinion that the whole crowd of gods and goddesses in ancient Rome and modern Varanes [Varanasi], mean only the powers of nature, and principally those of the SUN, expressed in a variety of ways, and by a multitude of fanciful names.¹

From Turner's statement, 'the Sun is God' I propose the use of the phrase the 'sun-as-god', to describe the theory that all major male deities originated as solar gods.

Enlightenment Radicalism: the astronomical origin of religion

These three separate strands of inquiry (investigation into the astronomical origin of religion, the universal symbolism of the sun and the long-chronology of the yugas) were combined by the French Enlightenment radical Jean Sylvain Bailly (1736-1793). Bailly expounded his arguments on the astronomical origin of religious forms in two major works, *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne* (1775) and *Traite de l'astronomie indienne et orientale* (1787). Bailly believed that a highly scientific civilisation had existed before the Deluge, an idea he discussed in correspondence with Voltaire who himself thought it quite likely that 'long before the empires of China and India, there had been nations cultured, learned, and powerful', an opinion later cited approvingly by H.P. Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society (1888: II.742).² However, in the context of late eighteenth-century scholarship this was hardly a controversial idea, finding its rationale in Plato's own account of the destruction of Atlantis (*Timaeus* 24E-25D). Bailly discussed the supposed beginning of the Kali Yuga, the current era of Hindu chronology, in 3102 BC, by which time, he calculated, the vernal point had precessed to the 'Eye of Taurus' (the star Aldebaran) (Bailly 1787: xlvii, xxix). In other words, the sun rose in Taurus at the spring equinox.

Bailly's work was developed by his fellow radicals Charles Dupuis (1781; 1795; 1857; 1875) and François Henri Stanislas Delaunay's 1791 work, *L'Histoire générale et particulière des religions et du Culte*, an attempt to establish the foundation of religion in astral worship. Delaunay was the first to consider the implications of the precession of the vernal point into Aquarius which he thought had taken place in 1726. This was too close to Delaunay's own time for him to specify its cultural correlations. Instead he wrote simply 'Plus de changements' (Curry, Campion and Halbronn, 1992: 89). Dupuis' ideas were also propagated by his radical colleague Constantin François de Volney in his shorter, more polemical, *Les ruines des empires* (1791), an English translation of which appeared in 1795, four years later. Both *Les ruines* and Volney's earlier argument in favour of nature religion, *The Law of Nature, or Catechism of a French citizen*

(1793) were translated into English, the former in 1795, after which Volney became one of the most influential freethinkers in the English and French-speaking worlds. According to Joscelyn Godwin (1994: 35), 'The *Ruins* became one of the foundational works of free thought in the English-speaking world, causing its author's name to be coupled with that of Voltaire as religion's greatest foe'. A more romantic strand of thought, though, was represented by Fabre D'Olivet (1768-1813), described as 'the great metaphysician of Esotericism of the nineteenth century' (Sperling 1975: iii), who discussed precession in connection with the Hindu Yugas in 1813 (D'Olivet 1975: 70-71).

The sun-as-god theory was well known in England by the mid-1790s. It entered radical circles with the publication of Volney's *Les ruines* in 1795 and was felt worthy of a serious rebuttal by the radical dissenter Joseph Priestly (1797) and a scathing parody by John Prior Estlin (1797: 35-85). The first major evangelist for the sun-as-god theory in England was the anticlerical deist (and former Tory MP and diplomat) Sir William Drummond (see Godwin 1979b). He was followed by Samson Arnold Mackey (see Godwin 1994: 68-76) who, in 1822, published the *Mythological Astronomy of the Ancients Demonstrated*, in which he expounded at great length on the mythological significance of changes in the stars' apparent location, the Golden Age, the yugas, his own invention, the age of horror, and the new idea that ten avatars incarnate on the earth to teach as the astrological ages change (Mackey 1822: 17-18, 25). The 'sun-as-god' theory became a staple of English radical deism and atheism and the solar nature of all deities was preached by Robert Taylor (1831: 30). Godfrey Higgins (1772-1833), meanwhile expounded at length on the changing forms of religious worship as the signs of the zodiac precessed over the vernal point. (1836: I.34-5, 43). Paraphrasing Taylor, he wrote, 'the history of the sun is the history of Jesus Christ' (1836: II.144; see also I. 24-6, 152, 264, 634, 637). In apocalyptic mood, he looked forward to a 'new aera' (1836: I,268, 638, II.445; see also Heelas 1996: 17).

The sun-as-god school lost its political radicalism but gained mainstream respectability with the work of Max Müller, or Mueller (1823-1900), the nineteenth-century's most distinguished orientalist and 'one of the founding fathers of the "science of religion"' (Klimkett 1987: 154). His *Ancient Hindu Astronomy and Chronology* (1862) introduced Europeans to an authoritative survey of the Hindu system of yugas or great ages, and detailed discussion of precession as a dating method for Indian civilisation. In the history of religious studies Müller is revered as the founder of the scientific study of religion and of comparative religion (Sharpe 1986: 35-41, Pals 1996: 3-4, Thrower: 1999: 106). Yet he followed firmly in the French tradition of Baillie, Delaunaye, Dupuis and Volney; the main distinction between his work and theirs being the detail and quality of his argument. He believed that the development of religion since earliest times was a decline from an original pure religion of nature focussed, as all seasonal beliefs must be, on the sun, the 'father in heaven' (Müller 1873: 276; see also 172). Müller's disciples included, as Sharpe admits, the eminent classicist, the Rev. George William Cox (1827-1902), whose series of popular expositions of sun-as-god theory included the *Manual of Mythology* (1867), *The Mythology of the Aryan Nations* (1870) and *Introduction to the Science of Comparative Mythology and Folklore* (1881).

Panbabylonianism

The sun-as-god school was to face a rival from 1874, when the first Mesopotamian cuneiform inscriptions were published by Archibald Sayce in *The Astronomy and Astrology of the Babylonians*. Sayce became one of the most influential of the Panbabylonians who, without denying the antiquity of Indian culture championed by Müller, argued that Babylonian cosmology had reached its final, complete form by 4,000 BCE at which time it provided the basis for the original version of near-eastern religion. Discussion of precession of the equinoxes was crucial to attempts to identify the date of Babylonian creation of the zodiac. Although Panbabylonianism was

discredited by the early years of the twentieth- century (Cumont 1960: 5), their theories were influential in the last quarter of the nineteenth and have remained so amongst proponents of a technologically sophisticated Golden Age.³ The extant Babylonian astronomical texts indicate no known knowledge of precession (Hunger and Pingree 1999: 200-2), but the argument that they were familiar with it was to lend immense credibility to the previous arguments that religious forms evolved to conform with precession.

Theosophical Cosmology and Historiography

This was the intellectual milieu in which H.P. Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875. The society may be the most important single institutional influence on the New Age movement, if only because of its global reach, from the United States to France, Britain, Germany and India, and the number of leading intellectuals who were members in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries (see Campbell 1980). Blavatsky set herself two goals. The first was to recover what she considered to be the lost wisdom of a once universal human civilisation by bringing together its surviving fragments from Indian, Platonic, Hermetic and Kabbalistic thought. The second was to form a body of people who, by studying and practicing ancient wisdom, could prepare the world for the imminent shift into a new historical era. Influenced by the German idealist philosopher George Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), whose theories of history, she argued, had 'their application in the teachings of Occult science' (Blavatsky 1888: I.641), Blavatsky set out her theory of cyclical history, in which complex patterns of cycles regulate a cosmos in which physical evolution is dependent on spiritual evolution.

The revolution of the physical world, according to the ancient doctrine, is attended by a like revolution in the world of intellect - the spiritual evolution of the world proceeding in cycles, like the physical one.

Thus we see in history a regular alternation of ebb and flow in the tide of human progress. The great kingdoms and empires of the world, after reaching the

culmination of their greatness, descend again, in accordance with the same Law by which they ascended; till, having reached the lowest point, humanity reasserts itself and mounts up once more, the height of its attainment being, by this law of ascending progression by cycles, somewhat higher than the point from which it had before descended (1888: I.641).

When Blavatsky published *The Secret Doctrine* in 1888, both the sun-as-god school and Panbabylonianism were still powerful and academically reputable approaches to the histories of religion and astronomy. Blavatsky cited Sayce approvingly (1888 I.320, II. 203, 226, 691, 693; see also 1877, II. pp. 459-65), finding support for her own theories of the antiquity of ancient civilisation in his extension of the date for the high point of Babylonian civilisation back to 4000 BCE. She disapproved of Müller's argument that all mythology was a disease of language (1888: I.304) yet the assumptions of the sun-as-god school pervade her work equally. She supported the interpretation of Old Testament stories as allusions to the twelve zodiac signs, going as far as to state that 'the whole scheme is built upon' such metaphors. Yet she was contemptuous of attempts to claim that the zodiacal links were specifically Jewish or Christian rather than universal (1888: 649-503).⁴

Blavatsky had read Volney (1877: I. 24, 268, 347, II: 142, 288, 456), Bailly (see 1877. I. 171; 1888 II), and Dupuis (1877 I.24; 1888: I.652, II.32). She cited Higgins extensively and discussed Bailley's and Dupuis' opinions on the yugas and origin of religion (1877: I. 24, 347), acknowledging the solar origin of all male deities (see for example 1877: I.48, 270; 1888: I.xliii) and discussed theories of world ages, including the Platonic great year (1888: II.784), at great length in *The Secret Doctrine*. She borrowed from Mackey a concern with the movement of the poles (1888: 2: 353-4, 785-6) and the yugas (1888: I.664-665, II.68-70), her essential argument being that 'the history of the world since its formation and to its end "is written in the stars," i.e., is recorded in the Zodiac' (1888: II.438).

Blavatsky had previously set out her zodiacal historiography in *Isis Unveiled* (1877: II. 455-7). Each of the endless series of universes, she wrote, is divided into twelve phases represented by the zodiac. The entire cycle, which begins with Scorpio (equivalent to Cain and destruction), involves a descent from an initial subjective, spiritual condition into a gross, objective state in Pisces (equivalent to Noah and the deluge). The forward movement from Scorpio to Pisces indicates that this is not a precessional cycle, even though Blavatsky notes Volney's opinion on precession (1877: II.456). The cyclical zodiacal process begins in Scorpio and then descends, via a series of Hermetically-inspired racial stages (1877: I.295; 1888: II.442-4) to the current, gross, fifth Piscean phase, from which low point humanity will commence its return to its pure, spiritual, subjective condition (1877: II.455-6). She believed that humanity was currently half way through the fifth root race (1888: I.xliii). Following Empedocles, she argued that, when the cycle of existence finally climaxes, the entire universe will dissolve. All humans will either escape from the cycle of existence into nirvana, or will commence a 'new cycle of transformations' (1877: II.456; see also 1877: I.32,342-3). Following Plato, Blavatsky argued that everything in the universe contains soul and that movement between the four natural kingdoms is continuous (1877: I.328-30). Each zodiacal shift is a 'transformation' so profound as to practically constitute an entry into 'a new world' (1877: II. 455). Although she incorporated the Berossian prophecy of alternative destructions by fire and water, she did not specify whether these took place at the junction of zodiacal ages or at the conclusion of the entire cycle (1877: II.455; see also 341). In addition, as matter is 'indestructible and eternal' (1877: I. 328), there could be no real destruction, only transformation into a new state. In spite of the eternal sequence of change, though, the overall nature of the universe is harmony in nature, corresponding to justice in the spiritual world (1877: I.330). The means by which this spiritual harmony is maintained is the geometrical universe of Pythagoras and Plato (1877. I.318).

Blavatsky's achievement was to take sun-as-god theory and turn it from a means of attacking Christianity, by showing that Christ was just another solar deity, to a means of elevating all religion to the same high status formerly occupied, at least in western culture, by Christianity alone. By embedding the theory in the neo-Platonic and Hermetic traditions, reinforced by eastern teachings and communications from her 'Masters', she turned the idea that, if all religion had a common origin, it must all be equally meaningless, into the certainty that, as the legacy of the once universal ancient civilisation, all religions shared a core of profound truth. These truths were revealed by a succession of great teachers and revealed as the universe evolved from one epoch to another, a process timed by the movements of the stars over great periods of time.

The Age of Aquarius: Gerald Massey

Blavatsky had no awareness of the concept of the Age of Aquarius and included just one reference to the sign Aquarius, inspired by the poet, Chartist, spiritualist and ardent sun-as-god evangelist, Gerald Massey. This concerned his reading of the twelve tablets of the Nimrod epic as a solar allegory (1888: II.353). It was Massey who elaborated on previous sun-as-god theorising to produce a meaningful scheme which explained world history and the evolution of religion according to the precession of the equinoxes. His ideas were set out in detail in *The Natural Genesis* (1883), *The Coming Struggle* (1873), a discussion of the contemporary meaning of the apocalyptic texts in Ezekiel and Daniel, and *The Hebrew and Other Creations* (1887b). He linked the Platonic Year to his 'Equinoctial Christianity' and, adding Blavatsky's belief in successions of world saviours, wrote,

The birthplace (of the divine child, the Messiah or the mythos) was always that of the equinoctial colure,⁵ whether the sign of the Fishes, the Ram, the Bull or any preceding sign (1883: II.337, see also 1887: 7).

Massey was as bitterly anti-Christian as the French radicals, and held true to their anticlerical principles. By distorting its true astronomical nature, he argued, Christianity

had turned the sun from a symbol of life to one of death. In his opinion, paraphrasing Dupuis,

The Christian religion is responsible for enthroning the cross of death in heaven...(and had) taught man to believe that the vilest spirit may be washed white, in the atoning blood of the purest, offered up as a bribe to an avenging God. The Christian Cult has fanatically fought for its false theory and waged incessant warfare against Nature and Evolution (1887: 25).

Crucially, though, Massey took the step which his predecessors had declined to do and anticipated the Messiah of the next precessional stage, that of the Waterman (Aquarius) though without yet mentioning the phrase 'Age of Aquarius': he wrote that the prophecy that a Messiah will be born again,

will be...fulfilled when the Equinox enters the sign of the Waterman [Aquarius] about the end of this century, to which the Samaritans are still looking forward for the coming of their Messiah, who has not yet arrived for them (1887: 8).

Massey's work was later taken up in his own time by Karl Anderson (1892), who examined astrology's role in the Bible and by George Saint Clair (1898, 1901, 1907), who documented what he saw as the role of precession as a model for Greek, Egyptian and near-eastern mythology. Massey's legacy is still evident in modern 'alternative archaeology', 'earth mysteries' and 'sacred geography', which provide a cultural milieu in which the belief that precession is historically significant flourishes.⁶ His work has remained an inspiration for later astrologers for whom the beginning of the Age was of crucial significance, including the theosophist H.S. Green, a close associate of Alan Leo, as well as of Dane Rudhyar and Alan Oken⁷ (see chapter 6).

The Age of Aquarius: Astrologers

Apocalyptic traditions were evident in the work of a number of leading nineteenth-century British astrologers, including Robert Cross Smith (1795-1832), who published astrological books, magazines and almanacs under the angelic pseudonym Raphael.

Smith claimed that the Jupiter-Saturn conjunction in Aries in 1821 inaugurated the apocalyptic period which would include the Jewish rebuilding of Jerusalem, around 1849, all the disasters prophesied in Revelation, and the death of a third of the world's population. His edition of the *Prophetic Messenger*, published in 1828, announced that its purpose was to prepare humanity for the coming of the kingdom at the end of the nineteenth century (Godwin 1994: 145). Richard Morrison (1795-1874), who wrote under the pseudonym Zadkiel, was described as a Christian supremacist who believed in the 'pure religion of the heart' and devoured the 'idea of a community based on love of one's neighbour', ideas possibly, in Godwin's opinion, taken from Samson Arnold MacKey (Godwin 1994: 177).

Within this context Massey's work on precessions spread fast, assisted by Theosophical expectations of the coming historical shift. In spite of a century of debate about the religious significance of precession, astrologers themselves were slow to incorporate it into their work, and the earliest known reference to the precessional ages occurred in the English astrologer A.J. Pearce's *The Textbook of Astrology*. Pearce put forward a theory of religious evolution, in which, paraphrasing Higgins,

the Sun was named, universally Buddha and was worshipped accordingly under that appellation' in the age of Gemini,⁸ was known as 'Heifer Baal' in the Age of Taurus and as 'Bel-aram' in the Age of Aries (1879: 1.10).

There is a clear lineage of ideas underpinning Pearce's model of religious development, dating back to late eighteenth-century arguments that Indian religion was the oldest on earth, that Buddhism was both a solar religion (O'Brien 1832) and the original form of Brahmanism (Blavatsky 1877 II.123) and that the original Christianity was essentially Buddhist (Blavatsky 1877 II.123, Higgins 1833-6, see Godwin 1994: 83). In particular Pearce cited Higgins' view, from book 1, chapter 1 of *Anacalypsis*, that the four faces of the cherubim (man, ox, lion and eagle) were defined as the four cardinal points of the zodiac when the vernal point was in Taurus, after 4000 BC (1880: 216). However,

Pearce stuck to the standard interpretation that Christianity's origins corresponded to the vernal point's passage through Aries rather than, as Massey was arguing at the same time, Pisces. In Pearce's opinion,

From the remotest antiquity there has existed a belief that the world was created at the vernal equinox. It is a remarkable fact that the Christian era is connected with the epoch of the vernal equinox in Aries - the scriptural ram or lamb (1889: 2.15).

However, Pearce made no mention of the Age of Pisces and uttered no prophecy of the Age of Aquarius. His interest was in demonstrating astrology's role in the history of religion, rather than with any immediate apocalyptic concerns.

The Nature of the Age of Aquarius

The general view of the Aquarian Age's nature and characteristics was formed in the 1880s and has changed little since then. A formative description, which directly links nineteenth-century ideas to Renaissance Hermeticism, was given in a text issued to its members by the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (Godwin 1994: 337, 345, 357-8). This was *La Clef*, a commentary on a work by John Trithemius (1462-1516) on the angelic rulers of the seven ages of the world entitled *The Secondaries, or Ruling Intelligences Who, After God, Actuate the Universe*. Each age was 354 years and 4 months long and was ruled by one of the planetary angels. However, the Hermetic Brotherhood's commentator reduced the length to 308 years, so that seven ages added up to one precessional age of 2156 years.⁹ The Brotherhood was set up in 1884 as a specific reaction to the Theosophical Society's reliance on Indian teachings and attempted to relocate western esotericism in a European context. According to the text's anonymous commentator the world had entered the seventh of the latest phase of ages, that of Michael, related to the sun, on 21 December 1880, and the Age of Aquarius in February 1881. Others disagreed. For example, Eliphas Levi thought that the Michael Age was to begin in 1879 (Godwin 1994: 345).

The fact that 1881 was cited subsequently as the beginning of the Age of Aquarius suggests that the Brotherhood's literature had entered the general astrological world. One such statement was made in 1952 in a lecture to the Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society in London by John Addey, who was later President of the Astrological Association. In his summary of Addey's lecture, Charles Carter, the Lodge's President, stated that,

According to an old tradition, the source of which he [Addey] preferred not to divulge, the Aquarian Age had begun when the Sun entered Aquarius in 1881 (At the Lodge 1952: 91).¹⁰

According to one of H.P. Blavatsky's closest companions in London, the astrologer Sepharial, writing in 1925, this date was based on the length of the Great Gallery of the Great Pyramid of Giza, 1881 inches (Williams 1977/8: 19). Sepharial referred to the Aquarian Age as the 'Age of Knowledge', a description reminiscent of the Hermetic Brotherhood's description of the Age's first phase, the Age of Michael:

This will be a period of Imperial Greatness, Empires will shine full of glory, the Human intellect will have full play and all Churches, Religious Creeds and Ecclesiastical Dogmas will fall to the ground and become things of the past. Parsons, Vicars and Bishops will have to work in different fields if they mean to obtain an honest livelihood. Yes, I repeat this prophecy. The Churches and Chapels will fall with a terrible crash, and be destroyed. But from their ashes, Phoenix-like, shall arise a new Religion, whose shining Motto will be: Veritas Excelsior, Truth Above. This era shall proclaim the rights of man. It is essentially the age of reason dreamed of by Bruno¹¹ and Thomas Paine¹² (Godwin 1994: 358).

With the exception of the prophecy of Imperial greatness, which was at odds with the Age of Aquarius' normal egalitarian character, the Hermetic Brotherhood's statement set the model for descriptions of the Aquarian Age. Although the Hermetic Brotherhood's prophecy envisaged the destruction of the old church, the new religion was heavily influenced by Christian esotericism, including Swedenborgianism. The late 1870s and early 1880s had witnessed a tension in the Theosophical Society between the 'easterners' and the 'westerners' (Godwin 1994: 338, 340, 344) The latter who found a home in Britain in The Hermetic Society, elevated esoteric Christianity above the esoteric Buddhism of the easterners, and initiated a strand of theosophical thought in

which 'the Christ' is the major teacher and which may be seen as a reforming branch of Christianity. Rudolf Steiner and Alice Bailey were to be part of the 'western' school. Godwin has already noted that Raphael and Zadkiel, the two leading astrologers of the early and mid-nineteenth century, were attracted respectively to Christian apocalypticism and a possibly Swedenborgian Christianity based on love for one's neighbour (Godwin 1994: 145, 177).

The theosophist Max Heindel (1865-1919) gave what may have been the first relatively detailed version of the astrological ages in his *The Message of the Stars*, first published in the 1900s. Heindel joined the Theosophical Society after moving to Los Angeles in 1903 and formed the Rosicrucian Fellowship after 1907 and his teaching, writing and publishing activities made him an important figure in the spread of astrology in the early-twentieth century (Holden and Hughes 1988: 75; Melton, Clark and Kelly 1991: 290-1). The Aquarian Age, he announced, 'will be illuminated and vivified by the solar precession, for the upliftment of the Son of Man (Aquarius), by the Christ within, the Lion of Judah (Leo), to the estate of Superman' (1929a: 12). He considered it likely that the Age will bring Christ's second coming, the 'wedding feast of the Higher Self to the lower' (1929a: 13). Heindel's Christ was 'the Christ', the cosmic Christ, who may manifest in different periods, as he did in around 2,500 BCE when he inaugurated the Arien Age and the religion of the Lamb (1929a: 25). Christ was the great 'Sun spirit' and the sun is 'exalted' in Aries, the ruling sign of the first Age of the Arien Epoch (1929a: 28). Heindel concludes his section on the Ages with a proclamation of the salvation to be expected as the Age of Aquarius dawns. By sacrificing himself,

Christ, the Son of Man, Aquarius, is born within us. Thus, gradually the third phase of the Aryan religion will be ushered in and a new ideal will be found in the Lion of Judah, Leo. Courage of conviction, strength of character and kindred virtues will then make man truly the King of Creation, worthy of the trust and the confidence of the power orders of life as well as of the love of the Divine Hierarchs above.

This, the mystic message of Man's evolution, is marked in flaming characters upon the field of heaven, where he who runs may read. And when we study the

revealed purpose of God, we shall in turn learn to conform intelligently to that design, thereby hastening the day of emancipation from our present cramped environment to the perfect liberty of free Spirits, risen superior to the law of Sin and Death, through Christ, the Lord of Love and Life (1929a: 29).

The cosmic Christ, as lord of the Aquarian Age, but with a typically theosophical regard for the east, was the focus of Levi Dowling's 1907 *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*. This gospel was reputedly channelled from the Akashic records which claimed that Jesus had studied with Buddhists and Brahmins (Levi 1980; see also Newport, 1998: 161). 'The Christ', as opposed to the Jesus Christ of mainstream Christianity, was defined in another of Levi's channelled texts as the God of Love, the son of the Almighty God, the God of thought. A Christ, as opposed to the Christ, is the teacher, the 'master spirit' allotted 'to every world and star and moon and sun' (Levi 1980: 12).

Rudolf Steiner

Heindel's work was paralleled by Rudolf Steiner, leader of the German Theosophical Society until 1912, after which he left to found his Anthroposophical Society (see Steiner 1980; Ahern 1984).¹³ Steiner developed a historical cosmology which postulated a major shift into a new spiritual age, known by later advocates, including Robert Powell, as the New Age (Powell 1999: I; see also 1,9, 14, 54; 1987: 82-4; 1989: 327, 335, 337; Vreede 2001: 204-7).

Steiner also relied on the Indian yugas, arguing that the Kali Yuga had commenced in 3101 BCE (Steiner 1983: 77), arguing that it had inaugurated a loss of any ability to connect with or directly observe the spiritual world, to which access could then only be gained through initiation. Then, in 1899, Steiner argued, the Kali Yuga had come to an end, giving way to the Satya Yuga, the new Golden Age, the age of light (Steiner 1983: 15, 36-7, 77, 82, 96; Leviton 1994: 81-84). This age, Steiner predicted, was to bring an essential democratisation of spirituality in that the incarnation of souls with the

appropriate faculties would eventually open contact with the spiritual realms, including Shamballa, the home of the theosophical Masters, to everyone (Steiner 1983: 87). Humanity, in short, was to be transformed. In 1910 Steiner noted that,

There is much talk about periods of transition. We are indeed living just at the time when the Dark Age has run its course and a new epoch is just beginning, in which human beings will slowly and gradually develop new faculties and in which human souls will gradually undergo a change...What is beginning at this time will slowly prepare humanity for new soul faculties (Steiner 1983: 15).

Steiner envisaged a time scale in which, although relatively few souls with these new faculties were being born at the time of writing, 1910, the number was set to increase sharply between 1930 and 1940, with 1933, 1935 and 1937 being especially significant:

Faculties that now are quite unusual for human beings will then manifest themselves as natural abilities. At this time great changes will take place, and Biblical prophecies will be fulfilled (Steiner 1983: 15).

The key event of the beginning of the age of light is Christ's second coming but not in physical form. Steiner insists that he will never again take on a material body, but only exist in the atmosphere, as he did after his crucifixion. 'Christ is always present', he wrote, 'but He is in the spiritual world; we can reach Him if we raise ourselves into that world' (Steiner 1983: 19; see also 17-18, 20, 39).

In Steiner's astrology precession was regarded as an essential guide to the universe's spiritual evolution and hence to the individual's relationship with the cosmic whole (Vreede 2001: 101). Steiner elaborated on Blavatsky's system of world ages in his *Occult Science* (1969), published in German in 1909, in a series of lectures given in Helsinki in 1912 (Steiner 1981b). His foundational lectures for the Anthroposophical Society in 1923-4, made it clear, on behalf of the society's new members, that their purpose was to 'dedicate ourselves in selfless cultivation of the spiritual life' at the

current 'turning-point of worlds' (Steiner 1977: 150). Steiner differed from Blavatsky in his emphasis on esoteric Christianity and the central role he attributed to the 'Christ-Will' which 'holds sway in the Rhythms of the Worlds' and is analogous to the sun and light (1977: 152-3). He was also influenced by the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor's teaching on the coming of the Age of Michael (Godwin 1994: 345); David Spangler (1975: 50) described Michael as 'the managing director', representing 'the power of the Christ as it brings things into manifestation, that is the creative power of the Christ' (Spangler 1975: 70). Michael's purpose was to invite human beings 'to manifest their freedom by perceiving spirit in matter - *as* matter - in a day time, wakeful cognition' (1994: 73). In 1910 Steiner noted that,

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C.G. Jung

From the 1910s onwards, the early part of his career, the 'sun-as-god' theme was developed strongly by C.G. Jung, whose theories on the matter, according to Hanegraaff, represent a 'Cult of the Interior Sun' (1996: 501). Hanegraaff relies heavily

on Richard Noll who in turn identified a strong influence from Max Müller within Jung's solar mythology (Noll 1994: 116-123). Noll notes that Jung adds 'libido' and 'hero' to the existing list of solar correspondences (light, god, father, fire, heat) and notes that the matching of external and internal qualities encourages the notion of a god within (Noll 1994: 120), which was to be central both to his psychotherapy and to New Age thought. In Jung's theology Christ became a symbol primarily of the self rather than the sun, although his portrayal as a fish in early Christian iconography was indicative of the manner in which human psychic projection onto the universe shifted when the vernal point moved into Pisces (Jung 1959a). Like Massey and Blavatsky, neither of whom he cited, Jung was concerned with precession's deeper numinous meaning. Nevertheless, the belief that early Christians were consciously aware that their new religion was signified in the heavens by precession of the vernal point from Aries to Pisces is widely accepted amongst astrologers (Jacobs 1995: 119).

Jung also followed Massey's opinion that precession of the vernal point into Pisces coincided with the origins of Christianity. He set out a historical philosophy in which cultural change follows shifts in the collective unconscious which, in turn, are revealed by psychic projections on to the cosmos. Jung argued that,

If, as seems probable, the aeon of the fishes is ruled by the archetypal motif of the hostile brothers, then the approach of the next Platonic month, namely Aquarius, will constellate the problem of the union of opposites. It will then no longer be possible to write off evil as the mere privation of good; its real existence will have to be recognised. This problem can be recognised neither by philosophy, nor by economics, nor by politics, but only by the individual being, via his experience of the loving spirit, whose fire descended upon Joachim, one of many, and, despite all contemporary misunderstandings, was handed onward into the culture. The solemn proclamation of the *Assumptio Mariae* which we have experienced in our own day is an example of the way symbols develop through the ages. The impelling motive behind it did not come from the ecclesiastical authorities, who had given clear proof of their hesitation by postponing the declaration for nearly a hundred years, but from the Catholic masses, who have insisted more and more vehemently on this development. Their insistence is, at bottom, the urge of the archetype to realise itself (Jung, 1959a: 87).

Jungian analyst Ean Begg, speaking at the Astrological Association conference on 9 August 1999, represented the Aquarian Age tendency amongst Jungians, announcing that 'The eclipse we have come here to celebrate foretells the world's entry into the New Age... We have to sort out all that was repressed in the Age of Pisces before we can move into the next thing... There is unfinished business'.¹⁴ Begg also reported a discussion with Gret Baumann Jung, Jung's daughter and herself an astrologer, after the BBC's centenary documentary on Jung in 1975. Begg asked her what she thought her father's major contribution was. In his account she responded 'I don't like to talk about it, but I think that he was one of the people sent to prepare for the Age of Aquarius' (Begg 2000: 22).

Chapter Summary

The use of the precession of the equinoxes as a means of dividing historical epochs has no basis in astrological tradition prior to the late nineteenth-century. It emerged out of late eighteenth-century radicalism and the attempt to establish sun-worship as the original form of all religion, including Christianity, an argument I have described as the 'sun-as-god' theory. The logical consequence of this proposition is that the forms of religious worship would have changed as precession of the equinoxes caused the stars to shift against the sun's location at the spring equinox. Whereas radicals such as Bailey and Dupuis used this argument to demonstrate the meaninglessness of all religious iconography others, such as Fabre D'Olivet and Godfrey Higgins, who were no less opposed to mainstream Christianity, began to regard precession as revealing essentially meaningful shifts in religious forms. Although H.P. Blavatsky was highly influential in popularising such work via the Theosophical Society, it was Gerald Massey, whose work she also cites, who, in 1883, produced the first substantial argument that different precessional eras were expressed through the world's religions. The first astrologer to use these arguments was Alfred Pearce in 1879. By the 1900s the concept of a current or imminent shift into a new precessional age was central to the work of Rudolf Steiner

and of a move into the Age of Aquarius to Max Heindel. The prophecy that the New Age, as a future era, is inevitable, is therefore dependent on the astrological prediction of the Age of Aquarius. This prediction, though, relies on an application of astronomy that marks a break with the traditional means of astrological apocalyptic prediction, celestial signs and wonders on the one hand, and Jupiter-Saturn conjunctions on the other. In addition, precession of the equinoxes was, for eighteen-hundred years, considered a problem for astrology. Its adoption as the basis of a new form of astrological historiography in the late nineteenth-century may therefore conform to Heelas definition of New Age astrology as 'detraditionalised' (1996: 23)

Notes

1. A.M. Jones (ed.), *The Works of Sir William Jones with the life of the author by Lord Teignmouth*, London 1807, vol. 3, p 385-6, cited in Gage, Turner, p 42.

2. Citing Voltaire, *Lettres sur l'Atlantide*, p. 15.

3. See Santillana, Giorgio de and von Dechend, Hertha, *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay Investigating the Origins of Human Knowledge and its Transmission through Myth*, Boston Mass: David R. Godine 1977 (1st edn. 1969); Sellers, Jane B., *The Death of the Gods in Ancient Egypt*, London: Penguin 1992.

4. See also Blavatsky 1877, II. pp. 456-68.

5. The colure is the intersection of two great circles, in this case the celestial equator and the ecliptic, the point the sun occupies at the spring equinox.

6. See Campbell (1979), de Santillana von Dechend (1969: 326), Bauval and Gilbert (1994), Hancock (1995), Vidler (1998), Gilbert (2000), Ulansey (1989), Fideler (1993), Lockyer (1894; 1906), West and Toonder (1973) and Schwaller de Lubicz (1949) and Michel (1969), the latter the foundation text of the modern 'earth mysteries movement' (see Sullivan 2000).

7. H.S. Green argued that the Aquarian Age began in 1900, citing Massey, *The Hebrew and Other Creations*, in *Modern Astrology*, April 1912. The same date was reproduced in the *Magazine of the American Rosae Crucis*, cited by a correspondent in the *British Journal of Astrology*, September 1916, Vol. IX, no. 12. The date was also repeated by Pauline Stone in a lecture at Astrological Association conference, 9 September 1990, based on a date of 254 BC for the beginning of the Age of Pisces citing Alan Oken, *As Above, So Below*, but without a detailed reference. Dane Rudhyar argued that the Aquarian Age began in 1905, also citing Massey, assuming a starting date for the Age of Pisces in 255 BC and a rate of precession of thirty degrees in 2,160 years. See Rudhyar 1969, p. 115.

8. Gemini is ruled by Mercury, which is known as Budha in India.

9. Trithemius' work is on line at www.geocities.com/seersnz/de_septum_secundeis.htm. See also Godiwn 1994, p. 358.

10. Sepharial, quoted in David Williams, 1977/8; Elbert Benjamin (C.C.Zain - see above); W. P. Swaison in *The Occult Review* (February 1925), quoted in Julius Bennet, *The Riddle of the Aquarian Age*, p. 20, published by the London Astrological Research Society, 1926.

11. Giordano Bruno, the Hermeticist and radical thinker, 1548-1600.

12. Thomas Paine, the English radical and author of *Commonsense* (1776), *The Rights of Man* (1791) and *Age of Reason* (1793), 1737-1809.

13. For Steiner's influence on modern astrologers see Matthews 1984: 75 and Straker 2000: 63.

14. For Begg's own Jungian analysis of the shift of the astrological ages see Begg, Ean, *Myth and Today's Consciousness*, London: Coventure 1984.

Prophecy Cosmology and the New Age Movement The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology

Part 2

Chapter 4

The New Age

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses current theories concerning the origins and nature of the contemporary New Age movement. The purpose is to identify its principal characteristics and provide a basis for discussion in subsequent chapters for its relationship to the Age of Aquarius and to the question of components of New Age thought in contemporary astrology.

Introduction

There is some confusion over the origins of the New Age movement, which is perhaps not surprising for there is no single history of it. It is assumed to be a contemporary millenarian movement, an argument set out by evangelical critics (Miller 1990: 27), and assumed by academic commentators (Davie 1994: 83; Hanegraaff 1996: 96, 98-103; Sutcliffe 2003: 9, 11, 17). There has, though, been little attempt to document this, other than Lemesurier's popular text (1990). Lemesurier's conclusion is that, as a millenarian phenomenon, the New Age movement shares common roots with other movements which may have millenarian characteristics, such as Marxism, progress theory and evolutionary Darwinism (1990: 4-5; see also Campion 1994; Hexham and Powe 1997: 93-6). The most reliable academic texts, by Lewis and Melton (1992), York (1995), Hanegraaff (1996), Heelas (1996), Sutcliffe (2003) and Kemp (2004), are all contemporary studies which locate New Age beliefs in the past but without tracing those connections in detail. For example York (1995: 1) summarises the New Age's debt to the American metaphysical tradition, transcendentalism, Theosophy, Swedenborgianism, New Thought, eastern religious philosophies and practices and

'other European non-mainstream developments' while Alexander (1992: 30-47) elaborates on the influence of Theosophy and New Thought, and Diem and Lewis examine the influence of Hinduism (1992: 48-58). Wessinger (1997: 53) meanwhile refers to the direct transmission of theosophical millenarianism to the modern New Age movement.

The pseudonymous New Age author Leo, who should not be confused with Alan Leo, writing in the 1930s or 40s, acknowledged the millenarianism nature of Aquarian Age ideas when he wrote that 'Those who have been trained in another terminology would use the term, *The Millennium* to describe the spiritual reality of it' (Leo: 7).

The derivation of the term 'New Age'

The term New Age appeared in the 1790s and 1800s in the works of Volney (1795: 127-133) and William Blake (Hanegraff 1996: 95 n.6; see also Raine 1979: viii). However, as Ellwood pointed out (1973: 64, 66; see also Stanley 1988; Heelas 1996: 17), the concept of the New Age as one of spiritual enlightenment is directly derived from the teachings of the Christian reformer Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1782). There may also be a lineage of teachings derived from Joachim of Fiore, the thirteenth-century spiritual Franciscan whose apocalyptic prophecy focussed on the coming spiritual Age of the Holy Ghost, which he believed was to begin in 1260 (Reeves 1969, 1976; see also Hanegraaff 1976). Swedenborg, though, is clearly the direct modern inspiration for the notion of a spiritual New Age. Influenced by the argument that, in a sense, the Kingdom of God was already present, one only had to look for it (see Mark 16.43; Strahan 1913: 333-4), Swedenborg argued that the *parousia* had occurred in 1757 but only on a spiritual level (Garrett 1984: 69). Swedenborg's followers in London formed themselves into 'The Theosophical Society Instituted for the Purpose of Promoting the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem' and, after 1787, the 'New Church'. They thrived briefly in the millenarian context of late eighteenth-century

England in which 'Spiritual enlightenment and human regeneration would come about through events on this earth, including both natural and political, until the wicked had been defeated' (Garrett 1984: 67). There was an emphasis on the transformation of the world rather than, in traditional Christian millenarianism (at least as a first stage), on its destruction, as well as a profound consciousness of the need for inner change. Garrett cites one Swedenborgian, Richard Clarke, who wrote in 1772, 'In our own *inner* man, lies the foundation of the new Jerusalem' (1984: 68). For a while Swedenborg's vision of a new world aroused considerable enthusiasm and Joseph Priestly wrote in 1791 'This kingdom of Christ, and consequently Swedenborg's doctrine, is speedily to prevail over the whole world, and to continue for ever' (Priestly 1791: 6). Swedenborg's opinion was that, on the one hand the new Jerusalem had begun in 1757, but on the other it was a constant spiritual state to which one could gain access at any moment. Although not acknowledging Swedenborg as a source, this point of view is common in the modern New Age movement. For example, in 1977 David Spangler wrote that 'For each of us the New Age is here now. It has always been here' (1991: 29; see also Lemesurier 1990: 232).

Although the peak of the New Church's popularity passed quickly (Garrett 1984: 81), Swedenborg became a profoundly influential figure in esoteric circles. Blavatsky (1877: I.73; II.471) regarded him as, if not an adept, at least 'the greatest among modern seers', although she kept an open mind on his precise proclamation of the New Jerusalem. Discussing the anthropomorphising of God, a phenomenon which she regarded as distancing humanity from a real understanding of the divine, she cited Swedenborg's solution: that, rather than making God in his own image, 'man imagines God after his own image' and then forgets that 'he has set up his own reflection for worship' (1877: I. 308). This idea, that divinity lies within, remains a central tenet of modern theosophy. A recent summary of theosophy makes it clear, relying heavily on Neo-Platonism for its

authority, that the key to spiritual development is the 'awakening of the inner man' (Farthing 2000: 31-3).

The use of the term New Age crossed the boundaries between mainstream Christianity, Swedenborgianism, spiritualism and psychical research and Theosophy. The publication of the periodical 'The New Age' in 1845 is one of the earliest instances, and Warren Felt Evans published a spiritualist paper called 'The New Age' in the 1850s and a book, *The New Age and its Message*, in 1864 (Heelas 1996: 17). By the 1870s the term became an established metaphor for the Swedenborgian spiritual era and by the 1900s it was being used by Theosophists such as Alfred Orage and Holbrook Jackson, editors of another periodical, *The New Age* (Webb 1980: 195-212, 206).

The Counter Culture

There is a strong body of opinion that the New Age movement dates from the 1960s or later, an argument which was developed in the evangelical literature. As Groothuis put it, 'the often laughable claptrap of the sixties has been replaced by a more mature and completing world view that seeks to draw all areas of life into its confidence' (Groothuis 1986: 51; see also 17, 37-8, 40). The dominant Christian evangelical view was that the New Age movement of the 1970s and 1980s resulted from the unholy alliance of 1960s moral laxity with eastern teachings, especially Hinduism (Baer 1989: 1, 37, 164).¹ The idea that the New Age movement originated in the counter-culture of the 1960s has since become widely accepted in the academic literature, especially since Melton set the launch date as 1971 (1991: xi-xvi, 1).²

The concept of the New Age as a recent, and hence transient, phenomenon has encouraged the view, fuelled by veteran New Agers' anger at the movement's commercialisation in the 1980s (Lemesurier 1990: 185; Spangler 1996: 55), that the New Age is over. Thus Irwin (1991: 17) pronounced the New Age 'dead', Melton

(2001b: 142-3, 8) talks of 'post New-Age' and Massimo (2001: 61-2) discusses the 'Next Age'. However, the New Age culture of the 1970s-1990s should properly be seen as popularisation of the theosophical New Age movement which dates back to the beginning of the twentieth-century.

It is widely acknowledged that contemporary New Age culture's intellectual lineage is to be found in such nineteenth and early twentieth-century movements as New Thought, Theosophy, and individuals such as Bailey, Steiner, Gurdjieff and Ouspensky (York 1995: 1, Alexander 1992). Given that the term New Age was current in theosophical circles from the beginning of the twentieth century, it is unrealistic to argue that New Age culture is a post 1960s phenomenon. David Spangler, who joined a New Age group in the 1950s, proposes an alternative view: that the New Age movement 'piggy backed' on the counter-culture (1993: 86; see also 1996: 55). That is, the New Age movement dates from the 1890s-1900s but became a mass cultural phenomenon in the 1970s. This possibility is suggested by Hanegraaff (1996: 97, 521), who argues that the shift in the 1970s saw the earlier New Age *sensu stricto*, which originated in the late nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century, becoming subsumed within the new and much wider New Age *sensu lato*³ (see below).

The Origins of the New Age Movement

The theosophical prophecy that a New Age was about to begin required, within the framework of Popperian activism, a social and political programme to enable its smooth inauguration. From the moment of its foundation in 1875 The Theosophical Society fulfilled this purpose, having a clear mission to prepare for the coming of the New Age through organised activity, primarily spiritual activity and education.

The Theosophical Society's political project extended to its spin-off groups. In 1928 the Aquarian Foundation, set up by the charismatic leader (and fraudster), Edward Wilson,

also known as Brother XII, in British Columbia, had eight thousand devoted members, including Alfred and Annie Barley, the English theosophical astrologers and confidantes of Alan Leo (Oliphant 1991). Barley had been the sub-editor of Leo's magazine and propaganda vehicle for theosophical astrology, *Modern Astrology* (Leo 1911: 311). The conscious sense of participating in a movement intended to encourage the smooth transition to the New Age extended to the world of theosophical astrology. By 1940 the following slogan had been added to the back cover of the magazine *Astrology*, the quarterly journal of the Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society.

Astrology is no mere system of fortune-telling. It is a universal philosophy founded on demonstrable scientific fact. The object of the Lodge is to form a strong body of earnest students, able to study and promulgate astrological truth, and to purify it from unworthy associations of all sorts. In this work we bespeak the help of every serious student, each according to his or her own capacity (The Work of the Astrological Lodge of London, 1940).

Alice Bailey⁴ was, with the exception of Rudolf Steiner, the most prominent leader of a theosophical splinter group. The group she founded was named the Arcane School. She was quite explicit that she was creating a group of individuals whose purpose was to bring the New Age into being. There are essentially two groups, Bailey argues. On the one hand there are those who are working consciously with the Christ and, on the other, those who are consciously working for greater awareness but are unconscious of the operations of the spiritual Hierarchy. Bailey's work began in 1921 when she and her husband Foster, who was secretary of the Theosophical Association of New York, formed a small meditation group 'to discuss the Plan of the Masters of the Wisdom and to meditate for a while on our part in it' (Bailey 1951: 191). The volume of correspondence generated by her first three books, *Initiation Human and Solar* (1922), *Letters on Occult Meditation* (1922) and *The Consciousness of the Atom*, and her classes on the *Secret Doctrine*, resulted in the formation of the Arcane School in April 1923, with the nucleus of the meditation group as collaborators with Bailey. In 1948 she wrote,

In the age into which we are now emerging, the Aquarian Age, this mode of group work will reach a very high point of development, and the world will be saved and reconstructed *by groups* far more than by individuals...In them is vested a spirit of construction; they are the builders of the new age... They are disciples of the Christ, working consciously and frequently unconsciously for His reappearance (1948:182-3).

Bailey estimated in 1951 that thirty thousand people had passed through the school and that there were 'many hundreds...still with us' (Bailey 1951: 193). In 1937 Bailey had discussed the importance of the creation of groups, a process she began in 1931, in order to bring God's plan into being, and help inaugurate 'the New Age, the Age of Aquarius' (1937: 28). The creation of the educational tools through which the new consciousness could be developed and a new culture built required collective action. She insisted, using italics for emphasis, that '*the new truths of the Aquarian Age can only be grasped as a result of group endeavour*' (1937: 30). Once again Popperian activism is central to the millenarian endeavour. There were, she wrote, different components of the group, of whom one of the most important is the New Group of World Servers, those who 'seek to express the spirit of Christ' (1940: 205) 'conceal and nurture the germ or seed of the new civilisation of the Aquarian Age' (1937: 35).

Alice Bailey's followers maintain the concept of a political programme. For example, in 1984 an advertisement for the Lucis Trust, the organisation set up to perpetuate Alice Bailey's teachings, announced that the

Lucis Trust is dedicated to the establishment of right human relations through Education, spiritual discipline, and meditation. The foundations for a new world order can be established... [through]...group work in preparation for the Aquarian Age (Lucis Trust 1984).

David Spangler, who discovered the New Age through Alice Bailey in 1959 (Spangler 1991: 2), in his two books *Festivals in the New Age* (1975) and *Revelation: the birth of a new age* (1976), brought the term New Age in its Swedenborgian and Baileyite sense into a wider usage (see also Trevelyan 1977). The sense of being part of a movement is important to Spangler (1993: 101), although the term does need further definition. The

difficulty is made clear by William Bloom who simultaneously discusses the nature of the New Age 'movement' (1991: xvi, 2) while denying its existence. In his opinion,

The New Age is neither a movement nor a religion set apart from others. It is not something one can choose or not to join. It is essentially a view of the time we live in and the world we are creating. It is therefore for everyone (1991: xiii).

He continues:

I see the New Age phenomenon as the visible tip of the iceberg of a mass movement in which humanity is reasserting its right to explore spirituality in total freedom (1991: xv-xvi)

In 2002 Steve Nobel, a director of the influential group 'Alternatives', based at St James', Piccadilly, wrote

I often feel that there is something stirring in the hearts and minds of humanity which is the beginning of something potentially quite amazing. Many spiritual teachers are now speaking about a mass awakening of consciousness occurring on the planet (2002: 28).

For Nobel the movement's strength is derived from its collective nature. In 2003 he wrote in the 'Alternatives' newsletter,

The outgoing age of Pisces is said to have lasted for 2000 years and has helped us learn about love, devotion, service through sacrifice, suffering, martyrdom, the individual rather than the community, and dealing with ideological conflict. Now, the coming age of Aquarius offers many new lessons and possibilities such as interdependence, community, cooperation between groups, and co-creation between nature, spirit, and humanity (2003: 1).

That there is still a consciously defined New Age movement is quite clear. A reminder of this was included in the November/December 1998 issue of *Insight*, the journal of the Theosophical Society in England. It set out the Theosophical Society's members' historicist duty in typically activist terms:

it is ourselves we must change. To bring about permanent change for the better in the world, a nucleus is needed of enlightened people, people who have themselves experienced the oneness of life and who act accordingly, so that their every action is quite spontaneously in the interests of the whole as well as in their own interest; this is the ultimate aim of the First Object - and it will take time to achieve...but we must also start with the First Object by changing the keyword of our actions from 'competition' to 'cooperation' (Barton 1998: 6).

Is there a New Age 'Movement'?

There is a substantial debate as to whether there is such a phenomenon as a New Age 'movement'. The issue was first raised in the Christian evangelical literature by Cumbeys (1983), who argued that there was a real worldwide conspiracy, by Groothuis (1986: 14, 32-36; see also Chandler 1989: 17), who argued there was a series of networks rather than a single movement, and Miller (1990: 14) who introduced the term 'metanetwork'. Lewis, following Lemesurier (1990: 183), deals with the issue by citing Eileen Barker on Ludwig Wittgenstein's theory of 'family relationships', in which different concepts and activities are linked by the words used to name and describe them; thus different aspects of the New Age movement may be linked through their similar ideologies rather than through any substantial connection (1992: 6). York's most recent subtle solution is to acknowledge the movement's diversity by referring to New Age movements, in the plural (2003: 15; see also 1995: 22). York (1996: 325) also uses Gerlach and Hine's (1973: 163) definition of a movement as 'a group of people who are organised for, ideologically motivated by, and committed to a purpose which implements some form of personal or social change; who are actively engaged in the recruitment of others; and whose influence spreads in opposition to the established social order within which it originated'. Given that, as York, suggests, the requirement of active recruitment of others may not in itself be a necessary precondition for a group to be categorised as a movement, this simple definition allows for the definition of New Age groups as movements because they may then be defined ideologically rather than institutionally. Gerlach and Hine (1973: 67) also emphasise the extent to which every social structure, as every biological structure, is a system, that different systems are interdependent and overlapping, that the nature of the system may alter depending on one's distance from it and that systems alter in time. The term movement, as a system, then, need not imply a fixed entity either in terms of ideology or organisation.

The New Age *Sensu Stricto* and *Sensu Lato*

One solution to the problem of whether there is or is not a movement is to distinguish two elements within New Age culture, as Steven Sutcliffe recognises (1998: 43 n1). First, there are the small groups of individuals who are well organised, believe that the New Age is coming and that, by their actions, they can actively assist this process. Second, there is the larger community of individuals who may be accustomed to ideas and practices generally included as New Age, whether feng shui, spiritual development, astrology or the use of alternative therapies, but who have either no concept of, or interest in, the approaching entry to the New Age as a major historical shift. Thus it may be possible to define the New Age Movement on the one hand and a general New Age as a cultural phenomenon on the other, without the sheer diversity of the latter compromising the existence of the former.

Lewis and Melton attempted an answer to the problem by developing a two-fold typology of the New Age, proposing a 'narrow' New Age consisting of 'the phenomena, personalities and events featured in the media since the 1980s' on the one hand, and a broad new age consisting of groups who might actually reject the label but still fall inside its scope from an academic point of view on the other (1992: x).

Wouter Hanegraaff provided a model which may be more useful. He distinguished the New Age *sensu stricto*, in a restricted sense, from the New Age *sensu lato*, that is, in a wide sense (1996: 96-103). The restricted New Age has its roots largely in Britain, is heavily Theosophical and Anthroposophical and is concerned with the coming historical transition, the entry into the Age of Aquarius. The restricted New Age, however, is but one component of the wider New Age, which is better defined by the diverse alternative ideas which emerged out of the 1960s counter-culture, is not dependent on the idea of an imminent historical transition and has its roots in the USA, primarily in California and principally in New Thought. Hanegraaff therefore provides

a possible answer to Michael York's question as to whether a formal initiate and a delegate to a creative management training session are both New Agers (1995: 22). The former may be members of the New Age *sensu stricto* and the latter members of the New Age *sensu lato*. The New Age *sensu stricto* is one component of the New Age *sensu lato*, but other parts of the latter may have little in common with the former.

Hanegraaff's typology is very useful and will be used as a model for the analysis of astrology in chapters 6-7 and 11-13. However, it is necessary to clarify the debate further, for there is a real difference between the use of the term New Age in different contexts within the literature on the subject. Three types of definition of New Age may be identified. Types 1 and 2 are emic definitions which reflect the experience and world view of insiders involved in New Age culture. Type 3 reflects the assumptions of the etic literature.

1. A present culture (St. Aubyn 1990) or future world (Bailey 1937/1957) founded in a real phenomenon, a genuine shift of the Ages, tied to objective astronomical motions. This corresponds broadly to Hanegraaff's New Age *sensu stricto*.

2. A genuine cultural shift, one in which the astronomical changes should be seen primarily as a metaphor (Spangler 1993: 88). That is why Thompson (1991: 17) can proclaim that the New Age is over, a nonsensical statement in terms of definition (a). Spangler himself began as an advocate of definition (a) but moved to support for (b) (Spangler 1996: 55). This corresponds broadly to Hanegraaff's New Age *sensu lato*.

3. A cultural phenomenon which has its immediate roots in the 1960s, developed in the 1970s and achieved its high public profile in the 1980s, and in which belief in astronomically measured changes is a minor feature, and in which the validity of the beliefs are (a) either not judged (Lewis and Melton 1992, York 1995, Heelas 1996,

Hanegraaff 1996), (b) critiqued (Bruce 2002) or (c) deemed false (Faber 1996). In this sense New Age is a 'mnemonic device far more than a prophecy' (York 1995: 49).

Defining the New Age

Most of the literature on New Age belief is either written from an evangelical Christian perspective or an academic, sociological one. Indeed Melton (1992: 15) noted the influence of hostile commentaries, especially religious ones, in shaping etc discourse on the New Age. The key features of what is now considered to constitute New Age culture were compiled from works on the counter-culture (Roszak 1969, 1972; Braden 1971; Evans 1971; Satin 1976) and spirituality in the 1960s (Wuthnow 1976; Glock and Bellah 1976). Ferguson's *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1982) established what are now taken as some of the core principles of the New Age world view - 'transformation, innovation, evolution' (1982: 25). It triggered a wave of evangelical Christian attacks on the New Age, beginning with Cumbeys (1983), who argued that there was a tightly organised set of groups and individuals aiming to take over the world on behalf of Satan. New Age culture was seen as a global threat and, quite possibly, a sign of the Last Days, arguments which were developed by other writers.⁵ The most alarming feature of New Age culture, according to such writers was its Gnosticism, belief in the cosmic-Christ and combination of Christian ideas with eastern teachings.

The difficulty of defining even the contemporary New Age is acknowledged by Melton, who attributes the problem to the fact that the major commentaries on it in the 1980s were written from an overtly hostile perspective, both religious and academic (1992: 15). The direct result, he argues, is an absence of unbiased commentary. Yet, the New Age movement is also diverse. As Michael York (1995: 22) writes,

Even the concept of a New Age is vague: on the one hand, there is the formal initiation; and on the other, is someone who attends a t'ai chi ch'uan workshop or a talk by Peter Russell on creative management automatically a New Ager? (1995: 22).

In this respect attempts to define the New Age reflect similar efforts to define the counter-culture (Wuthnow 1976: 12). In Hanegraaff's opinion (1996:2),

the initial fact about the New Age is that it concerns a *label* attached indiscriminately to whatever seems to fit it, on the basis of what are essentially pre-reflexive intuitions. As a result, the New Age means very different things to very different people (1996: 2).

The etic categorisation of groups and individuals is therefore highly problematic (Hanegraaff 1996: 9) and the result is often an appearance of disorder, of a 'movement' in which the differences between groups may be as noticeable as the similarities. Although the description of the New Age as a 'label' can be indiscriminate, especially by external critics such as the sceptic Martin Gardner (1988), it is nevertheless possible to identify a coherent set of ideas. For David Spangler the New Age is essentially experiential, transformational, spiritual and holistic. It is fundamentally, he writes,

a spiritual event, the birth of a new consciousness, a new awareness and experience of life. It is humanity becoming more fully integrated with the being of Gaia, more fully at one with the presence of God (Spangler 1984: 81; see also 1996: 13-23).

Bloom identifies four facets of New Age: new science (including new forms of healing), ecology, new psychology and spiritual dynamics (1991: xvi). For Heelas, New Age beliefs can be summed up as 'self-spirituality' and he sees it as based in the 'self-ethic', the need to take responsibility for one's own actions (1996: 18, 23; see also Miller 1990: 26). Summaries of the core elements of New Age ideology were given first in the evangelical literature, particularly Groothuis (1986: 18-48) and Miller (1990: 17-18, 25-7) and, from there, summarised in the academic literature, especially in Lewis (1992: 6-9), Heelas (1996: 15-40) and Bruce (2003: 83-85, 89-101). Most of these qualities are also identified in studies of the counter-culture, for example in Wuthnow's study of shifts in meaning-systems in the 1960s (1976: 6). These may be combined in a manner which suggests a coherent scheme more than a random collection of ideas.

1. A belief that the divine exists within each human being, rather than being purely external. The individual is, then, essentially spiritual. There is therefore an emphasis on inner development, whether psychological or spiritual (see also Wuthnow 1976: 4; McCulloch 2002: 149-150; Roof 1993: 122-3). New Age religion is therefore fundamentally Gnostic, influenced by Blavatsky (see for example 1877: I. 1-54) and C.G. Jung (see for example, 1959b). God in New Age thought, meanwhile, is more typically the Neoplatonic deist creator, rather than the personal Christian God (Hanegraaff 1996: 183-9; Spangler 1975: 70-1). The monist nature of New Age theology, its assumption that the divine and the visible universe are one, was summed up by David Spangler when he wrote, 'God is the New Age, the original and only New Age, the Spirit that makes all things new' (Spangler 1993: 105).

2. Following directly from the idea of the inner divine is the implication that the individual is the highest authority. Heelas (1996: 21) refers to 'epistemological individualists' for whom knowledge essentially arises from the self.

3. It follows from this that individual experience, whether of nature or the divine, is the ultimate arbiter of truth.

4. From this in turn is derived a distinct cultural relativism. As the evangelical Elliot Miller wrote, the New Age assumes that belief systems are created to meet cultural needs (Miller 1990: 25-26).

5. The implication of cultural relativism is, in turn, eclecticism and syncretism, in which ideas from many cultures may be adopted either individually, or combined to create new systems.

6. The tendency to syncretism is linked to holism, a belief that the entire universe is one interdependent whole. From this idea there develops a concern with the environment.

7. The universe is thought to be in a constant process of evolutionary spiritual development (Hexham and Poewe 1997: 93-6). As Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov, the French teacher and member of the Universal White Brotherhood wrote in 1972, 'The law of life is evolution, that is development all the way to perfection. That is why Jesus said, "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect".' (Aïvanhov 1981: 25.19).

8. Popperian activism. The astrologer Rupert Gleadow, who was profoundly sceptical of the Age of Aquarius, wrote that 'its only virtue is that it encourages us to look on the future, despite rebuffs, as something for which we must continue to do our best' (1968b, p 137). In other words, true or not, it is a call to action. In the words of David Spangler (1984: 84) 'The New Age offers action' and is a metaphor which galvanises people into action, 'an image of transformation and potential' which can endow people with the power to transform themselves and their society (1993: 88; see also 1976: 180-1; 1984: 76; 1996: 55; Bailey 1949: 36; Trevelyan 1984: 82, 139-147; York: 1995: 34, 39-40, 49, 57).

8. Education. The preparation for the New Age is achieved partly via education and any practice designed to facilitate spiritual growth. The literature on correct preparation for the New Age is extensive, from theosophists in the first part of the twentieth-century (Bailey - *Education in the New Age*) and the last (Spangler 1980: 12-33).

8. Transformation. Linked to activism, meanwhile, is the transformation which will make the inauguration of the New Age possible as the evangelical critics Groothuis (1986: 11), Chandler (1989: 17) and Cole et al (1990: 6), pointed out. To quote Michael York again,

What unites all New Agers, however, is the vision of radical mystical transformation on both the personal and collective levels. In fact, the awakening to the potential abilities of the human self - one's individual psychic powers and the capability for physical and/or psychological healing - is the New Age springboard for the quantum leap of collective consciousness which is to bring about and constitute the New Age itself (York 1995: 39).

As Lemesurier put it, 'transformation is one of the New Agers' favourite concepts' (1990: 197; see also Melton, Clarke and Kelly 1991: 3; Spangler 1984: 76).

9. Secularism. Braden considers that astrologers who forecast the Age of Aquarius are 'humanists', noting that the key to the prophecy concerns 'long-term prospects for man' (Braden 1971: 17) rather than, as traditional Millenarianism would have it, the inauguration of the kingdom of God. This theme was developed by Miller (1990: 4), who identified the New Age in the lineage of western intellectual history, arguing that it is broadly descended from Enlightenment secularism, especially in its humanism, naturalism and existentialism, although in a 'spiritualized' form (Miller 1990: 4; see also 20). This idea was developed by Hanegraaff, who argued that the New Age is 'characterised by a popular western culture criticism expressed in terms of a secularised esotericism' (Hanegraaff 1996: 409, 521). Its secularised components are those shared with Enlightenment rationalism; the study of comparative religion, notions of causality, evolutionary theory and psychology. As Godwin has pointed out, Blavatsky's theosophy was as much a product of the Enlightenment as a reaction against it (Godwin 1994: xi).

Christian Attitudes to the New Age

The first significant Christian work on the New Age was Constance Cumbeys's *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow*, published in 1983 as a direct response to the wave of publishing that began in 1975 with David Spangler's *Revelation: the Emergence of a New Age*. Cumbeys took an extreme view. The New Age movement was part of a deliberate demonic conspiracy to inaugurate the rule of the Antichrist. It was a fully

fledged religion, not unlike Nazism (1983: 40, 42, 58, 99-120) whose deliberate appropriation of Christian imagery was itself a warning of the Last Days. It was, Cumbey claimed, the first movement of the last two thousand years that truly meets the scriptural definition of the political movement of the antichrist (Cumbey 1983: 41).

Alice Bailey's followers, Cumbey (1983: 52) announced, were planning,

religious war, forced redistribution of the world's resources, Luciferic initiations, mass planetary initiations, theology for the New World Religion [sic], disarmament campaign [sic], and elimination or selling away of obstinate religious orthodoxies...the last stages of the New Age scheme to take the world for Lucifer.

It is quite clear that Cumbey's alarm was motivated largely by the fact that theosophical Christianity was the New Age's ideological core. She was quite right to point out Blavatsky's hostility to the mainstream Christian churches (1983: 44-5), but the Christian rhetoric of post-Blavatskian theosophy was, if anything, more threatening. Statements about Jesus such as those in Levi's *Aquarian Gospel*, or Benjamin Crème's proclamation of the second coming represented a direct challenge to evangelical Christians, especially as they themselves often cited Christian texts (Cumbey 1983: 13-25, 31, 41). Gnosticism's role as a disturbing feature of the New Age was attacked by Groothuis (1986: 42).⁶

The dominant Christian attitude to the New Age is therefore one of overt hostility. As the evangelical writer Jeremiah wrote (1995: 26), 'I believe the New Spirituality is the greatest threat to the Christian world-view today'. The Roman Catholic church took a similar line in 2003 in its press release, *Documents on Christian Reflection on the New Age* (2003), stating that 'the New Age proposes theories and doctrines about God, man and the world, that are incompatible with the Christian faith'.⁷

New Age Christianity

In chapter 3 the emergence of a 'western' faction, deeply influenced by esoteric Christianity within theosophy was discussed and Rudolf Steiner's argument that the coming Age of Michael will see the triumph of Christ-consciousness was noted. Alice Bailey, meanwhile came from a devout Christian background and never lost her respect for Christ, even within a theosophical context. She spoke in terms that any Christian evangelist would understand. But, while her view of the Aquarian seed-men was essentially elitist, at least in the short-term, before the Aquarian Age had been fully inaugurated, her Christianity was so inclusive as to include people of all faiths and none. 'I would point out', she wrote, 'that when I use the phrase "followers of Christ" I refer to all those who love their fellow men, irrespective of creed or religion' (1945: 468). What was unpalatable to the mainstream churches, though, was her firm view, following Blavatsky, that they were destined to be replaced not by their vision of the New Jerusalem, but by hers. As David Spangler argued in 1975, in the New Age Easter would cease to exist because death would no longer exist as a fearsome concept (1975: 46).

The New Age's apocalyptic Christian origins are deliberately referenced to Revelation 21.1 by David Spangler, who wrote in 1976 that 'the New Age is a concept (that) does indeed lead to greater things, in this case to a new heaven, a new earth and a new humanity' (1976: 91; see also 180). Both Spangler and Bloom also acknowledge New Age Gnosticism's roots in the esoteric Christian tradition, emphasising the value of 'an acquaintance with, or knowledge of, the God within' (Bloom 1996; see also Tumber 2002: 33-8; Gilhus 20001: 130). Lucas, meanwhile, has pointed out the striking similarities between New Agers and Pentecostals and evangelicals, including a shared emphasis on millenarianism, prophecy, healing and the direct experience of God (1992: 210):

For ages man has looked outside himself for what he receives, not knowing that he draws all things to him by virtue of his own consciousness. Now he is being directed

within to know the promise, the hope, the creativity that is within him, and he is being asked to release these qualities through positive action into his world. Revelation is not a great Being telling man what to do. It is his own being asking to release itself. It is his own personal and collective future asking to be admitted into his present. It is his own New Age seeking to blend with the New Age of others to create a new heaven and anew earth. Limitless Love and Truth is his own Divine nature speaking to him, calling forth the promise within him. Man himself is Revelation; the continuance and unfoldment of Revelation is now up to him (1976: 181).

The New Age threat experienced by the evangelicals might therefore be better seen as deriving less from a non-Christian source as from a new, reformed, 'Humanistic' Christianity. Davie (1994: 43), recognising the Christian component in New Age ideas which, she argues, contributes to their popularity, refers to 'nominal' as opposed to 'organised' Christianity, the Christianity of loose belief rather than institutional commitment. From her perspective such a component is inevitable, given that religion is 'acquired' in early family upbringing, rather than 'learnt' (Davie 1994: 29-30), and so the New Age's rejection of Christianity may be more apparent than real. It is the church which is rejected, along with the letter of its teaching, rather than the spirit. As Lucas (1992: 204; see also Kemp 2003) observed, the similarities between New Age and Pentecostal religion, such as their rejection of contemporary materialism, may be due to a common millenarian lineage. Smart distinguishes two types of Christianity, traditionalist and prophetic. (1973a: 22-3). It may be then, that Bailey and Steiner may be identified as belonging to the prophetic tradition. According to Hanegraaff,

It is remarkable how often New Age authors talk about Christ or *the* Christ, as a divine reality, power or person. In spite of the religious inclusivity of New Age thinking, in spite of its interest in Oriental religions, and in spite of its criticism of mainstream Christianity, it is still Christ who dominates New Age speculation wherever the need is felt to explain the relation between God and humanity by some mediating principle. Not even the Buddha, generally regarded by New Agers as a model of spiritual enlightenment, comes even close to the unique metaphysical status enjoyed by Christ (Hanegraaff 1996: 189).

The fluid boundary between the New Age and Christianity was recognised by Constance Cumbey, who complained bitterly that the New Age movement, particularly in its respect for eastern teachings, has penetrated the Christian churches, including the Roman Catholic and Episcopalian (Cumbey 1983: 39). Others saw the same process

manifested in the development of the interfaith movement (Chandler 1989: 210; Cole *et al* 1990: 42-57). As Kemp (2003) has shown, there is a strong argument to be made for an overlap between some Christian groups and the New Age. The papers in Ferguson (1993) actually represented an attempt to find common themes between Christianity and the New Age, while Curtis' work (1973) straddles the boundary between Baileyite and evangelical Christianity. Frost (2001) was a rare Christian who set out to attack the New Age but instead found its ideas entirely compatible with his Christian faith. Therefore, when Robert Wuthnow (1976: 213) asks whether 'new meaning systems will not so much replace the old ones as provide the basis for them to be reorganised and revitalised, the same question may be posed of the New Age: is it inherently hostile to Christianity or a possible means of reviving it?

Chapter Summary

The development of the New Age movement, as a self-conscious set of groups and individuals with the common aim of actively preparing for, and working for, a New Age of spiritual enlightenment can be traced back to eighteenth-century Swedenborgianism and nineteenth-century theosophy. As such it both parallels the development of the idea of the Age of Aquarius, which has origins in late eighteenth-century comparative religion and assumed its prophetic qualities only after the foundation of the Theosophical Society. The key characteristics of New Age culture conform broadly to the list of key millenarian features given in chapter 2: an imminent historical crisis to be accompanied by the appearance of a saviour, followed by a major improvement in the condition of the world according to a predetermined pattern which, paradoxically, may require human intervention; Popper's historicist activist model is also central to Bailey and Steiner's insistence that, although the New Age is inevitable, it is necessary to work for its peaceful inauguration. In addition New Age thought emphasises Gnosticism and a post-Enlightenment focus on the self, features which are bitterly attacked by Christian evangelicals. However, New Age culture in its 'western'

form, with its prophecy of Christ-consciousness, may be seen as a Christian reform movement rather than an anti-Christian movement. Hanegraaff's distinction of two forms of New Age culture, the millenarian *sensu stricto* and the non-millenarian *sensu lato* has been discussed and will be applied to astrology in later chapters. It should also be noted that the New Age *sensu stricto* is also necessarily dependent on astrology in the sense that its prophecy that the New Age is inevitable is dependent on the precession of the equinoxes.

Notes

1. See also Walter (1989: 8), Miller 1990 (15, 23-4), Cole *et al* (1990: 9-11), Newport (1998: 8, 163).

2. See also Lewis and Melton (1992: xi-xii), Curry (1992: 161), Sutcliffe (2003: 11, 28), Hanegraaff 1996: 10-11, 18), York (1995: 1, 21-22, 37-38, 49-50), Heelas (1996: 34), Hutton (1999: 411), Greenwood (2000: 9).

3. However, Hanegraaff takes a different line elsewhere, asking whether early twentieth-century movements such as Anthroposophy can be considered New Age, but concluding that they can not because the term itself was not current (1996: 521). Similarly, he finds the roots of New Age religion 'not later' than the early decades of the twentieth-century (1996: 521) and in the late twentieth-century (1996: 388).

4. For Bailey's life see Bailey (1951).

5. See Matrisciana (1985) and Groothuis (1986), Livesey and Livesey (1986), North (1986), Amano and Geisler (1989), Baer (1989), Chandler (1989), Cole *et al* (1990), Miller (1990) and Livesey (1990), Mangalwadi (1992), and the more liberal Newport (1998) and Inghman (1986).

6. See also Lewis (1986: 11), Miller (1990: 5), Newport (1998: 20), Quispel (1987: 568), Newport (1998: 6, 16).

7. For the full report see *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian reflection on the "New Age"*, Pontifical Council for Culture, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, 2003, <http://www.christaquarian.net/>.

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Part 2

Astrology and the New Age

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Chapter 5

The New Age and the Age of Aquarius

Chapter Summary

In chapter 3 it was argued that the New Age and Age of Aquarius shared a common history in the theosophical millenarianism of the 1890s and 1900s. This chapter examines the extent to which both ages have been regarded as identical both in New Age literature and some astrological literature since the 1910s. Attitudes to the New Age within the astrological literature on the Age of Aquarius will be discussed and the existence of literature hostile to the New Age noted.

The New Age Movement and the Age of Aquarius

There is a widespread assumption in commentaries on the New Age that it is identical with the Age of Aquarius. Evangelical critics accept the link without question (see for example, Walter 1989: 19; Miller 1990: 15; Cole *et al* 1990: 9-11; Groothuis (1986: 39). Heelas, meanwhile, wrote, 'some have supposed that the development of the New Age itself is in the hands of astrological processes' (1996: 34; see also 1, 43). For Michael York, for example, the terms New Age and Age of Aquarius may be considered to be identical (1995: 1, 47; see also Hanegraaff 1996: 10-11, 97-8 n.10, 348; Sutcliffe 2003: 9, 11, 13, 28-9, 333). Indeed, that the New Age and the Age of Aquarius coincide is a commonplace of New Age literature, the reason being that 'By aligning the New Age vision with the astrological age of Aquarius...the New Age [is] grounded to a supposedly discernible astronomical event' (York 2003: 14). Thus, the astronomical fact that precession will take the vernal point into Aquarius provides a validation of New Age philosophy by demonstrating that the New Age is indeed beginning; its attendant prophecies concerning the imminent global crisis and attendant

shift in the human condition from material to spiritual are not speculative, but objectively true. David Spangler, one of the most prolific of New Age writers, confirmed York's perspective when he wrote, 'Now humanity is undergoing another vast evolutionary change which is symbolised both factually and allegorically by the concept of a new age, the age of Aquarius (Spangler 1980: 78; see also 1996: 247). Bloom (1991: xviii) and Nobel (2002; 2003a; 2003b). Both continue the argument that the astronomical facts of precession lend objective validity to forecasts of the New Age's arrival.

Aquarian Age Literature in the 1920s and 1930s.

The terms New Age and Age of Aquarius were being used interchangeably from the 1900s. Amongst astrologers, the theosophist Max Heindel (1929: 13, 19) used the term New Age in 1909. Alice Bailey, whose works, as Sutcliffe (2003: 53) argued, became the dominant source for New Age discourse was using the term in 1919 when she wrote, in a passage which suggests strong Swedenborgian influence, that 'the religion of the New Age already exists on the mental plane' (1919: 502). While the New Age model was not original to her, her adoption of it guaranteed its wide dissemination. By 1927 the discussion of the New Age as a synonym for the Age of Aquarius was accepted amongst astrologers.

The first substantial book to be devoted to the Age of Aquarius was published by Curtiss (1921), who took a theosophical line but, like Heindel and Steiner, one which emphasised theosophy's Christian content and was heavily indebted to sun-as-god ideology. Osiris, he wrote, was 'the Egyptian term for the great Creative Aspect of the Godhead which manifests to the Cosmos as the Cosmic Cause, to our universe as the Sun and to humanity as God (1921: vii). Curtiss also argued strongly for the unity of the masculine and feminine aspects of the divine as the Age of Aquarius begins, placing a strong emphasis on the re-emergence of the goddess. He claimed that,

As the new Aquarian Age, so long foretold, dawns for humanity, the outbreathing of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, again speaks, and in no uncertain tones, to all children who recognise Her, and proclaims to them: 'Behold, it is I, Be not afraid!' At the ushering of this Aquarian Age She comes under the name of Aquaria. And, true to the promise of Jesus, She brings to our remembrance all that He has told us concerning the New Dispensation when there "Shall appear the sign of the Son of Man (the sign Aquarius in Heaven)"¹ (Curtiss 1921: viii).

Curtiss added, that 'just in case any of Her children...fail to recognise her as the Divine Mother or who fail to see the signs and wonders brought forth by the outpouring of Her Divine Love, as the gates of the New Age swing open', further messages will be sent (1921: viii). The New Age will begin with the arrival of the latest avatar of the Christ consciousness, in Christian terms, the Holy Ghost (1921: 81). Further, in the Aquarian Age,

Man should reach a point where he no longer acts like a mere child, swept hither and thither by the currents and eddies of the Great Law; for, in this Age the majority of mankind will reach a point of intellectual and spiritual development which today is reached only by a few (1921: 31).

Such ideas, explicitly equating the Aquarian and New Ages, quickly became a commonplace in the astrological literature, being developed by Cheiro in 1925 (1931) and Julius Bennett (1927). This was the precise literary context within which Alice Bailey began writing about the Aquarian Age: an acceptance of the prediction that the shift into the Age of Aquarius would bring the inauguration of the New Age; that this would bring a dramatic shift towards an enhanced spiritual consciousness, particularly a heightened awareness of the divine within. In spite of the high position given to eastern teachers, the primacy of the Cosmic Christ indicates a strong emphasis on Christian imagery. Bailey did, though, disagree on points of detail with her predecessors. Unlike Heindel she maintained the typically high theosophical regard for eastern religion and regarded Buddhism as a valuable feature of the Piscean Age (1948: 127, 192). Her astrological historiography began with the Age of Gemini and she accepted completely

the equation of zodiac signs with religious forms, as in the link between the Taurean Age and Mithraic bull worship (1948: 127):

In all lands, men today are aware of the existence of the Masters and of the possibility offered and the opportunity presented to make scientific spiritual progress and thus become members of the Kingdom of God...This advance will become definite and clear in a manner not understood today, at some point during the Aquarian Age. Humanity, the world disciple (through its various groups all at various stages of unfoldment) will "enter into" new states of awareness and in new realms or spheres of mental and spiritual consciousness, during the next two thousand years...In the era which lies ahead, after the reappearance of the Christ hundreds of thousands of men and women everywhere will pass through some one or other of the great expansions of consciousness, but the mass reflection will be that of the renunciation;...they will renounce the materialistic standards which today control every layer of the human family (1948: 126-7).

Even though the timing of the Aquarian Age is astronomically determined, the dominant notion is that the timing of the manifestation of the New Age's spiritual qualities are not themselves necessarily tied to exact measurements of precession. Astronomical motions are therefore exactly measurable, but the corresponding historical changes are not. Although the Aquarian Age will create the conditions in which human beings may enter the Kingdom of God, individuals can still make their own choices. Bailey doubts, for example, that the 'masses' will take the 'fourth initiation', which involves the renunciation of materialism (1948: 127). The New Age, for Bailey, is the spiritual era made possible by the Aquarian Age, the astronomically defined historical period.

Alice Bailey's highly influential view of the Age of Aquarius was couched entirely in terms of her apocalyptic Christian millenarianism. She confidently identified signs of 'the time of the end' (1948: 187) and of the 'the reappearance of the Christ and the externalisation of the Kingdom of God' (1984: 185). Bailey's view of the transition to the millennium was that crisis was highly likely but not inevitable for it depended both on the strength of the spiritual 'Hierarchy of Light' (1940: 217) and the willingness of human beings to support them. She believed that,

The functioning of the Law of Loving Understanding will be greatly facilitated and speeded during the Aquarian Age which we are considering; it will eventuate later in the development of a world-wide international spirit, in the recognition of one universal faith in God and in humanity also as the major expression of divinity upon the planet and in the transfer of the human consciousness from the world of material things to that of the more purely psychic (Bailey 1949, p. 47).

The Age of Aquarius in Contemporary Astrological Literature

The notion that the Age of Aquarius is either currently beginning, or will do so sometime in the near future, is a given in most modern astrological literature. It occurs in the popular literature as a hook to the reader. In 1982 American astrologer Debbi Kempton-Smith opened her mass market paperback, *Secrets from a Stargazer's Notebook* with the call 'Kings and queens of the Age of Aquarius, come on now, I know what you want. You want everything' (Kempton-Smith 1982: xiii). Discussion of it occurs regularly in the main astrological periodicals of the English speaking world. Recent examples include Solté (1999) and Grasse (2000, 2003) from the major serious commercial magazine, *The Mountain Astrologer*, Caton (2002), McDevitt (1999, 2002), MacKinnell (2002) and Zoller (2002) from publications of the American National Council for Geocosmic Research (NCGR) and the British Astrological Association (AA) and Nobel (2002) from *Prediction*, the major UK news stand 'occult' periodical. As Nobel reports in his discussion of the Age of Aquarius (2002: 28), 'many astrologers I have spoken to agree that we are in an age of transition'.

A typical account of the essentially progressive millenarian point of view identified by Nobel was submitted to the ISAR E mail Newsletter by American astrologer Kelly Lee Phipps in 2002: 'We live in the interface period between the Piscean and Aquarian Ages, blending spirituality, institutionalization, and illusion with enlightenment, technology, and cosmic consciousness'. Signs of the Age of Aquarius' approach are widely identified. They may include genetic engineering (Collins 1980: 15), multicultural marriages in the USA (Levine 1997: 2), new technology (Magnay 1995:

16), jazz music, post-modernism, solar energy, cultural relativism and political organisations exemplified by Jesse Jackson's 'Rainbow Coalition' (Grasse 2000: 14, 19, 20), or American democracy in general (Lister 1984: 249-50; McDevitt 1999: 1). Christian evangelicals (Cole *et al.* 1990: 3, 5) even argued that the rising popularity of astrology is a sign of the approach of the New Age.

The pervasiveness of the belief that the world is entering a new phase, the Age of Aquarius, suggests firstly that astrology may be classified as a New Age belief and secondly that this belief may have a significant impact on the nature of contemporary astrology. It also locates contemporary astrology or, at least, certain developments within the history of millenarianism and hence of a certain class of theories of history.

Religion and the Astrological Ages

Precession offers two kinds of statement. One concerns the future, and prophecies of the Age of Aquarius. The other concerns the past providing a historical cosmology which offers an account of social and religious development. The chronological framework is based on division into 2160 (or 2000) year periods, the main characteristics are derived from the astrological associations of each sign or constellation. Typically, following Dupuis, Delaunay, Taylor, Higgins and Massey, parallels are drawn between the animal ruler of the Age in question and the animals featured in the corresponding religious imagery. For example the Age of Taurus of the 3rd and 4th millennia BCE. is said to be demonstrated in the widespread worship of the bull. The Age of Aries saw the worship of the Ram in Egypt and Palestine, while the Age of Pisces brought the fish symbolism of Christianity.

This system is given its most comprehensive treatment in Vera Reid's *Towards Aquarius* (1944). Reid's system provides the template for most future accounts (Hone 1973: 278-300; Oken 1976: 3-44; St Aubyn 1990: 6-11; Orr 2002: 18-19). Reid's

scheme also serves as a basis for work which harks back to Massey, but with a much more detailed scheme of ages than he described (Strachan 1985; Lemesurier 2002). Two features are obvious in Reid's scheme. The first is that the sequence of Ages is expressed most strongly in religious terms. The second is that there is therefore no idea of absolute truth in terms of human religion, for each Age produces its corresponding religious forms, and all religions are seen as a path to the ultimate truth. There is a cultural relativism at the heart of Aquarian Age thinking. In 1951 Margaret Hone, wrote that 'Each age plays its part in the evolution of the world, which can no more escape its correlation with the cosmic pattern than can the tiny human beings living on its surface' (1973: 279).

Reid took the political situation in 1944 as the starting point in her view of contemporary culture, of the past and the future. She writes that,

Today we stand on the threshold of a new era when, according to zodiacal symbolism, the truth, long hidden, will be revealed - the Age of Aquarius, the Man, The Age of Enlightenment. Response to vibrations of another dimension, which is already beginning to transform our life and thought, can be profoundly disturbing until we catch a glimpse of its purpose. In such circumstances it is inevitable that we ask, "What is the purpose underlying the present conflict of ideologies? What part has the individual to play in the transformation of his world? What of tomorrow? Does civilisation stand on the verge of collapse or of new life? (1944: 7).

Although Reid's original purpose was to study zodiacal symbolism in the Christian religion, her work relied heavily on quotations from other religious traditions - Egyptian, Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, Inca: all faiths, it seems follow a parallel path.

Reid's account was summarised by Margaret Hone in *The Modern Textbook of Astrology*, the teaching manual of the Faculty of Astrological Studies, which was published in 1951 and which went into thirteen reprints by 1973 (1973: 278-300). This represented a final codification of the many writings on the subject since Bailey and Dupuis.

10000 BCE. Age of Leo corresponding to Atlantean civilisation and solar monotheism.

8000 BCE. Age of Cancer corresponding to the Deluge, lunar and fertility goddess cults.

6000 BCE. Age of Gemini corresponding to cults of twins, such as Romulus and Remus.

4000 BCE Age of Taurus corresponding to stable civilisations, such as Egypt, and bull worship.

2000 BCE. Age of Aries corresponding to military empires, exploration, discovery and the ram and lamb as religious symbols.

1 CE. Age of Pisces corresponding to Christianity and the fish as a religious symbol.

2000 CE. Age of Aquarius corresponding to humanity, peace, justice and equality.

The Inner Divine

There is a difference between the academic study of religious forms in relation to precession on the one hand, and the religious proclamation of the Age of Aquarius in overtly religious, usually theosophical Christian terms as pioneered by Bailey, Steiner and Jung, and continued by writers within the traditions they established, such as Sibbald (1978). Amongst the latter, Liz Greene has expanded Reid and Hone's historical structure and borrows Jung's statement (1959a: 87) that, if each astrological age constellates an archetype, then the function of the Age of Aquarius will be to make

humanity aware that it, and not some external agency, is responsible for both good and evil. At the end of her marriage of Reid, Hone and Jung she concluded,

Man...explores himself, led by psychology, only to discover that he has shaped the world. No one can help him decide what to do with his discovery. In the end he must place his allegiance with the Self, and the gatekeeper to the centre of his own being is that inner partner which lives within his own psyche and serves as psychopomp and guide to the mysteries. And in the end the only way he will ever discover and bring to consciousness this inner partner is through understanding the outer one, the human beings with whom he lives and shares his planet. He will only find himself in the looking glass. Perhaps then he can fulfil the myth of the sign which rules this dawning age (Greene 1977: 277).

Greene ended with a quote from Alice Bailey's *Esoteric Astrology*: 'Water of life am I, Poured forth for thirsty men'. Such ideas have penetrated the wider new age and pagan literature. John Michel introduced the 1972 edition of his *The View over Atlantis*, the seminal text of the 'earth mysteries movement', with a warning that the current shift into the Aquarian Age gave the book's content an added urgency. A core text on witchcraft in the 1980s by Marian Green, whose series of books on magic have done much to spread popular paganism, considered the prospects of an improvement in the human condition, as the Piscean Age gives way to the Aquarian (Green 1983: 32-3). Later she wrote,

A lot is happening, even in the political world...This is only the start of the many changes the next couple of hundred years will bring. We could be on the verge of a true Golden Age, for the Water Bearer (i.e. Aquarius) is the Grail Carrier who has found the vessel of rebirth and brought it into the world that its redeeming waters may be poured out for all in need (Green 1987: 211-2).

Janet and Stewart Farrar (1984: 159-160) regarded that current 'reintegration of the Ego and the Unconscious, on a new and higher level' as the prelude to a 'new and unimaginable fruitful evolutionary phase; call it, if you will, the Aquarian Age'. However, the Age is correctly identified as only one species of global prediction. Vivianne Crowley identifies the New Age and Age of Aquarius, which are synonymous, as particularly favourable to the spread of Wicca, on the grounds that one of the Aquarian/New Age's manifestations is the awakening of the Goddess in human

consciousness (1989: 49, 162). Objective certainty is given to this development by the fact that the Age is an astronomical certainty, beginning in the twentieth or twenty-first century (1989: 255). Culturally it is the Age's pluralism which provides a sympathetic environment for Wicca; theologically it is its emphasis on the inner divinity which, being so sympathetic to Wiccan cosmology, will enable the new religion 'to serve the religious needs of many in the Aquarian Age' (1989: 242).

Other groups have seized on the Age of Aquarius in order to legitimate their political programmes. The Raelians are a notable example. Rael, born Claude Vorilhon, founded the group following an 'encounter of the third kind' in 1973, followed by a visit to the aliens' host planet. Raelians believe that the Age of Aquarius commenced with Vorilhon's birth in 1946, and their prophecy of the future age accords perfectly with the astrological literature. The Raelian Age of Aquarius will be an egalitarian, secular meritocracy or sexual paradise (Chryssides 2000: 48).

Pre or Postmillenarianism

Hanegraaff argued that, while the New Age *sensu stricto* tended originally to be premillennial and passive, it subsequently became post-millennial and inclined to actively work for the earthly utopia (1996: 100). Such figures as Green and Rael generally fall into the postmillennial camp, playing down the prospect of global crisis. However, premillennial and postmillennial points of view are inseparable in the astrological literature. A premillennial version of the future was summarised by the society astrologer Count Louis Hamon in 1925, writing under the pseudonym Cheiro (1931: 178-9, 184). He forecast a combination of political revolution, global war and natural catastrophe that would destroy the known world. Such forecasts were repeated by the clairvoyant Edgar Cayce (Stearn 1998: 143-4, 168; see also Willner 2001: 93-119) who has been highly influential in maintaining the premillennial, apocalyptic point of view (see West and Toonder 1973: 272; Levy 1984: 156-8; Levine 1997; Caton

2002: 4-5; McDevitt 2002: 1). However, inherent in the theosophical vision is the prophecy, promoted by both Steiner and Bailey, that the approach of the New Age will be accompanied by spiritual evolution, a process which may offset the risk of catastrophe. A shift of consciousness, then, may convert a pre-millennial disaster into a post-millennial paradise (Rudhyar 1972: 33-83; 1987, esp. 8-11; West and Toonder 1973: 269, 272-3; Oken 1974: 3, 46; 1988: 13; Allen 1979: 15; Levine 1997: 4; Grasse 12000: 20; Caton 2002: 20; McDevitt 2002). As Cyril Fagan forecast,

During this Age the whole world will be just one big happy family, speaking the same language and freely mingling and intermarrying one another. Nations, monarchies, sovereign governments, republics, communistic states, separate communities, clans and tribes will be things of the past. National political and religious labels, which now factionalise the world into many contending camps, such as British, American, Germany (sic), Russian, Capitalist, Communist, Christian, Hindu, Moslem and so forth, will disappear. Frontiers, customs barriers and colour bars will vanish and with them the hierarchical, caste and clan systems. In such a society there will obviously be no need for armies or armaments of any description. This desirable state of affairs will not be brought about by conquest; but by a complete psychological revolution taking place in the consciousness of all individuals (1951: 24).

Cheiro believed that the Aquarian Age would 'so affect the minds of humanity that the most astonishing changes, upheavals and revolutions would follow in its wake' (1931: 170), and in the success of women such as Mary Baker Eddy and Annie Besant he saw evidence that 'since the dawn of the "New Age" there is nothing that man has held sacred that women have not in the last century and a half demanded as their right'(1931: 174).

Activism

York (2003: 13-14) differentiates three modes by which the Age might come about: firstly external supernatural intervention, secondly inner, spiritual work and thirdly social and political action. The second and third, corresponding to Popperian activism, are evident throughout the astrological literature. The forecast of the coming of the Aquarian Age means nothing without the call to work for its arrival. Williams (1978:

62) considered the responsibilities faced by astrologers in the build-up to the Messianic arrival and asked what astrologers could do to make the arrival peaceful. Gordon Strachan, an astrologer and Church of Scotland minister, provided an answer in 1991:

The Bible doesn't just give us permission to prepare for the coming New Age, it says in effect: "Look what happened to those who were not prepared for the coming of the last new age. If you want to avert a similar fate, you'd better get stuck in there!" Planetary catastrophe is not far away but there are energies which can make it avoidable. These are freely available to all those who wish to understand and live in the cosmic Now, which to be precise is 27.7 degrees of Pisces. The last age ended in fire, the one before in flood. Ours could end in peace (1991: 246).

What is needed is a combination of knowledge (Grasse 2000: 20), immediate action (Phipps 2000) and love (Caton 2002: 4). Thus Fagan wrote (1951: 24) the Age of Aquarius will only come about as a result of 'a complete psychological revolution taking place in the consciousness of all individuals'. Levine (2002: 2) argued that the free choice to work for a smooth transition to the Aquarian Age is an obligation: 'each person must discover his or her own belief system that leads personally to God. Greater acceptance of individual differences *must* be adhered to'.

David Spangler argued that the concept of the New Age is rooted in the real prophecy of the coming of the Age of Aquarius, but is also aware that, by the 1990s, it was functioning as a wider metaphor that did not merely describe cultural change but could galvanise it (Spangler 1993: 85-7, 88). What distinguished New Age astrologers from other New Agers, as the Baileyite Marc Lerner (1984) argued, is their emphasis on astrology as a primary means of raising consciousness and engineering the peaceful transition into the New Age.

Anti-New Age Discourse Amongst Astrologers

The same combination of pre- and postmillenarianism is found amongst astrologers who are resistant to New Age ideology. As Hanegraaff noted (1996: 97), even though the terms New Age and Age of Aquarius are generally interchangeable, belief in the

Age of Aquarius is not a necessary precondition for belief in New Age ideas *sensu lato*. However the reverse is also true, and acceptance of the reality of the historical changes that occur with precession of the equinoxes, and hence with the Age of Aquarius does not necessarily require belief in the New Age as a spiritual era. There is, amongst astrologers, an almost universal acceptance of the latter, but a strong element of resistance to the former, in the sense that the next Age must necessarily be one of universal spiritual enlightenment.

Opposition to New Age discourse tends to be expressed by astrologers who are not themselves above belief in a paradigm shift in which astrology itself will rise to public prominence (Addey 1971: 3), but have no patience with general prophecies of global cataclysm or a new paradise. Notable attacks on the adaptation of Aquarian Age historiography to suit the purposes of New Age prophecy were made by the theosophical astrologer, and close friend of Blavatsky, Sepharial (1968: 58), the German astrologer, Walter Koch (1959), who attacked the links between Aquarian Age theorists and the Nazis, and Robert Zoller, one of the most admired and respected astrologers of the 1990s, who has no doubt that the Age of Aquarius is approaching but unusually perceives it as profoundly threatening, referring to it as the Dark Age (2002: 14). Australian astrologer Terry MacKinnell, who believes the Age of Aquarius began around 1472, meanwhile, regards the New Age as completely irrelevant.

A classic anti-New Age position was set out in 1947 by Charles Carter, the President of the Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society, based in London. He wrote that 'It is probable that there is no branch of Astrology upon which more nonsense has been poured forth than the doctrine of the precession of the equinoxes' (1947: 111). In 1951 he wrote that 'In the West we have heard about the so-called Aquarian Age, which is to follow that of Pisces and for some unexplained reason is to be so much pleasanter to inhabit, until the very mention of this term fills the careful astrologer with

apprehension. For it is questionable whether many who talk about it, and even some of those who write about it, understand what is meant'. (1951: 73). In other words this is something which only the high-brow elite can understand. Ordinary astrologers might get it wrong. Yet, while condemning popular belief in astrological ages, Carter did acknowledge that the Age of Aquarius was an actual phenomenon, and produced his own detailed historical scheme in which each astrological age was in turn divided into twelve sub-ages (1951: 76-86). When Carter considered the nature of the Piscean sub-age, which he thought was to begin in 1980, he predicted that it might be only 'different' to the outgoing Aquarian phase. As a Popperian Activist, he wrote 'whether it will be better and more agreeable (which is what most people mean when they say 'better') depends chiefly upon Man himself (1951: 86).

Chapter Summary

The Age of Aquarius and the New Age are not identical. The former depends on a value-free prediction that history is tied to the precession of the equinoxes while the latter is rooted in the Swedenborgian and Blavatskian prophecy that the coming age is to be more spiritual than the last. For Blavatsky the coming of the New Age, though, was a matter of a cosmically determined evolutionary law and it was therefore natural for theosophical astrologers to time its beginning according to precession of the equinoxes. New Ager in the tradition of Bailey and Steiner then regard the New and Aquarian Ages as identical. The dominant mode of discourse within the New Age *sensu stricto* sees the astronomical fact of the Age of Aquarius as validation of its own prophetic future, while the dominant discourse amongst astrologers sees the spiritual qualities of the New Age as those which will be introduced when the Aquarian Age dawns. The model which contrasts pre and postmillenarianism does justice neither to the astrological point of view, nor to Alice Bailey's. The historicist/activist assumption in both is that the premillenarian apocalypse is inevitable unless urgent steps are taken

to counter it. The implications of the historicist/activist model of the future for astrology are discussed in chapter 6.

Notes

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1. Matthew 24.30.

Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology

Part 2

Chapter 6

New Age Astrology

Chapter Summary

In part 1 the astrological nature of Millenarian belief and the relationship between the concepts of the Age of Aquarius and the New Age were discussed. This chapter explores the implications for astrology of New Age ideology and the resulting reform of astrology by two theosophical astrologers: Alan Leo in Britain in the 1890s to the 1910s, and Dane Rudhyar in the USA from the 1930s to the 1970s. The deliberate result was the development of two distinct but related forms of astrology: the first, esoteric, was concerned with the soul and second, psychological, was concerned with the development of the personality. The latter astrology, with its rich character descriptions of the zodiac signs, is that which most modern western astrologers study and practice. While it will be argued that the impact of New Age ideology from the 1910s onwards has been so pervasive that modern astrology may be largely regarded as New Age, it will be acknowledged that there are astrologers who are actively hostile to the combination of New Age ideas with astrology.

Introduction

That modern astrology is essentially a New Age discipline is assumed by most external commentators whether evangelical (Anderson 1988: 39; Walter 1989: 15; Amano *et al* 1989: 32-3; Cole *et al* 1990: 6; Miller 1990: 19; Newport 1998: 8), historical (Curry 1992: 161) or academic (Saliba 1995: 23; Bruce 1995: 105; Gill 1999: 50-1, 81, 135). This proposition, though is, essentially what Sutcliffe would call an 'etic' formulation. In other words astrology's inclusion as a New Age discipline is taken for granted and there has to date been no study of astrology's nature in any commentary on New Age

culture, with the sole exception of Feher (1992). The purpose of this chapter is to explore the textual evidence, examining the attitudes of some leading astrologers and their impact on astrology in the English speaking world and to consider Heelas' proposition that, along with other ancient or pre-modern practices, astrology in the hands of New Agers has adopted a 'detraditionalised' New Age form (Heelas 1996: 23).¹ However, none of these studies examines any primary material. It has been noted elsewhere that there are 'two basic forms of astrology', one 'outward', based on traditional techniques and concerned with behaviour, and the other 'inner' and psychological (Kelly 1998: 528). It will be argued that the latter form of astrology emerges from, and is associated with, New Age ideology.

The Reform of Astrology

It is generally agreed amongst astrologers that astrology in the twentieth century underwent a substantial change. According to Dean and Mather, 'In 1900 astrology was effectively medieval. It was modernised largely by the work of Alan Leo (1860-1917). The result was a renaissance of interest in astrology' (Dean and Mather 1977: 5; see also Hand 1990: 13-18; Oken 1988 11-13). Jeff Mayo, former Principal of the Faculty of Astrological Studies, wrote that,

Astrology as practised today by trained astrological-consultants is, by its correlation to modern psychology and the eradication of many muddle-headed esoteric theories and 'fortune-telling sensationalism', far removed from the astrology of even the turn of this century (1981: 7).

Although the underlying principles of astrology, Mayo argued, have not changed since its origins in Mesopotamia, whereas once planetary patterns were associated with divine influence, they are now, he declared, associated with 'impulses and drives rooted in the unconscious mind...reflected in disposition, emotional response, general behaviour' (1981: 7).

Hand's assessment of the change in perspective was that 'I think this may be the twentieth-century's outstanding contribution to the history of astrology: the use of astrology as a developmental tool' (Phillipson 2000: 76).

Theosophical Attitudes to Astrology

Madame Blavatsky set the tone for theosophical attitudes to astrology when she stated that,

Astrology is a science *as infallible* as astronomy itself, with the condition, however, that its interpreters must be equally infallible; and it is this condition, however, *sine qua non*, so very difficult of realization, that has always proved a stumbling block to both. Astrology is to exact astronomy what psychology is to exact physiology. In astrology one has to step beyond the visible world of matter, and enter into the domain of transcendent spirit (1877: I.259).

In two sentences Blavatsky had set out a manifesto for what was to become New Age astrology. The core argument was that astrology, as a 'Department of the Divine Wisdom' (Besant 1919: 8), is infallible but that astrologers, being only human, are fallible. However, by moving beyond the realm of the visible into the transcendent, they can become infallible. Blavatsky thus established a requirement for those astrologers with a deep commitment to the theosophical vision of New Age to condemn the fallible astrologers they saw all around them and instead set out to create an astrology which would be, as she hoped, infallible (Leo 1911: 8.5.180, 8.3.95; Rudhyar 1977: v).

Blavatsky was familiar with the basic symbolism and interpretative structure of astrology (1877: I.168), but never concerned herself with its technical aspects. Instead she was far more concerned with its roots in the esoteric universe and angelic cosmology of the Platonists, Hermeticists, Zoroastrians, Kabbalists, Hindus and Sufis (See for example 1877: 1.312-3, 328-9, 331, 502; II. 306-7, 454-5). Her primary interest was in the solar origin of religion and the representation of both the sun and the zodiac as 'emblems' of such Biblical incidents as Ezekiel's dream (Ezekiel 1-3) and the prophets and patriarchs; indeed, all the religious traditions of Babylon, Persia and India,

as well as the evolution of the entire human race (1877: II. 454-472). Thus, she argued, there were deeper truths, which had been handed down orally, and to which she, via her own studies and communications from the 'Masters', the spiritual beings who directed her', was privy. Amongst these truths was knowledge of reincarnation, the cause of which, she wrote is 'ignorance of our senses, and the idea that there is any reality in the world, anything except abstract existence' and its consequence, 'evil desire' and 'cleaving to existing objects' (1877 I. 346, 351; see also I.329-30). Thus, there is a purpose to each human life, which is to work to purge one's self of the 'dross' of one's nature working towards a gradual improvement in each incarnation until one can finally secure the chance of escape to nirvana at the end of the sequence of zodiacal ages (1877. II.456). Astrology, at least Blavatsky's proposed astrology of the transcendental spirit, thus became, as Popper suggested (1986: I.210, 244), an essential tool of the historical process. Its immediate purpose, she wrote, was to 'establish a still closer metaphysical connection between the earliest races and their Creators, the *divine* men from other worlds' (Blavatsky 1888: II.437), and thus to promote the shift into the new historical era.

Blavatsky's astrology then, was teleological, based on the theory of a final state into which all individuals were to evolve. This evolutionary process was also driving humanity as a whole as well as the entire cosmos towards its ultimate return to pure spirit. Individuals passed through successive incarnations but individual evolution took place only within a vast historicist framework defined by the yugas and long astrological periods. The creation of the Theosophical Society was the outward demonstration of her belief that action is important and that each individual has a duty to participate to the full in the coming historical shift, the beginning of humanity's return to its spiritual condition.

The seminal figure in the incorporation of New Age ideology into astrology was William Frederick Allen (1860-1917), who is generally known under his pseudonym, Alan Leo. In Leo's own account he discovered astrology as a teenager in 1877 (Leo 1925: vii), although other versions make him twenty-one (Howe 1967: 358). Over the next forty years, he worked ceaselessly to study it and understand its principles. From around 1890 he was one of the dominating figures in British astrology (Besant 1919: 8; Hone 1973: 295; Melton, Clark and Kelly 1991: 274; Curry 1992: 122-159). Annie Besant, Blavatsky's successor as President of the Theosophical Society, stated that 'Mr Alan Leo is so well known among all who are interested in Astrology, and he has done so much to raise Astrology from the position of a superstition to that of a science' (Besant, *The Theosophist* February 1911, cited in Leo 1936: viii).² According to Ellic Howe, discussing the early theosophical astrologers of the 1880s and 1890s,

The most important of these pioneers was Alan Leo, an obscure commercial traveller who was to become this century's first major astrological publicist and, furthermore, the first astrologer of all time to practise his art on a large and well-organised professional scale (Howe 1967: 56-7).

Leo's astrology was originally the standard event-oriented, character-describing astrology of the nineteenth-century, dealing with such matters as infant mortality and the horoscope of ships (Lacey 1919: 50, 54). In the late 1880s, though, he began reading theosophical material, including the journal *Theosophical Siftings* and, in around 1890, he was invited by the theosophist and astrologer Sepharial (1864-1929) to the theosophical headquarters at Avenue Road in London, where he met Blavatsky and her fellow heads of the movement, Henry Olcott and William Q. Judge (Lacey 1919: 40). Leo became a devout theosophist and began to study theosophy, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* becoming two of the only books he ever read deeply (Besant 1919: 7-8; Lacey 1919: 43). If anything, he loved theosophy more than astrology although, as Anne Besant reported, he believed that the two were so intertwined that they were almost indistinguishable (Besant 1919: 8). Even though Sepharial was always much closer to Blavatsky than was Leo, Annie Besant, Blavatsky's successor as President of

the Theosophical Society, was much closer to Leo. He became her personal astrologer and performed tasks such as the election of the moment to lay the foundation stone for the new Theosophical Society headquarters in London (Leo 1911: 8.10.402).

The 'great upheaval' in his social life occasioned by his introduction to Blavatsky, Olcott and Judge prompted Leo to begin an empirical study of all the horoscopes in his possession with accurately timed births. The result, in his opinion, was 'to establish beyond all question the permanent value of Esoteric Astrology, itself defined as the combination of astrology with the 'eastern teachings concerning Reincarnation and Karma' (1925: vii). Leo was no relativist, though. He wrote that the 'laws which guide the evolution of the world are infallible laws which work incessantly for the ultimate good of humanity' and 'are capable of demonstration to all who apply themselves thoughtfully to the methods required to obtain first-hand knowledge' (Leo 1925: v). He added,

Today my whole belief in the science of the stars stands or falls with Karma and Reincarnation, and I have no hesitation in saying that without these ancient teachings, Natal Astrology has no permanent value. The law which gives to one soul a nativity of good environment in which refinement, opportunity, and sound moral training are uppermost; and to another poverty, disease, and immoral training, is manifestly unjust to say the least, apart from its being without any apparent purpose (1925: vii).

The essence of Leo's reformed astrology was an attempt to convert theosophical cosmology in practical astrology. This was an important and profoundly helpful task, for only esoteric astrology can solve certain problems that are beyond traditional astrology, such as why planetary movements might be 'calamitous in some cases and transmutative in others' (Leo 1911: 8.3.95). He argued that understanding one's character and past, including past lives, was central to the control of one's future, adapting the Heraclitian aphorism 'Man's character is his daemon' as 'character is destiny' (Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1983: 211; Leo 1911: 8.3.95, 1936: 134-141). It is still widely quoted (see for example Greene 1992: 5; Sasportas 1989: 4-5). This, as

Arthur Mee wrote, became 'the keynote' of Leo's teaching, and paraphrased it in Biblical terms as 'What we sow so shall we reap' (Mee 1919: 156). Leo wrote,

Sooner or later it must be realised that character is destiny. That is why so much stress is always laid upon the fact that the nativity must be fully understood before 'directions'³ can be interpreted. We each bring our character with us as a result of past efforts, aspirations and opportunity (Leo 1922: 35).

Leo added two other traditional aphorisms 'the stars incline, they do not compel' and 'the wise man rules his stars, the fool obeys them' (Leo 1911: 8.3.95), announcing himself to be a believer in free will. Astrology's immediate purpose, he argued, must therefore be self-understanding, the goal being to 're-act...on circumstances, remoulding and reshaping them', changing the world and introducing 'far-reaching changes into the life-map drawn from the horoscope at birth' (Besant 1919: 8-9). Prediction, by inference, is useless. As explained by Annie Besant,

as the power of the Spirit, the Inner Ruler Immortal, passing in ever increasing measure out of latency in potency, so did the future become more and more inscrutable by means of ordinary rules, since the emergent new forces brought about their necessary results in fashions well nigh incalculable by most Astrologers (Besant 1919: 9).

Leo conceded that what he came to call 'exoteric astrology' (which is concerned with outer events, as opposed to 'esoteric' astrology, the astrology of the soul), might be studied and practiced satisfactorily within its own terms, just as medicine can study the body alone without the soul. But, he added, 'the deeper students of human nature know that physiology acquired a profounder meaning by the addition of psychology' (1925: vii; see also v). Psychology, for Leo, was essentially a means of analysing the individual's spiritual condition. His use of the word 'Ego', for example, is more analogous to soul in that it may move between different incarnations (1911: 8.9.353; 1925: 88-89) while the 'Self' is characterised by 'intellectual self-consciousness', as opposed to the normal definition of the self as an individual person (1925: 88-89). In a cosmic scale the Ego of the Logos⁴ survives the complete destruction of the universe as

envisaged in Hindu cosmology, and passes intact to the next. Elsewhere, Leo defined the Ego, in theosophical terms, as the Self, 'the consciousness in man or the feeling of "*I am ship*"' (Leo 1911: 8.9.353). 'Esoteric philosophy' he wrote, 'teaches the existence of two egos in man, the mortal or personal, and the higher, divine or impersonal; the former being termed the Personality and the latter the Individuality' (Leo 1911: 8.9.353). The Ego in the sense of the higher, divine nature, was itself revealed in the horoscope for, if the human being and the universe were part of each other then the horoscope, as a map of the universe must reveal the entire person, physical and spiritual. The new esoteric, spiritual-psychological astrology, Leo believed, was the coming astrology, and it was his urgent task to create it. Leo announced his historically driven millenarian mission: 'I am actuated by the primary motive of expressing what I believe to be the true Astrology, for the new Era that is now dawning upon the world' (1925: v).

Leo followed Blavatskyan neo-Platonic, Gnostic cosmology in every detail. All souls, he wrote, are a 'Divine Fragment' of 'the great Being whom men ordinarily call God - the God of this system - and whom theosophists often refer to as the Solar Logos', and of whom they were once part (Leo 1936: 1). Through successive incarnations, souls then descend lower and lower into matter and, as they do, so the inner light becomes so obscured that the memory of the soul's origin is almost obscured. Following Blavatsky, he believed that humanity was at the lowest, half-way point of its evolutionary cycle, the fifth sub-race of the fifth root race. The Age of Aquarius, he argued, would begin with the arrival of the new world Teacher (Leo 1925 116), who will inaugurate the religion of the sixth sub-race, preparing the way for the sixth root race and a significant evolutionary shift back to spirituality and the long return of humanity to God, the Solar Logos. Urgency was added by the fact that the souls of the sixth sub-race were already beginning to incarnate (Lowe 1911: 406). In addition, the 'Intelligences at the back of things' (Lowe 1911: 406), 'the Great Beings who are the Guardians of Humanity and the

Teachers of the individual Souls' (Besant 1919: 9), devas and planetary spirits (Leo 1925: 122-128, see also 63), were encouraging the use of astrology to guide humanity through the current crisis. The crucial stages in the historical process might therefore be better understood within the context of his essentially spiritual understanding of precession of the equinoxes: the zodiac, he wrote, 'is the book of life that is read on Judgement Day' (Leo 1925: 63). Leo was actually present in India for the Theosophical Society's foundation of the Order of the Star in the East under the leadership of Jiddu Krishnamurti, in order to make preparations for the great spiritual Teacher's arrival (Leo 1911: 8.10.397-8),⁵ and he became convinced that the Age of Aquarius was to begin on 21st March 1928 (Leo 1911: 8.7.272, .8.10.398).

Leo posited a form of dualism in which the universe is divided between 'the being, soul, man or creature...the Self' on the one hand, and the environment, nature, sensual stimuli, including planetary influences, and the 'Not Self' on the other. He also added a third pole, the physical body, which mediates between the environment and consciousness. As an example, he argued, although every external stimulus can produce a change in consciousness, it also corresponds to a fragment of inner experience. Thus the sound of a gun or the colour red only exist in the consciousness. In the environment all that exists are vibrations in the air or ether (Leo 1936: 3-5). As Leo acknowledges, this notion is ancient, although in claiming that humanity is the microcosm of the universal macrocosm, he used a more recent designation for the macrocosm, Swedenborg's 'Grand Man' to describe the macrocosm. But what was novel in his astrology was his emphasis on subjective inner experience as the determinant of one's relationship with the environment, and his modification of astrology to comment on different levels of consciousness.

The core features of Leo's Esoteric astrology were drawn partly from neo Platonism: the doctrine of correspondences as expressed in the Hermetic maxim 'as above so

below' (Leo 1925: 122), a revival of Hermetic angelology mediated through theosophy, in which humanity is surrounded by invisible beings with superior powers (Leo 1925: 63, 120, 122-128) and the zodiac as a 'book' in which divine plans could be read, using astrology as a language (Leo 1925: 63. From Blavatsky's version of sun-as-god theory he adapted the concept of the solar logos as the manifestation of God. He also adopted Blavatsky's teleological, evolutionary, spiritual universe.

Leo's contribution to astrology was to maximise the importance of psychological delineation and minimise the relevance of prediction, dramatically simplifying the technical procedures of interpretation (McCann 2002: 60-70). Relying on the notion that the soul is superior to the body and that the planets have essentially spiritual natures, he argued that planets therefore 'manifest' through the individual life (see for example Leo 1925: 187). There was a considerable degree of uncertainty, though, for it is impossible to ever be sure of how this manifestation will take place, given that all things - including states of consciousness - are in a constant state of transition into another (Leo 1925: xix, 88-89). From understanding these processes, individuals can then change themselves and the world (Besant 1919: 8-9). Leo wrote (1936: 2),

Souls come forth into manifestation to gain experience, to grow in wisdom, in love, and in power; and they can only do this by coming into practical touch with the world around them by experimenting and then learning from the results. Power is gained by the exercise of practical ability, by going out into the world and living the life of action, by doing all manner of works, some wise, many unwise, and by registering within the soul the consequences that follow from each' (Leo 1936: 2).

Charles Carter and Marc Edmund Jones

Alan Leo was followed by three other highly influential theosophical astrologers. In Britain his successor was Charles Carter (1887-1968), who was President of the Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society from 1920 to 1952. In the USA, theosophical astrology was represented by Marc Edmund Jones (1888-1980) and Elbert Benjamine (1882-1951), who also wrote under the name C.C. Zain. Carter, Jones and

Benjamin were highly competent teachers and organisers and prolific writers, but confined their innovation in astrology to minor technical modifications. There was also a strong strand of theosophical millenarianism in the USA represented in The Brotherhood of Light, founded by Thomas Burgoyne 'before 1876' (Melton, Clark and Kelly 1991: 275). Another society, The Rosicrucian Fellowship was founded in 1907 by Max Heindel (1865-1919), a student of Steiner and head of the Los Angeles Theosophical Lodge in 1904 and 1905 (Melton, Clark and Kelly 1991: 275). Heindel was also overtly Christian, believing that the key event in the Aquarian Age was to be the coming of the Christ, and he had little patience with Blavatsky's high regard for eastern religions and teachers. However, while Heindel was an energetic teacher, writer and publisher, his legacy has been entirely eclipsed by that of Alice Bailey (1880-1949).

Like Alan Leo, Bailey came from a profoundly conservative British Christian background. In 1915 she came into contact with theosophy, began studying works such as *The Secret Doctrine* and Annie Besant's *A Study in Consciousness*, and started teaching for the Theosophical Lodge in Pacific Grove, California (Bailey 1951: 133, 7-8). In 1917 she moved to Krotona, near Hollywood, at what Peter Washington (1995: 216) has described as the Theosophical Society's 'cultural and missionary centre'. There she met Foster Bailey, her second husband, long-term collaborator and, in 1919, National Secretary of the Theosophical Society (Bailey 1951: 144, 152, 156-7). However, Bailey became disillusioned with what she found to be the authoritarian atmosphere at Krotona and she and her husband then embarked on the process of separating from the Theosophical Society and setting up their own classes which, in April 1923 became formalised as the Arcane School (Bailey 1951: 158, 161, 193).

Bailey had immense respect for esoteric astrology, which she regarded as 'one of the keys the to *The Secret Doctrine* (Bailey 1925: 625; 1933: 19) and 'the purest

presentation of occult truth in the world'. She argued that it was absolutely essential to an understanding of the approach of the New Age, and hence of the entire great evolutionary shift in consciousness which she believed was then taking place (Bailey 1973: 5). Ultimately, she thought, esoteric astrology would reveal 'the true karma of the Heavenly Man', the 'incarnation of a Planetary Logos' (1952: 1191-2). This new astrology would satisfy humanity's need to make spiritual preparations for the Aquarian Age. She wrote that,

The sequence of the Mysteries which each of the signs of the Zodiac embodies will be clarified for us by the Christ, because the public consciousness today demands something more definite and spiritually real than modern astrology, or all the pseudo-occultism so widely extant (Bailey 1948: 127)

Dane Rudhyar

Alice Bailey's fellow theosophist and student in the Arcane School, Dane Rudhyar, was arguably the second most important astrologer in the twentieth-century English-speaking world after Leo, and the most significant to emerge from the United States. In the tribute published in the British *Astrological Journal* in 1985 to mark his ninetieth birthday, Layla Rael, Rudhyar's student, collaborator and wife, wrote that 'virtually no astrologer practising today is unaffected by Rudhyar's work' (Rael 1985: 77). Aidan Kelly described Rudhyar as 'the leading figure in the movement that reoriented twentieth-century astrology from the prediction of events to its present emphasis on the analysis of personality' (1994: 458). Others saw him as the 'seed man for the New Age' (Rupert 1986: 55; see also Arroyo 1975: 41; Somerfield 1995b: 56; Bogart 2002: 30).

If only because of its sheer scope - some twenty books and around a thousand articles - Rudhyar's published work constitutes as great an application of theosophy's broad principles to astrology as do Leo's. They were driven by the same sense of urgency as were Leo's, which arose from his belief that the upheavals of the twentieth-century were the final prelude, the Baileyite 'seed period',⁶ necessary to prepare for the New Age

which, as the Age of Aquarius, he thought was to finally commence in 2162 (1972: 135). They are also influential in the wider New Age movement, partly through the writings of David Spangler (Spangler 1976: 211) and Jose Arguelles, who endorsed Rudhyar's 1974 book, *An Astrological Mandala*. Arguelles wrote that the book was 'invaluable...for every person seriously interested in symbols as a medium for achieving the kind of transformation necessary to bring about the "new age"'. Rudhyar was also one of the few astrologers to be recommended in the wider literature of the New Age *sensu stricto*, receiving an endorsement in 1976 from David Spangler, who recommended Rudhyar's *Planetarization of Consciousness* and *Occult Preparations for a New Age* (Spangler 1976: 180).

Rudhyar's major contribution, though, was to take Leo's theosophical astrology forward by one important logical step. While Leo believed he was developing a psychological astrology, writing in the 1890s and 1910s prior to the translation into English of the emerging work on psychoanalysis, he lacked the language of depth psychology. Leo's psychology, like Blavatsky's, concerned the psyche as soul rather than as a set of internal processes. Jung, who did so much to create a psychology that could be applied to astrology, was studying the subject only in 1910 (Main 1997: 79), near the end of Leo's career. By the time Rudhyar began writing in 1930, Jung's early works were available to him.

Rudhyar's studies of western occultism had begun in 1917, the year that Alan Leo died, with his first serious exposure to theosophy, along with its Neoplatonic, Gnostic, Hermetic and Kabbalistic elements, and the later addition of Indian and Chinese wisdom (Rudhyar 1977: v-vii). He began to study astrology when he lived at the Theosophical Society headquarters at Krotina in California from 1920 to 1921, exactly when Bailey was separating from the society (Rudhyar 1970: vii; Kelly 1994: 459); it was Bailey who, in 1936, suggested that Rudhyar's series of astrological articles be

gathered together into his first book. Rudhyar's interest in astrology waned when he left Krotona but was restored around 1930 when he began to study Marc Edmund Jones' mimeographed courses and, shortly after, encountered C.G. Jung's depth psychology (Rudhyar 1970: 85-113) and Jan Smut's holism (1970: vii, xv). For Rudhyar, holism, which rests in the simple premise that the universe is inexorably moving towards greater wholeness (1970: 125), rather than fragmentation, formed a fitting complement to theosophy's teleological principles.

Rudhyar began publishing his 'psychological and psychospiritual' astrology in 1931-2 in a series of seven pamphlets under the general title *Harmonic Astrology* (Kelly 1994: 459), which formed a preparation for a further series of articles from 1933 onwards in the newly founded popular magazine *American Astrology* (Rael 1985: 83). While being firmly based in the theosophy which was to remain the foundation of his philosophy until his death, Rudhyar's articles represent the first comprehensive application of Jungian principles and depth psychology to astrology in the English-speaking world. These were then read by Alice Bailey, who suggested that the Lucis Trust publish them in book form as *The Astrology of Personality* in 1936. Paul Clancy, *American Astrology's* editor, described this book as 'the greatest step forward in Astrology since the time of Ptolemy. It represents the birth of a new epoch' (1975a: 77). More cautiously, the *Larousse Encyclopaedia of Astrology* considered that the book 'is generally acknowledged to be a classic' (Brau, Weaver and Edmunds 1982 244). Rudhyar's own description of the book was that it,

was an attempt to reformulate traditional astrology in terms of the modern philosophical and psychological outlook...It established new foundations for a consistent system of symbolism, using astrological factors as its symbols. Its goal was the formulation of an "algebra of life", using organic life-qualities as its primary elements, defining these qualities particularly at the psychological level in terms borrowed from C.G. Jung's analytical psychology (Rudhyar 1938: xii).

In 1974, thirty-eight years after its publication, the book was voted second in 'a survey of 100-200 opinions on "The 7 Best Books in Astrology"' (Dean and Mather 1977: 3).

In 1970 Rudhyar remarked that his outlook in 1934-5 had been so heavily theosophical that, had he written *The Astrology of Personality* in 1970, he would have formulated some of his interpretations differently. Yet the publication of *Occult Preparations for a New Age* in 1975 stood as the enduring testimony of Blavatskian eschatology as a central theme in his thought. There is no real evidence in his writing that his adherence to theosophical teachings ever diminished,

Ideologically, Rudhyar's astrology was a synthesis of nineteenth-century theosophy and twentieth-century psychology, including the ideas of Jung with Indian and Chinese wisdom. The basic principles of his work were laid out in his *The Astrology of Personality* (1936) but went through a further development in the wake of what he saw as the apocalyptic nature of the 1960s. The influence of theosophical historicism and the expectation that the New Age is about to begin were crucial to his entire body of work. Even his psychology was couched primarily in terms of Blavatskian cosmology, the personality being defined as 'man as a whole solar system...in constant relationship to the zodiac' (1970: xv).

Essentially Rudhyar adhered to what had become standard theosophical historiography, that the Age of Pisces was about to give way to the Age of Aquarius (1972: 17, 20, 98, 117) and that this would coincide with an evolutionary leap back to a more spiritual condition (1975a: 25). He took from Bailey (Bailey 1934a: 35) the concept of the 'seed-man', arguing that Buddha had been the germ but Christ the seed of the Age of Pisces (1972: 117). However, as the democratic Age of Aquarius approaches any person may become a seed man of the New Age by developing their individuality (1970: xiii, 1972: 167). The importance of astrology in this process is rooted in the argument that the birth chart reveals the person's spiritual condition (1970: xi-xii) and hence their seed potential (1969: 12; see also 1938: xii). Spirit, Rudhyar wrote, is,

The consecration that comes to the wholeness of an individual whole. It is the "identity of this whole - its uniqueness, its capacity to be the origin of a cycle of subjective duration; thus to be creative and original (1967: 13)

It was this tendency to wholeness which gave Rudhyar's astrology its spiritual character. 'Spirit', he wrote, was the active power of wholeness enveloping the total organism of differentiated parts, pervading all the parts and acting upon them in a "spiritual" manner (1978: viii). To be spiritual is therefore to open one's self up to the universal spirit, and the function of a spiritual astrology is to enable the person to achieve this. Rudhyar accepted Blavatsky's teleological, evolutionary, spiritual cosmos in its entirety (1967: 12-13), arguing that the development of individual self-hood (1967: 13, 1972: 22, 99, 1975a: 86:114) and the Christ-within, or God-within (1963: 55-7, 1970: 29; see also 1977: 54) is a necessary part of the ultimate return of the cosmos to its pure spiritual state and humanity's return to God.

Rudhyar was profoundly disturbed by the disturbances of the 1960s (1970:viii-ix, xiv, 1977: vi, 1978: 6), which he saw as a threat to order and a sign of an impending pre-millennial apocalypse (1970: xiv-xv; see also 1974: 18-19). He therefore set out on a fresh reform of astrology, arguing that both traditional exoteric astrology and Leo's esoteric astrology were unequal to the task as the New Age approached (1970: vii-ix, 1977: v; see also Arroyo 1975: xi). He conformed to Popper's activist model, discussed in chapter 2, and set out to maintain order in the face of the chaos of the 1960s. To accomplish this he turned to the latest forms of psychotherapy, such as Gestalt psychology (1972: 166) and counselling techniques.

The crucial purpose behind Rudhyar's development of astrology as a counselling art in the 1970s was to open up the individual to the cosmic powers, the spiritual beings and agents of God who are ready to work through the seed-individuals and assist humanity in its task (1970: xiii; 1975a: 148-9; 1978: 262; 1984: 27). He hoped to restore the

harmony between individual and cosmos (1977: 193-219), enable the New Age to dawn peacefully and convert the danger of a pre-millennial holocaust into a post-millennial peace. Within this historicist model, then, it is the absolute obligation of each individual to act (1970: xv, 1977: vii, 1980: 9; see also Somerfield 1995b: 56). To act, in turn, means primarily to transform both one's self and the entire planet (1970: xvi, 1977: 56-8, 149).

Rudhyar's impact was described by Rael in terms of the extent of the widespread acceptance of his ideas by astrologers in the 1980s. She wrote that 'Today, even the most event-oriented astrologer...*counsels* clients - that is to say, points out the client's responsibility, indeed purpose in life, to grow and learn from whatever happens, however dire or sublime' (1985: 77; see also Greene and Sasportas 1987: xii). She attributed this phenomenon entirely to Rudhyar's influence. If, for Rudhyar, astrological counselling was directly designed to facilitate the inauguration of the New Age (Brau, Weaver and Edmunds 1982: 245), it may then be argued that his formulation of psychological astrology is New Age in the *sensu strictu* sense identified by Hanegraaff. This then opens the way to a definition of modern psychological astrology as a whole, especially when its practitioners and users have no sense of the coming of the New Age as a historical imperative, as part of the New Age *sensu latu* (Hanegraaff: 1996: 96-7).

There was one further implication of Rudhyar's work for astrology: a profound relativism. 'Each individual', he wrote, 'is in a very real sense the center of his own universe. It is the way he orients himself to the universe as a whole that matters' (1970: xii). The individual's concerns in Rudhyar's new 'person centred astrology' (1980) were more important than the rules of astrology. Alexander Rupert, Rudhyar's interpreter and fellow member of the Arcane School, stated in a lecture in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s that the notion that 'an astrology with a capital A which exists somewhere, has always existed, and which we should all submit ourselves or be faithful

to...is merely the result of our imagination' (Rupert 2002: 3). There was, therefore, no such thing as an astrology which has any independent existence, only astrologers, people who are trying to interpret their relationship with the universe through astrological symbols. Each astrologer has his own astrological system, dependent on time and cultural context (see also Rudhyar 1967: 9, 12, 13; Greene 1977: 7, 13; Hand 1976: 5, 13).

The legacy of Leo and Rudhyar is evident throughout modern astrology. Writers such as Doane (1979), Perrone (1983) and Soric (1985) assume the primacy of spiritual evolution. The teleological notion that there is a purpose to life to which the individual is both led by a cosmically determined evolutionary process, but which is also dependent on personal activity and effort is widespread (see for example Rupert 1985: 57-8; Oken 1974: 4, 13; 1977: 25, 29; Greene 1997: 135-6). Alan Oken, the theosophist and student of Alice Bailey, emphasised the need for personal growth and evolution within the context of the crisis generated by the approach of the Age of Aquarius (Oken 1973: 3; 1974: 3, 7; 1988: 7, 42; see also Greene 1977: 3). The practical implication of this point of view for astrology is that the birth chart represents not what a person is but what he or she can become through personal transformation and by developing his or her potential (Rupert 1985: 56-58; Greene: 1977: 26, 135; 1986: 119). As Sasportas wrote (1989: 6; see also Rose 1982: 20; Greene 1989: 6-7), developing Rudhyar's metaphor, the birth chart is a 'seed' or, according to Greene (1977: 5), Mayo (1981: 6), Pond (1990: 15) and Hickey (1992: 15), a 'blueprint' of potential'. Hand (1975: 5) developed Leo's idea that planets 'manifest' in human lives, together with Rudhyar's statement that events don't happen to people, people happen to events (Rudhyar 1972: 103; see also 1974: 23), to argue that the horoscope is a symbol of intent, or rather, the encounter between cosmic intent and human intent. Hone (1973: 19, 287) for her part, developed the parallel idea that precise prediction is therefore impossible. The future, in other words, is dependent on the present and, if the present changes the future can not

be forecast. Schulman (1979), meanwhile, developed ways of examining reincarnation in the birth chart while Rose (1982) developed the techniques of astrological counselling. The relativistic notion that there is no 'good' or 'bad' in a chart, only potential, has also become widely accepted (see for example Hone 1973: 180-198; Greene 1977: 13; Tierney 1983). The need to experience one's inner dynamics as a means of growth was developed by Barbara Schermer (1989; see also Sasportas 1989: 6), while Jawer (1991, 2003) introduced the techniques of psychodrama into astrology to produce astrodrama, the acting out of astrological principles in order to gain self-awareness. Kirby (1997) published a collection of guided imagery exercises for astrology, designed to enable individuals to contact their inner being. Astrology has become dynamic, process oriented, experiential, driven by the need for self-understanding. The technical procedures of horoscope interpretation have become simplified and subordinated to the pursuit of personal meaning.

Yet there is a fundamental difference between the astrology of Alan Oken and that of Stephen Arroyo, whose books (1975, 1978) were regarded as seminal texts in the 1970s and 1980s. Both Oken and Arroyo follow the tradition set out by Rudhyar, but Oken's emphasis is theosophical and Baileyite, Arroyo's psychological, primarily Jungian. The latter is, as Curry noted (1992: 116), dominant, and contemporary astrology is psychological rather than spiritual. The primary philosophical distinction between the two models is that, whereas in esoteric astrology the soul is represented in the birth chart, in psychological astrology the soul is converted into the 'Self' and is regarded as being a higher faculty, the source of free-will, and is outside the chart (Greene 1977: 25-26; Mayo 1981: 6; Sasportas 1989: 6-7). Ruperti (1987), as a member of the Arcane School responded that the psychological astrologers did not understand the forces they were playing with. There is no single New Age astrology. Rather there are two, one that emphasises spiritual evolution and another that concentrates on the personal development. The former is devoted to the coming of the New Age as an imminent, real

event (see for example Oken 1973, 1974), whereas for the latter it is more of a motif for the current historical shift (see for example Greene 1977) or, in Sutcliffe's terms, an 'emblem' (2003: 9). Within Hanegraaff's typology the former therefore, may be New Age *sensu stricto*, while the latter begins to move towards the New Age *sensu lato*. There is also a distinction to be made between a psychological astrology which is more descriptive, which talks of the way people are (see for example Carter 1977) and one which is more dynamic, presupposing personal growth and what people can become (see for example, Greene and Sasportas 1987, 1988). Yet the two can recognise each other. Hone, a prime representative of the former, and Rudhyar, the principle advocate of the latter, were friends and admired each other's work (Hone 1973: 19-20, Rudhyar 1968).

Evident in all traditions of New Age astrology is a fundamental secular humanism, in which the understanding of humanity's evolutionary purpose is astrology's primary function (see for example, Ruperti 1985: 57), reflecting Hanegraaff's argument that the 'secularised esotericism' of New Age culture as a whole owes a debt to Enlightenment secularism (Hanegraaff 1996: 409, 521). Secularism in this sense may be defined as a rejection of the institutional church rather than the supernatural (see Hill 1979: 228-251). The central role of this evolutionary perspective locates such New Age historiography firmly in a Popperian historicist model in which individual action is necessary for the historical process, or as Ruperti put it, 'to undertake the necessary process of transformation of personal living into true transpersonal living' (1985: 56; see also Greene 1977: 25). Even the impact of the Enlightenment, noted by Hanegraaff (1996: 409, 521) as a feature of New Age thought is evident in Oken's (1973: vii, 8, 10) argument that the Age of Aquarius will bring scientific breakthroughs, rational explanations for psychic phenomena and the final end of medieval superstition. The core task of the Aquarian Age astrologer was outlined by Melanie Reinhart in 1987. She argued that,

in order to relate with feeling to a client and to follow the lead of the healing process itself, one needs to...simply be with someone, listen carefully to what they say, observe carefully how they are and what they do without the need to "make it better", interpret, or change anything. This depends not on a large vocabulary of astrological concepts and psychological techniques, but on the astrologer's self-knowledge, self-acceptance and continuing relationship with his or her own unconscious (Reinhart 1987: 113).

At the heart, then, of the ideology of New Age astrology lies Heelas' 'self-ethic' (1996: 18, 23). The penetration of New Age ideology - its eclecticism, universalism, use of magic and emphasis on the soul - into astrology, including books aimed at a mass market, is profound. For example, *Born Together: Love Relationships, Astrology and the Soul* (1998) by NCGR Council member Terry Lamb, defines the purpose of astrology as 'to help us know our True Self, to find our connection with the Divine, and to know ourselves as part of the source', while 'Aries goes to the deepest of levels - back to the Source itself' and 'Capricornians are looking for the keys to the cosmos' (1998: 15, 63, 87). Liz Greene's *Astrology for Lovers* (1986) couched sun-sign readings in terms of the psychological interpretation of myth and the development of one's future potential. Greene's introduction of Rudhyarian concepts into the mass sun-sign literature was followed by a series of imitators. Typical were Sheila Geddes' *Self-Development With Astrology* (1990) and Huntley's (1990) *The Elements of Astrology*, a guide to learning astrology, which was aimed at the popular market. Huntley wrote that the sun,

rules our ego and individuality, often the deepest, innermost part of our character, which can be hidden from view. We relate to our Sun sign as being our true self, and should strive to achieve the positive characteristics of this sign in order to be living a fulfilled life (1990: 52).

The activist view, meanwhile, was summarised by Donna Cunningham in 1978 (1978:9):

To believe that you are being buffeted by Pluto or held back by some bad aspect is very short-sighted... every difficult thing in the chart can lead us to positive, constructive insights and actions that will help us move along on the spiritual path. We generally grow through the mastery of the adverse circumstances, inner conflicts and difficult times that we go through. With that in mind, you can regard difficult aspects, transits, and sign placements as opportunities to grow. The true usefulness of a chart, as I see it, is to get a better perspective on yourself, to appreciate your own individuality and potential, and to work toward your most positive expression of self.

Your chart is only an instrument panel where you take readings on the course of your life. YOU ARE THE PILOT.

The New Age and Astrology

Two questions necessarily arise from consideration of astrology's relationship to the New Age movement. The first is whether astrology in itself can be considered a New Age discipline. The second is whether astrology's contemporary popularity is a function of the rise of the New Age movement. There are subtleties, though, in these questions. For example, Michael York points out both that astrology's philosophical roots are classical, yet that it is the 'lingua franca' of New Age movement, which 'establishes itself on astrological nuance, metaphor and interpretation' (York 2003: 25-6). Patrick Curry (1992: 161) argues that astrological notions of history may be central to both the psychological discourse of New Age culture and the historical prophecy of the New Age as a future epoch, even if it competes within the New Age market place with myriad other routes to self-awareness (Curry 1992: 161). Sutcliffe meanwhile, acknowledges astrology's significance as the popular wing of the occult and esoteric revival of the early twenty century (2003: 28, 36-7).

There is, though, no consensus amongst astrologers either on the date or desirability of the coming of the Age of Aquarius, and within the prevailing belief in the Age, there is also an overt anti-New Age tendency, as identified by Shoshanah Feher (1992). Feher reported on her survey of the 1989 United Astrology Congress in New Orleans, in which she broadly distinguishes a New Age astrology mainly represented by women and concerned with personal growth, and an 'Old Age' (Bailey 1934a: 35; Rudhyar 1984: 27; Oken 1988: 43; Lemesurier 1990: 5; Spangler 1993: 102) astrology mainly represented by men and concerned with event prediction. That is, if there is a New Age astrology, there may also be a non-New Age one. For example, James Holden argued

that although 'throughout the ages some people who were devotees of a particular philosophy or religion, and some who practiced magic have also been interested in astrology', concluding that 'this does not mean that astrology itself has anything to do with religion or magic, or, for that matter, with "New Age" thought' (Holden 1996: 261). There was opposition to Leo's theosophical reform programme from its inception in the 1900s (Leo: 1911: 310; Matthews 1911: 263; Smith: 1911: 396). In addition, some theosophical astrologers, notably Sepharial (Farnell 1998: 34-5; Curry 1992: 161) considered that astrology was self-sufficient and had no need of theosophical input; a point of view represented more recently by Dennis Elwell (1986). The distinction between two types of astrology was also recognised in the astrological literature in 1987 by Greene and Sasportas, who were of the opinion that the psychological branch was expanding at the expense of the event-predicting, character-describing branch (1987: xi). However, the 1980s saw a reaction against the dominance of post-New Age psychological astrology in the so-called 'traditional revival' (Campion 1994b: 3) strongly associated with Olivia Barclay (1998/9). Nevertheless, the influence of New Age ideology is pervasive. Elwell, for example, cites Rudolf Steiner (1987: 40-2, 54-5, 106-7) while Barclay (1990: 19) argued for the unity of the 'Inner Spirit' with the universe and claimed that astrology demonstrated the 'Oneness of Life'; however, she insisted that such ideas had nothing to do with practical astrology. Thus the issue would appear to be primarily one of rhetorical positions adopted in order to show hostility to the New Age, rather than any real philosophical distinction. As Robert Wallis has noted, 'neo-Shamans and Pagans often use New Age as a derogatory term, denoting a shallow, woolly approach to spirituality, with one Pagan suggesting 'newage' be pronounced 'rather unkindly, as in "sewage"' (Wallis 2003: 29; see also Pearson 1998). The same tendency may be evident amongst astrologers who have nevertheless adopted aspects of New Age ideology.

Chapter Summary

It has been argued that there were two major reform programmes in astrology in the twentieth-century, both under the impact of the theosophical prophecy that the New Age, or Age of Aquarius, was imminent. The first, by Alan Leo, resulted in the creation of esoteric astrology, concerned primarily with spiritual evolution but with an emphasis on psychological interpretation. The second, by Dane Rudhyar, included a substantial component of depth-psychology, mainly from Jung, as well as from Bailey's theosophical Christianity. The result was the creation of an astrology which conforms in all respects to the characteristics of New Age thought set out in chapter 4: it emphasises the inner divine, individualism, the value of personal experience, and personal transformation, is eclectic, syncretistic, holistic and evolutionary. It also conforms to the principles of Popperian historicism, postulating a universe in which the existence of a teleological, deterministic process requires individual action. It may also be observed, in relation to the characteristic of millenarianism set out in chapter 2, Rudhyar believed that western society was afflicted by a profound moral crisis while both he and Leo believed that the New Age was imminent, expected the arrival of a saviour and believed that education was a major means of ensuring a smooth transition to the millennium.

New Age astrology, it may be argued, through its contrast with traditional nineteenth-century event-oriented astrology, conforms to Heelas' 'detraditionalised' astrology, or to Gill, Hadaway and Marler's definition of astrology, along with new age beliefs as 'non-traditional religious belief' (1996: 512). Whilst astrology's connection with millenarianism dates to the ancient near east, modern astrology, then was 'detraditionalised' as a direct response to the millenarian imperatives of belief in the coming Age of Aquarius and theosophical doctrines of spiritual evolution.

Notes

1. Heelas notes the paradoxical New Age devotion and aversion to tradition which leads to traditional practices being adopted but then transformed (1996: 27).
2. In return Leo called Besant 'without a doubt the most remarkable woman of the twentieth century (Leo 1911: 8.10.399).

3. Directions are movements of the planets around the horoscopes which are used as the basis of prediction.

4. Blavatsky defined Logos in its esoteric sense as 'the rendering in objective expression, as in a photograph, of the concealed thought. The Logos is the mirror reflecting DIVINE MIND, and the Universe is the mirror of the Logos...' (1888: II.25).

5. See also Leo 1911: 8.3.92-3, 1911: 8.4.135, 8.5.1135; Vernon 2000: 25, 48-50; Washington 1995: 34-5, 126-133).

6. The concept of the 'seed' as in 'seed' individuals being chosen to start a new race, was familiar to Californian theosophists in the 1920s. See Heindel 1929b: 310.

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Part 2

Chapter 7

Sun Sign Astrology

Chapter Description

The main vehicle for the transmission of popular astrology is the horoscope column consisting of twelve paragraphs, one for each of the approximate thirty-day periods when the sun occupies each of the signs of the zodiac. The zodiac sign occupied by the sun at birth is known as the sun-sign by astrologers, or frequently as the 'birth-sign' or 'star-sign' in public discourse. The existence of sun-sign columns is a matter of some argument amongst astrologers, a controversy summarised by Dean (1996a: 145-6, 150-2; see also Heath 1996: 129-132). Many astrologers regard such columns as responsible for astrology's poor public reputation (Hone 1973: 14; see also Oken 1974: 5). According to Campbell and Brennan (1990: 33), sun-sign columns are 'a corrupt form [of astrology] disowned by most serious astrologers'. Some 'serious astrologers', though, both write and publicly defend such columns (Elliot 1990; Eccles 1996: 306-10). However, it is necessary to distinguish two types of sun-sign astrology (Harvey 1973-74b: 38-40). First there are the sun-signs as character descriptions, or sun-sign delineations. Second are the sun-sign forecasts, the columns carried in most popular newspapers and women's magazines. These 'horoscopes' are based on brief readings for individuals born with the sun in the respective signs of the zodiac and consisting of a combination of generalised advice and prediction. Both sun-sign delineations and sun-sign forecasts are simplifications of astrology which allow it to relate to large groups of people, each individual being able to easily identify their astrological type from their date of birth. The wide dissemination of these columns has led to a popular identification of astrology as a whole with the birth, sun or star-sign, the zodiac sign

containing the sun at birth (Harvey 1973-74b: 39). The question 'what's your sign?' was to become a classic 'chat-up' line in the 1960s (Rudhyar 1970: viii).

However, the concept of the sun-sign would have been meaningless to any astrologer prior to the early twentieth-century. The standard technical procedure for interpreting birth charts would, before then, have assigned the planets significance largely on the basis of the house cusps which fell in the zodiac signs which those planets ruled,¹ and would have assessed their importance largely according to factors known as the essential and accidental dignities, of which at least five, and perhaps thirty, might be taken into consideration (Lilly 1647: 101-4). In this system the sun might actually turn out to be the most insignificant planet. It was Alan Leo, influenced by Blavatsky's writings, who radically reformed the interpretative procedures for the judgement of birth charts, making a series of revisions which were designed to simplify the techniques of interpretation, such as the planetary aspects (McCann 2002: 66-70) and moving the sun to the centre of astrological interpretation.

The Signs of the Zodiac

The qualities of the zodiac signs in western astrology were established, or at least systematically recorded, by Claudius Ptolemy in the second-century. He was primarily concerned with the systematic attribution of particular qualities to the signs in order to allow their use either in the analysis of individual horoscopes, or in the prediction of specific outcomes. Aries was, for example, hot, dry, diurnal and masculine (Ptolemy 1940: I.11-16), attributes which might be applied to description of character, the diagnosis and treatment of disease or the prediction of general events for the year. Ptolemy's list of qualities was adapted and added to over the next fourteen-hundred years and appeared in English for the first time in William Lilly's *Christian Astrology* (1647). The space given by Lilly to the signs of the zodiac was minimal compared to the attention given in many modern astrology books. For example, in just half a page of

an 832-page book Lilly outlined all that it was necessary for the astrologer to know about Aries in order to apply its qualities to matters as diverse as the diagnosis and judgement of the sick, the finding of lost objects, the outcome of battles and success in marriage. Of this section only three adjectives, 'luxurious, intemperate and violent' (Lilly 1647: 93) might apply to individual personality, although they could as easily refer to the weather, the entire nature of the times or any other matter of interest to the astrologer. More important to Lilly than the nature of Arien people was the sign's rulership of 'sand and hilly grounds, a place of refuge for Theeves' (1647: 93), associations of vital importance if one was tracing stolen property. The same accounts were repeated time and again in subsequent literature. One typical nineteenth-century description of Aries was provided by Zadkiel in his 1849 *Grammar of Astrology*. His account of the sign was brief, but what he did include was almost entirely physical (the use of which would have been to recognise characters described in horary charts), and contained only seven words of psychological delineation:

This sign produces a dry, lean body, middle stature, strong limbs, large bones, long and meagre face, sharp sight, neck rather long and scraggy, dark eyebrows, swarthy complexion, hair reddish and wiry, thick shoulders; disposition, angry and violent as the ram (Zadkiel 1849: 359).

Of the various aspects of Leo's reformed astrology, the most dramatic, in terms of the interpretation of the zodiac signs, was his discarding of almost the entire list of zodiacal attributes which had been accumulated from the first to seventeenth-centuries. In his opinion, these were of no use at all if people were to prepare for the New Age. He therefore set out to create a zodiacal astrology which would fulfil this purpose by encouraging people to reflect on their inner character, rather than measure the extent to which they conformed to a set of externally imposed criteria. Leo's description of Aries (1922: 17), was typical. At almost four times the length of Zadkiel's version, Leo's completely ignored physical characteristics and set the tone for all future descriptions of the sign. Aries, he wrote,

Represents undifferentiated consciousness. It is a chaotic and unorganised sign, in which impulse, spontaneity, and instinctiveness are marked features. Its vibrations are the keenest and most rapid, but without what may be called definite purpose, except towards impulsiveness and disruption. It signifies explosiveness, extravagance and all kinds of excess. Its influence is more directly connected with the animal kingdom, in which life is full and without the directive power of fully awakened self-consciousness (Leo 1922: 17).

Leo's description does contain the recognisable legacy of the Ptolemaic canon, but was psychologised to the extent that Aries' traditional rulership of the head becomes 'a desire to be at the head and command'. Mars' rulership of Aries is responsible for the strong dose of martial qualities, 'force, combat, energy, strength and vigour...enthusiastic, pioneering, ambitious, militant, enterprising, independent, assertive, and self-willed'. However, Blavatsky's physics are evident in the notion that the sign has 'vibrations', and her theory of evolution represented by the concept that Aries' consciousness is 'undifferentiated' and that its lack of 'fully-awakened self-consciousness' signifies its closeness to the animal kingdom. Leo had adapted Blavatskyan evolution to the notion of the tropical zodiac as a developmental cycle, commencing with Aries, the point of creation and hence the lowest point of evolution, and then rising to Pisces, the highest point. Thus the concept of psychological growth was written into the zodiac.

Leo's theosophical millenarianism was, perhaps, more evident in his delineation of Aquarius. Whereas to Lilly this sign's significance had been found in its rulership of the ankles, high places, strong bodies, and southern Bavaria (1647: 98-9), Leo was clearly influenced by Aquarius' role as the sign of the New Age. It was, he wrote, distinguished by 'its love of human nature' (Leo 1922: 23) and represented that point where the circle [the zodiac] is left for the spiral and man begins his mental ascent', even though he doubted whether many people were ready for this step.

Leo's formulation of the signs' characters were to become the basis of most subsequent 'sun-sign' descriptions and, arguably, every description within the English speaking world after 1945, with the exception of those associated with the 'traditional revival' of the 1980s-90s. His description of the Arien character, for example, was repeated in most of the standard texts (see for example Parker and Parker 1971: 106; Hone 1973: 48-30; Mayo 1981: 41-2). The Arien passage in Linda Goodman's best seller *Linda Goodman's Sun Signs*, illustrates the point (Goodman 1970: 3). Leo's forceful impulsiveness and spontaneity became Goodmans 'forceful manner [and] firm handclasp' together with an imaginative warning to prepare for 'a dizzy dash around the mulberry tree'. Leo's adaptation of Blavatskyan spiritual evolution to the zodiac cycle was evident in Goodman's statement that Aries 'represents birth, as Pisces represents death and consciousness of the soul. The ram is only conscious of himself.' (1970: 3). Thus Leo's astrology as new age *sensu-stricto* was embedded into the text of what claims to be the biggest-selling sun-sign book of the twentieth century and hence the principle work of late-twentieth century popular astrology. It does not follow from this that Goodman had any interest in the coming of the Age of Aquarius or, if she did, whether she considered it to be important. She did establish, though, the potential profitability of the sun-sign books which dominated popular astrology publishing from the 1970s to 1990s. Whereas it had been sufficient for Leo to devote a half page to Aries, the sign warranted approximately twenty-four pages in Bernard Fitzwalter's *Sun Sign Secrets* (1989), including information which would have been regarded as irrelevant or superfluous by William Lilly, or better located through more precise astrological measures.

The Sun as Religious Symbol

The sun has been an object of religious veneration since earliest recorded history. The dominant role of solar deities in Egyptian religion is well-documented (see for example Assman 1995) while in second millennium BCE Babylon the sun god Shamash

occupied a vital role in the state as the lawgiver (Frankfort 1978: 157), and the existence of a solar component in early Hebrew religion has been plausibly proposed by Hollis (1937) and Taylor (1993). In the second and third centuries CE, Hermetic philosophers in Hellenistic Egypt devised a complex cosmology in which the sun played a central role in the relationship between the creator and humanity. As summarised by Fowden (1986: 77) there are three worlds: the first is the realm of God the creator, the second is the intelligible world, the home of reason, and the third is the sensible, material world. God's creative and benevolent powers then flow through the intelligible and sensible worlds to the sun, around which orbit the seven spheres of the stars and planets. The divine powers which bind this structure together may be spoken of in terms of light and derive from the sun, together with the less celestial bodies, the planets and stars. Thus everything is in God, he is in everything and the sun is the primary vehicle for the transmission of his divine intent to the earth.

The religion of the unconquered sun, Sol Invictus, provided the nearest approximation to a state church in the late Roman Empire (Halsberghe 1972) prior to Constantine's reconciliation with Christianity in the early fourth century. The subsequent adoption of pagan solar iconography by Christianity is evident in the orientation of churches on an east-west axis and the choice of December 25th, the winter solstice and feast of Sol Invictus, as Christmas Day. Indeed, respect for the sun as a metaphor for God became an accepted part of the Christian narrative. For the church father Irenaeus (1916: I.10.2) in the second century, the sun was a universal metaphor for God's teaching. In the thirteenth-century Thomas Aquinas (1975: I.93) used the sun as a metaphor for God's justice, comparing it to the light of a candle as God's justice compares to man's. From the twelfth-century on, though, the sun acquired real physical powers. Thus, following Aristotle,² Aquinas (1956: III. 104.10) remarked on the sun's generative power: 'for man, together with the sun, generates a man'.

The translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* by Marsilio Ficino (see Ficino 1989: 17-90; Thorndike 1923-58: IV.562-73) in the late fifteenth-century, and the revival of pagan cosmology which it engendered, played a part in Copernicus' revolutionary proposal in the early sixteenth-century that the sun was at the centre of the cosmos. In the introduction to his *De Revolutionibus*, published in 1543, Copernicus (Shrimplin 2000: 1; see also Copernicus 1975: I.10, pp. 24-5, Shumaker 1978: 44) wrote,

In the midst of all assuredly dwells the Sun. For, in this most beautiful temple, who would place this luminary in any other or better position³ from which he can illuminate the whole at once? Indeed, some rightly call Him the Light of the World, others, the Mind or the Ruler of the Universe: Hermes Trismegistus names him the visible God. Sophocles Electra calls him the all-seeing. So indeed the Sun remains, as if in his kingly dominion, governing the family of Heavenly bodies which circles around him. Trismegistus calls it a visible god and Sophocles' *Electra*, that which gazes upon all things.

The centrality of the sun in the cosmos had a strong appeal for alchemists, for whom the transmutation of lead into gold, the sun's metal, acquired new significance, as well as some astrologers. John Dee, Elizabeth I of England's astrologer, was an enthusiastic Copernican (Shumaker 1978: 56-7). Athanasius Kircher, the early seventeenth-century Christian Kabbalist, initiated 'sun-as-god' theory (discussed in chapter 3) and anticipated Max Müller's theories by arguing that pagan polytheism was a misunderstanding of the original solar nature of all gods (Godwin 1979b: 43-60).

Blavatsky and the Sun

As was discussed in chapter 3, H.P. Blavatsky was well aware of Max Müller's work on the solar origins of religion with which, however, she profoundly disagreed on the grounds that, for Müller, this was evidence of primitive error (1888: I. xxviii-xxx). Blavatsky was, however, profoundly influenced by the Hermetic heliocentric cosmology of the first and second-centuries BCE, the structure of three heavens and the centrality of the sun. The doctrine of the three worlds was known to Blavatsky through such seventeenth-century Hermetic and Rosicrucian thinkers as Robert Fludd

(Huffmann 1992: 99), whom she described as the 'chief' of the 'philosophers by fire' (Blavatsky 1877: I.309).

Thus, when Blavatsky referred to the 'Central Spiritual Sun' (1888: I.100), like Copernicus, she was, as she states, harking back to the Hermetic teachings. 'In the shoreless ocean of space', she wrote, 'radiates, the central, spiritual and *Invisible* sun' (1877: I. 302), while the 'Hermetic axiom' maintains that our 'spirits...incorruptible and eternal', both emanate from the 'eternal central sun' and 'will be reabsorbed by it at the end of time (1877: I.502). Adapting the threefold Hermetic cosmos to the emanation theory of Kabbalism, she described the first emanation, the first light, as the soul of the spiritual sun, the second as its spirit, in which the life-principle is infused into form, and the third as its body, the material world. The further the universe moves away from the spiritual sun, the darker and worse it becomes. She added that the material sun then 'shines for bodies' as 'the spiritual sun shines for souls' (1877: I. 324). The sun, she added, drawing on Jowett's recent translation of Plato's *Timaeus*, neither emits heat nor exerts gravitational influence, but instead operates according to magnetism and becomes the lens through which the spiritual light of the invisible sun, or God (1877: I.270) becomes visible (1877: I. 271; see also I.258). The planets are also, being fragments of light, equivalent to the sun. Thus, when Blavatsky deliberately evoked Christian imagery, punning on the words 'sun' and 'son', she stated that the 'Sun-Sons', the stars and planets are, like the sun, children of the 'Spiritual Sun' (1877: I.50, II. 463; 1888: I.100, 400). In other words, she wrote a Kabbalistic Christian theology of Father and Son (1877: I.271) into the Hermetic, theosophical cosmos of invisible, spiritual sun and material, visible sun.

Alan Leo and the Sun in Astrology

Alan Leo's solar astrology was derived directly from Blavatsky's reformulation of Hermetic cosmology. In *Esoteric Astrology* he stated that 'There is but One Life within

the Universe - The Supreme Life of God, streaming through the Sun' (1936 xix; see also 126-7). Again following Blavatsky, he wrote that the planets are fragments of the sun and hence, like it, parts of the body of the 'Great Logos' (1925: 126-7). The sun, as the 'life-giver' is the most important single factor in the birth chart and the zodiac, Leo argued, should be seen less as the sun's path through the sky than a circle surrounding it; the sun's rays permeate the entire circle at once as its rays but pass through one particular sign at birth (1936: 30-1). Then relying on Blavatsky's sun-son analogy, Leo laid the spiritual foundation for a new psychological astrology. He wrote that,

It is these rays of light and consciousness sent forth from the Sun that form the individualities of men and that make of them in very truth the Sons of God. For the Sun represents the great Sacrifice and sends forth individualities that will afterwards be drawn back in full self-consciousness to share that Bliss which is the essence of the Divine Nature (1936: 30).

It was in another passage in *The Art of Synthesis*, (1936: 30-1), published in 1904, though, that Leo set out the foundations for a technical revolution in twentieth-century astrology. He began by paraphrasing Blavatsky and then moved straight to the direct statement that the sun is the most important single feature in astrological interpretation:

The Sun, then is a representative of our Solar Logos, whose sacrifice on a lower plane is a reflection of that on higher planes above.

There is a Trinity of manifestation from the Solar Logos, just as there is in the greater universe; and this we are taught takes the form of three emanations, or great outpourings of Consciousness (Life), Light, and Heat or Magnetism...

Therefore, as taught in the Secret Doctrine: 'The Sun we see is a reflection of the true Sun: this reflection, as an outward concrete thing, is a Kâma-Rûpa, all the suns forming the Kâma-Rûpa of Kosmos...

Astrologically the Sun is the life factor which animates everything its rays fall upon, giving that magnetic affinity which binds one thing to another...

The Sun is the giver of the life-principle, or the breath of life, and when manifesting in the physical world the Sun represents the specialised life or 'Prana' in each separate individual. In all degrees of manifestation the Sun is the giver of life, spiritually, mentally, and physically, and it is therefore of vital and primary importance in all study of Astrology. It is the representative of the One Life that permeates all things; and therefore careful study of the Sun and all that it denotes in a nativity is necessary before a sound judgment can be given.

This single passage marked a profound shift in the technical procedures of astrological interpretation, perhaps as great a change as any since the development of the horoscope in the Hellenistic world. Blavatsky's cosmology may have entered the astrological literature through routes other than Leo. For example, Heindel (1929b: 5) summarised her teachings on the invisible sun. Leo's ideas, though, were profoundly influential. Bailey (1973: 16-17) summarised his distinctions between planets, sun-sign and rising sign, while Rudhyar (1978: vii) repeated his view that all twelve signs of the zodiac 'are operative within human nature'. An emphasis on the centrality of solar spirituality also occurs in the writings of followers of Gurdjieff (Collin 1984) and Steiner (Vreede 2001: 283), the latter including the common identity of the sun and the son. But when Margaret Hone in 1951 (1973: 24-5) described the Sun she was deeply indebted to Leo. In the standard British astrological textbook of the 1950s-80s, she wrote,

This is the most powerful of all the horoscopic factors. When considering a personal chart, the judgment of the type of person will depend largely on his solar characteristics....The real underlying *self* will be largely shown by the placing of the Sun...it is understood as the creative principle, the power giving body, the personal self-expression. Its symbol is that of Eternity, and of the power of primal motion, from whence all else issued and was created.

Jeff Mayo's description in 1964 (1981: 17-18) followed directly on Leo's and Hone's. Derek and Julia Parker, in their best selling popular text-book, *The Compleat Astrologer*, omitted Leo's appeal to the soul and Hone's to Eternity, yet their brief psychological description of the sun's attributes made just a slight attempt to recall the traditional associations of pre-Leonian astrology, remarking that the sun rules the heart, heads of state and royalty. Their explicit gesture to New Age astrology *sensu lato* came in their statement that, in the charts of children, the sun relates to 'potentialities to be developed in adulthood' (1971: 86).

Sun-Sign Forecasts in the UK (1)

Although it has been argued that there is a continuous practice of using the position of the sun 'as propitious or appropriate for various activities' dating back to Hellenistic astrology, around the fourth-century BCE up to the nineteenth-century (Koch-Westenoltz 1995: 170), this practice is better understood in terms of the so-called 'Egyptian days', a tradition imported into the Hellenistic world from Egypt in which days were considered variously lucky or unlucky. The entire practice of the form of astrology which is now practised in the western world has always been based primarily on the planets as a group, from Babylonian times (Brown 2000) through to Hellenistic and medieval astrology (Crane 1997). From Lilly's *Christian Astrology* (1647), the first astrological text book to be published in English, to the standard astrological texts of the nineteenth-century, such as Zadkiel (1849), it is clear that each planet might assume the most prominent role in horoscope interpretation, and that the sun might be least important. In general the planet ruling the sign of the zodiac rising on the eastern horizon might be the most significant and the concept of the sun-sign as a primary factor was completely unknown.

However, from around 1850, Raphael's *Prophetic Almanak* included forecasts for the year ahead for individuals born on each day of the year, but not grouped together by zodiac sign (Dean 1996a: 144). By the early twentieth-century Cheiro (1913) was producing character descriptions and forecasts but with the different types grouped by month of birth, with absolutely no mention of zodiac sign. By the 1940s Edward Lyndoe (1949) was producing equivalent books in which knowledge of the zodiac signs was taken for granted. In between these two dates, the language of the signs had entered popular culture.

The first newspaper astrology column is generally understood to have been published in *The Sunday Express* on 24 August 1930 (Naylor 24 August 1930). The Express had asked Cheiro to provide an analysis of the horoscope of the infant Princess Margaret,

daughter of the future George VI. The feature was actually written by Cheiro's assistant R.H. Naylor and he included, along with an analysis of the Princess's birth chart, general political predictions and about fifty words per day of birthday predictions for each day of the coming week.

The result was a repeat of the column on the following Sunday (Naylor 31 August 1930), this time without the Princess's birth chart and the political forecasts, but with around seven or eight words per day of birthday forecasts for every day in September. The exercise was repeated a month later (Naylor 5 October 1930), after which the column was published weekly, as it has been to the present day, though with a break beginning in 1943 (Howe 1967: 69). This was most likely because of the reduced size of the newspaper due to war time newsprint shortages.

The newspaper was clearly delighted with the response to Naylor's column. An editorial note introducing his second feature (31 August 1930: 7) reported that 'enormous interest was aroused' in Naylor's predictions and treatment of the Princess's birth chart. The potential increase in circulation clearly guaranteed support from the paper's editor and owner (Howe 1967: 66) and there seems no support for West and Toonder's comment (1973: 113), that the first column was published 'in the spirit of a joke'. Arthur Christiansen, the entertainment editor of the *Express* who hired Naylor late wrote that,

Naylor and his horoscopes became a power in the land. If he said that Monday was a bad day for buying, then the buyers of more than one West End store waited for the stars to become more propitious (Christiansen 1961; 65).

Naylor himself was in no doubt that he had initiated a popular revolution in astrology, claiming that his first column in August 1930 had been both 'the only worthwhile forward step in Astrology this century', and had 'entirely altered the orientation of the public mind towards astrology' (Naylor 1936b: 151). The result, he added (1936b: 151), was 'a widespread willingness to admit that there is or might be something in Astrology. An enormous potential market for horoscopes and Astrological literature

was created'. He was not the only astrologer to identify a change. In 1938 Charles Carter (1938: 1) reminisced on developments in the astrological world since 1926, writing that,

The science itself has since then undergone a great change. A new race of astro-journalists has sprung up, popular astrological periodicals have come into existence, and the very small, but enthusiastic astrological world of my young days is no more.

Naylor himself referred to the number of imitators in other newspapers (1936b: 151), adding later that a 'flood of astrological literature...swept throughout the bookshops' (1943: 24). It was clear though, that the language of the zodiac birth-signs was unfamiliar. Naylor did not use them and in one of his first features (Naylor 26 October 1930) gave a brief but painstaking introduction to the zodiac and its division into twelve sections. By 1934 Naylor was introducing his readers to the sun-sign as a character type, including profiles for the sign of the month, featuring 'Mr' and 'Mrs Taurus' on 29 April 1934 but it is clear that the process of education was slow.

Naylor's major competitor was Edward Lyndoe, who was hired by *The Sunday Express's* rival, *The People*, in late 1933. Lyndoe copied Naylor's format, adding monthly forecasts to the daily birthday and general political predictions, but without using the names of the zodiac signs, suggesting that the public was unaware of them (Dean 1996a: 144-5). He did use them in May 1935 but dropped them later. The *Daily Express* launched a daily column in 1934 but with a much lower profile than the Sunday version. It was anonymous and consisted of about 100 words for the birthday of the day and twenty words to sum up the day as a whole for all other readers. The feature was regarded in some quarters as a major success. James Leigh (1936: 98), the editor of *Prediction*, reported that,

The Daily Express will never again doubt the interest which its readers take in Astrology. Some days ago it published on its main page an article which told what happened behind the scenes when through pressure of other matter (sic), the Editor decided to leave out the daily horoscope. No sooner had the paper been dispatched for distribution than the editorial powers regretted their rashness. From 1 a.m. the

newspaper was besieged by 'phone and personal enquiries indignantly demanding to know what had happened to the horoscope! A special staff team was delegated to deal with these queries. It spent several working days reading the horoscope over the telephone and sending proofs to readers who lived in the provinces. If the city page, or the shopping notes or the features are curtailed (says the *Express*) no one raises any objection. But the day when the horoscope was omitted will always be remembered, for it caused endless inconvenience in the office, and disturbed the peace of thousands of readers.

Naylor himself wrote his first twelve paragraph sun-sign columns in 1936 when he became astrologer to *Prediction*. It was clear, however, that even amongst the readers of such a specialised magazine, there was little awareness of the zodiac signs. In the very first issue, in February (1936a) he headed each paragraph as 'Sun in Aquarius', 'Sun in Pisces' and so on, adding the dates when the sun was in that sign. Yet in March the twelve paragraph column was dropped. When it was revived in August the paragraphs were headed with the dates of birth, such as 'Born anywhere between January 21st and February 19th inclusive', followed by the zodiacal subheading in parentheses, such as '(THE AQUARIUS TYPE)' (Naylor 1936c: 16). Once again Naylor appeared to doubt whether the zodiac sign names alone would mean anything to his readers. It was not until the December issue that Naylor used bold headings for the zodiac signs adding only an explanatory note to the effect that each paragraph summarised 'the influences which will be experienced' in the coming month by individuals born between the relevant dates (Naylor 1936d).

Yet, in spite of the anecdotal evidence indicating their popularity wartime newsprint shortages caused a curtailment of astrological publishing in the UK (Howe 1967: 69), while Hone (1973: 296) noted that wartime pressures in general limited wider astrological activity. As West and Toonder (1973: 115) remarked, 'the Second World War put a temporary halt to astrological activity, such as it was'.

Sun-sign Forecasts in the USA

While Naylor appears to have been the first of the high profile media astrologers, it was six years after his first *Sunday Express* feature that he composed his first twelve-paragraph horoscope column using the names of the zodiac signs with no further explanation. The first such columns appear to have been published in the USA, although the date is uncertain. A weekly feature of the type written by Naylor may have appeared in the Boston Record in 1931 (McMillan 1985: 3). However, what is known is that the first regular twelve-paragraph horoscopes columns appeared in *American Astrology* magazine, written by the editor Paul Clancy (though published anonymously), from the first issue onwards (Vol. 1 no 1, March 1933, pp. 11-15).

Ken Irving (2003), the current editor of *American Astrology*, has suggested that it was Dane Rudhyar, on the basis of his own philosophical inclinations, who actually suggested the twelve paragraph format to Clancy. Rudhyar had certainly inherited Blavatsky's respect for the spiritual sun. In 1938 he opened his second book, a detailed account of the planets and horoscope houses in terms of their potential for spiritual development, with a proclamation of the change of the ages:

Today is a new birthday for the ancient gods. New men call for new symbols. Their cry rises, beyond their logical intellects ashamed of mystical longings, for new gods to worship and to use in order to integrate their harrowing mental confusion and to stabilize their uprooted souls. Young gods, fresh and radiant with the sunshine of a new dawn, glorified with the "golden light" of a new Sun of Power, ecstatic with virgin potentialities after the banishment of ancient nightmares (1938: xiii).

To rely on a mass market magazine as his first major vehicle was also consistent with Ruperti's (1985: 55) claim that Rudhyar used astrology much as Blavatsky used spiritualism; to reach the greatest number of people. Clancy, according to Irving, had been producing such columns in his previous magazine, the Detroit-based *Modern Astrology* (Irving 2001).⁴ The format clearly had an immediate appeal. According to Carl Weschke (2002b), the president of Llewellyn, one of the largest publishers of popular astrology titles in the USA, "American Astrology" magazine's start was

entirely based on Clancy's conviction that sun sign astrology would prove popular'. Horoscope columns then spread from the astrological media to the national press, including *the New York Post* in 1936 (McMillan 1985: 3) and the *Los Angeles Times*, whose columns for 1952-3 were critiqued by Theodor Adorno (1994: 34-127). Whereas in the UK the publication of horoscope columns was hit by wartime newsprint shortages, the same problems were absent in the USA. Thus, as Hone (1973: 296) wrote, in the USA 'great strides took place, because of the comparative ease with which astrological knowledge could be spread to the vast magazine reading public'.

Sun-Sign Forecasts in the UK (2)

In the UK the sun-sign format was not fully adopted in the press until 1955. Although by 31 January 1938 the *Daily Express* horoscope was divided into twelve paragraphs, these were set for the months when the sun was in particular signs, zodiac sign names were not used and each section consisted only of about twenty words with about sixty words for the birthday of the day. However, by 1 January the column was dropped, almost certainly because of newsprint shortages; the size of the newspaper was reduced from up to thirty pages to only ten, and as little as six. Even in January 1951 the newspaper was only six pages long. The column was relaunched by 1 January 1954, but the pre-war format was revised to include one paragraph for the day in general, one for the birthday of the day and two for the signs of the zodiac, which were now named. By 2 January 1956 the full twelve paragraph sun sign horoscope was published daily. Thus, the sun-sign phenomenon in Britain only became an established part of the popular daily press in the mid-1950s.

The Current Status of Sun-Sign Horoscopes in the UK.

My personal experience of dealing with editors of women's magazines in the UK since 1986 is that the horoscope column is considered an essential feature and that the first freelance contributor to be hired for the launch of a new women's magazine is the

astrologer. Even if this latter claim is an exaggeration, every single magazine aimed at women and teenage girls in the UK carries a horoscope column. The 'tabloid' newspapers, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Star* and *The Sun* all carry daily horoscopes. The greatest space devoted to any astrologer is given to Jonathan Cainer who is allocated a whole page in *The Daily Mirror* to publish his column and its associated features. On Sunday the publication of horoscopes extends from the tabloids to the upmarket 'broadsheets' including *The Sunday Times*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *The Sunday Telegraph* and *The Observer*. The latter three papers, though, have an uneasy relationship with astrology, either giving it minimal space and promotion (*Independent on Sunday*), running a spoof column to compete with the genuine one (*Telegraph*) or periodically cancelling their column (*Observer*). At the level of mass popular culture represented by the tabloid newspapers and women's magazines, though, sun-sign astrology is considered an essential ingredient.

The Appeal of Sun-Sign Columns

Sun-sign columns have been so widely dismissed by other astrologers that little attention has been paid to their appeal. Weschke (2003b) considered that sun-sign astrology's mass appeal,

was all part of the adventure of self-knowledge. That is what was really new in the 20th century. Never before had there been any system that could be applied on a mass market basis that "revealed" one's self to oneself.

In Rudhyar's view (1974: 20),

The "solar astrology" of popular astrology magazines and newspaper columns is oracular in that it is meant to convey to human beings, categorized according to the twelve Sun signs, general value judgments concerning the character of those responses to everyday circumstances which would be most suited to their basic temperament.

Oken (1990: 11), meanwhile, echoed Rudhyar and pointed to the Sun-sign column's appeal as being to 'focus on the need to clarify one's individual identity'. Sutcliffe

(2003: 6) considered astrology's ability to address personal concerns while providing a metaphysical framework, converting the 'vast occult cosmologies' of Blavatsky, Jung and Gurdjieff into a form which 'could travel socially and speak both to everyday concerns of love and happiness and grand theories of meaningful coincidence'. Different horoscope columns, though, have different styles. I asked Jonathan Cainer, current astrologer for *The Daily Mirror* and past columnist for *Today*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Express*, to what he attributed his popularity. He replied,

It's a cocktail. There's not one ingredient. It's a cocktail. That's how I think of it... I meditate every day and that takes a bit of a discipline. Enough to leave me with this feeling of 'what do I do?' In that hour I spend my time trying not to be on the planet. Trying to be...at one with the one single thing that goes on forever and ever and then I come out of it, generally speaking, with a sense of optimism and I think that's where my optimism comes from...I am, one way and another, relentlessly optimistic...So I can't bring myself to write a forecast that has got an edge of gloom to it and I think that's the one thing that people like. So somewhere between my spiritual view of life which is 'stand back from everything, let it go and it will be alright', and my Sagittarian ebullience is that. And that I think is the factor that people like (Cainer interview).

As David Spangler wrote, 'The idea of the new age, as I see it is - and must be - an optimistic vision. It cannot be anything other' (1984: 76). Shelley von Strunckel, who writes for *The Sunday Times* and the *London Evening Standard*, argues that astrology fulfils an unsatisfied public need for a contemplative, philosophical perspective:

In our culture today, what we are pleased to call education doesn't go anywhere near anything about philosophy...simple education doesn't teach people to observe how they think or to pause and be still. Therefore, part of the process in their...reading a column, even something as short as an entry in the *Standard*... is that an individual is introduced to this new way of being with their mind in which they step outside of themselves...because most people don't know how to pause, so their appointment with their astrology column... may be their only time in their life when they have stillness (von Strunckel interview).

Ken Irving, *American Astrology's* current editor, who is in a position to evaluate the appeal of sun-signs as opposed to a more detailed interest in astrology, estimated that around 75% of the 110,000 who buy the magazine every month buy it for the sun-sign columns. He added,

the other 25% is perhaps three-fourths people who are mostly interested in sun signs but who know something about other aspects of astrology and are interested in reading about those and then there is a very small portion, maybe from 5-10%, who are people who would read the magazine just for astrology. Learning about astrology. Finding out things they didn't know about it. And those people ...sort of tolerate the fact that the sun signs are there (Irving interview).

Chapter Summary

A strong statement of what was, from the 1960s to 1990s, a dominant attitude to sun-sign astrology amongst British astrologers, was written in the early 1970s by Charles Harvey, then the Astrological Association's President. Distinguishing sun-sign delineation, the simple description of character according to sun's location at birth, from sun-sign forecasts, in newspaper and magazine columns, he excused the former on the grounds that 'such literature has a useful role to play in spreading astrological ideas to a wider public' (1973-74b 39; see also Oken 1974: 5). The latter, which he claimed 'are indelibly associated with astrology in the public's mind', he condemned as 'an offence to the intelligence of even the most modestly endowed', adding that they 'are known to be a journalistic fiction of the 1930s' which have 'no relation to any kind of astrological fact or tradition' (Harvey 1873-4b: 39; see also Harding: 1990: 89-91). In this chapter it has been shown that sun-sign delineations also have little basis in astrological tradition, being based largely on Alan Leo's extrapolation from Ptolemaic principles inspired by Blavatsky's adaptation of Hermetic cosmology. It has also been shown that sun-sign columns were developed by astrologers out of the new astrology of Hermetically inspired sun-sign delineation. Both sun-sign delineations and sun-sign forecasts thus conform to Heelas' (1996: 23) definition of New Age disciplines as 'detraditionalised'. Indeed, it was this very break with the tradition that Harvey used in his attack on sun-sign forecasts. Further, in that Leo's reform of astrology was devoted to the need, as he saw it, to prepare for the Age of Aquarius, sun-sign astrology as a whole may be seen as a feature of New Age culture. Leo's entire body of work may be identified as belonging to Hanegraaff's New Age *sensu stricto*. However, in that neither

sun-sign delineations post-Leo, nor horoscope columns, require any adherence to, or even knowledge of, the millenarian aspects of New Age culture, they may be better identified as belonging to Hanegraaff's New Age *sensu lato*.

Notes

1. For example, if the second house, ruling money, is found in Virgo, the financial fortunes may then be indicated by Mercury, the ruler of Virgo. The full medieval system for assigning planetary rulers might be very much more complex than this simple example suggests. The house cusp is its beginning point.
2. *Physics* I, 2 (194b 14).
3. Wallis' translation (Copernicus 1975: I.10, pp. 24-5) reads 'in the centre of all rests the sun'.
4. Clancy himself referred to a previous magazine as *Popular Astrology*. See 'The Message of the Stars', *American Astrology*, vol. 1 no 1, March 1933, p. 6.

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Part 3

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Part 3

Chapter 8

Reasons for Belief in Astrology

Chapter Description

Belief in astrology is a matter of concern both for evangelical Christians and sceptics, who tend to see it as a threat to society. This chapter discusses the nature of belief and then surveys the literature on belief in astrology, primarily that emerging from positivist perspectives, especially from sceptics and psychologists, and attempts to define the various reasons proposed as explanations for belief in astrology. Lastly it considers debates within the sociology of religion, such as secularisation theory, which may place astrology within a broader cultural context, and considers whether definitions of astrology as a belief or superstition are viable.

Introduction

Astrology is widely treated as a matter of 'belief' (Hunt 2003: 173) or faith (Bok and Mayall 1941: 244) rather than, say, knowledge. Yet there is currently no detailed consideration of the function of belief in astrology in the sociological literature. There are, though certain general assumptions. Hill (1973: 247), for example, suggests that 'astrology provides an 'alternative source of self-definition' among groups of individuals who are searching for such 'definition', but it is not clear why those individuals should have found this function in astrology. Elsewhere claims are made but little independent argument offered. Hexham and Poewe offer no independent reasons for belief in astrology, preferring to cite Eliade, though without a reference, as the source for their claim that belief in astrology arises out of belief in karma and reincarnation, and vice versa (Hexham and Poewe 1997: 104).

The greatest concern with astrology is found in literature written by Christian evangelicals and scientific sceptics. While the Christian evangelical literature on belief in astrology includes the argument that astrology's claims are true, but originate in the satanic realm (see for example Harris 1999; 2000), the major part of the debate on belief in astrology is therefore based on the sceptical premise that science has disproved it. Crowe's comment (1990: 163), that 'there is currently no scientific or statistical evidence for...[astrology's] validity' is typical and is echoed throughout the sceptical literature (see for example Glick and Snyder 1986: 20). The sceptical literature repeatedly promotes the view that all research results into astrology are negative (see for example, Abell 1981: 89; Dawkins 1998: 122; Blackmore 1999: 184; Dean and Kelly 2003: 175). Such information is also cited in the literature on the sociology of religion. For example, Hexham and Poewe (1997: 104), citing sceptical sources (McGervey 1977; Bastedo 1978), write that 'astrology has been thoroughly discredited by scientific testing' and conclude that it is therefore magical and irrational. The need to explain belief in astrology, therefore, arises directly out of the view that its claims are so patently false that those who take it seriously are suffering from psychological weakness or disorder (see for example Dean, Kelly and Mather 1996b: 86).

Definitions of Belief

Belief is a highly problematic issue for astrologers. For example, when the question 'do you believe in astrology?' was put to astrologer Jane Ridder-Patrick when she was addressing a meeting of students in the astronomy department at Glasgow University on 1 March 1990, she replied simply,

no, I don't believe in astrology. I know from more than ten years of almost daily hands-on experience that astrology is a valid and useful tool for understanding our world and our relationship with it (Ridder-Patrick 2000b).

She later added that,

belief for me is a leap of faith which is not based on concrete personal experience. When working with any tool or system, including astrology, I need some kind of

PROOF that makes sense to me. It doesn't have [to] be formal scientific proof which is so often, in any case a complete non-sense for looking at astrology. However, I would add that I have the working hypothesis that astrology can be used to examine, quite literally, anything under the Sun. When venturing into new territory, as I am at the moment, I keep an open mind, constantly testing if a proposition is 'true' or not either literally or symbolically & rejecting whatever doesn't pass the stringency test. If I have any belief in relation to astrology it is that life is meaningful and purposeful, and that astrology has a part to play in illuminating this meaning and purpose (Ridder-Patrick 2000c).

Thus Ridder-Patrick's understanding of belief is that it is inherently false. She concedes belief only in astrology's function, not its existence, and considers that its validity is based in empirical observation.

Strictly speaking, the definition of belief is neutral, meaning 'trust or confidence' in the object of belief and, in the examples given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the objects of belief can be either religious, intuitive, a matter of opinion or an accepted fact. Thus it is possible to believe both in the Virgin birth and the existence of gravity, without the fact that both may be defined as beliefs, implying that one is more true than the other. In this sense a belief does not have to be true but neither is it necessarily false: it is the perception of the believer which counts. Edwards (1957: 10) defines belief as a 'psychological concept' and adds that,

By a person's beliefs about a psychological object we shall mean all those statements relating to the object that he agrees with or accepts. By a person's disbeliefs about a psychological object we mean all of those statements about the object that he disagrees with or rejects.

In the strict definition of the word one can believe in science, or that a particular phenomenon is scientific, including astrology, as did Colin Wilson when he headlined an article in the *Daily Mail*, 'Why I now believe astrology IS a science' (Wilson 2001). In Wilson's strictly grammatical use of the term, belief does not carry religious connotations. In popular discourse scientists are also regularly described as believers. For example, on the same day, *The Independent* reported that 'scientists...believe that

they have found the gene' responsible for a 'sweet tooth' (Connor 2001a), and that 'some scientists believe [that evolution] has come to a standstill' (Connor 2001b).

Theological discussions of 'belief' tend to concentrate on its relationship with faith for which, according to Clark (1898: 827), it is a synonym (Hastings 1910: 1.827). Yet, having noted the two words' shared meaning as 'loyalty', or 'to hold dear', Cantwell-Smith (1998: 104. 116-7) argues that, due to shifting usage, 'belief' has lost its spiritual connotations to the extent that 'belief in God' no longer carries the same power as 'faith in God'. Yet the attempt to distinguish words which have fundamentally the same meaning leads to confusion. O'Hear (1982: 2) distinguished faith as 'an all encompassing set of attitudes to human life and the world' from mere 'scientific', 'historical' or 'psychological' beliefs. Yet, he argued that 'for believers faith is overwhelmingly a matter of living and of acting', as if faith is a natural attribute of believers.

In common usage the word can be used neutrally or pejoratively at one and the same time: in the literature on paranormal phenomena the term 'believe' is applied to both sympathetic and sceptical opinions of paranormal phenomena (see for example Sheldrake 2001: 58; see also Marks and Colwell 2001). Some beliefs, in this usage, can be false but others, if they are verified by observation, true. This was essentially the point made by Frank Jevons (1896). However, Jevons undermined the clarity of the distinction by arguing that observation itself is a function of consciousness, and itself may be external or internal (1896: 402-3). Thus, the belief that certain acids corrode certain metals may be verified externally but the belief that revenge is sweet may only be judged internally. Beliefs, then, are inferences which may be judged true or false according to reason.

In popular discourse amongst sceptics, belief is automatically regarded as false, in contrast to science, which is the source of truth (Glick and Snyder 1986: 22; Krippner and Winkler 1996). For example, discussing the granting of a PhD to Elizabeth Teissier, President Mitterand's astrologer, by the Sorbonne, Magnus Linklater commented in *The Times* that the core problem of the incident was that,

In short, the woman really *believes* in astrology. And there is the rub. If you seriously believe that the stars rule our lives, you have abandoned the most basic tenet of science which is knowledge obtained by observation and experiment (Linklater 2001).

In much of the sceptical scientific literature, a 'belief' is automatically defined as false unless, in rare cases, proved otherwise. Myers (1990: 102, 109-111, 114), in his summary of the psychological reasons for belief, generally treats beliefs as false but regards them as dangerous only when 'belief perseverance' (the tendency for individuals to retain beliefs when they have been disproved) occurs and leads to 'self-defeating behaviour'. Later, though, he concedes that a false belief may be countered by a true one, suggesting uncertainty over the word's precise use.

More recently the cognitive psychologist Stephen Pinker (1997: 25) defined beliefs as 'information, incarnated as configurations of symbols'. Symbols, in his view, are 'physical states of bits of matter' which correspond to beliefs and are 'triggered' by 'things in the world'; when two of these bits of matter 'bump' into each other, he argues, the symbols to which they correspond combine to form a new belief. The assumption, that a belief is a distinct cognitive state arising from physiological processes was combined with a summary of the sceptical arguments on the nature of belief by Robert Park (2000: 35), Professor of Physics at the University of Maryland. He argued that brains are 'belief engines'. According to Park's line of reasoning, belief has physiological causes and occurs when the believer mistakenly infers a causal connection in two unconnected events. Park argues that, when 'the chemical messengers

of emotion cause the thalamus to bypass the sensory cortex and route the information directly to the amygdala', a belief then becomes a 'personal superstition' (Park 2000: 36). Park acknowledges belief's positive function in encouraging survival strategies and social cohesion but, he argues, carried to extremes, it can become destructive – as in the mass suicides at Jonestown and Heaven's Gate (for which see Hall 2000). However, 'If this sounds hopelessly gloomy', he wrote, 'be patient, we are coming to the good news: we are not condemned to suffer the tyranny of the belief engine. The primitive machinery of the belief engine is still in place but evolution didn't stop there. It provided us with an antidote, namely science' (Park 2000: 37).

The notion of belief as an opposite to truth was applied to astrology by Dean and Mather (1977: 3, 15), who argued that, because belief and truth are incompatible then, in relation to astrology, the former may offer meaning but must be tested against the evidence and ultimately replaced by the latter in the form of science, which offers genuine explanations. According to this argument, while astrology may be subjectively pleasing and while this does not make it true, such subjective satisfaction is nevertheless the basis of belief in it (Dean 1992; Dean and Loftson 1995/6: 40; see also Dean, Mather and Kelly 1996b: 66; Kelly 1997: 1063; 1998: 544). Astrology is therefore essentially a 'delusional system' (Dean 1998/9: 49).

Reasons for Belief in Astrology

Kanitscheider (1991: 259-260) proposes that a major reason for belief in astrology is publicity through the media, an argument which may explain how belief spreads but not why it spreads. Similarly Dean (1998/9: 26-28, 47-51; see also Dean, Kelly and Mather 1996b: 86-88) proposes four reasons for belief, all based on personal experience and resulting from 'reading sun signs', 'reading astrology books', 'visiting an astrologer' and 'being an astrologer', his argument being that 'astrology seems to work, so we become believers'. According to Kelly, although its claims are false, 'many people appear to be

attracted to astrology because it seems simple and speaks to their lives' (Kelly 1998: 542). Dean and Mather agree, suggesting that 'The great popularity of astrology is due largely to its symbolic and non-scientific nature, for this makes it instantly helpful in understanding, ie (sic) in areas of belief' (Dean and Mather 1977: 3). Regarding Dean and Mather's third reason above, 'visiting an astrologer', Wunder (2002) argued that this was a marginal consideration when compared to personal study of astrology.

Astrology as Primitive Error

The arguments which seek to explain religion as a form of 'primitive error' were summarised by Thrower (1999: 99-125). By association, then, astrology is also condemned as primitive error. The evolutionary position was summarised comprehensively by Jevons, who argued that progressively, over the millennia, as humanity evolved, it used its reason to correct false beliefs and identify true ones so that religion, even though fundamentally false, became progressively less so (Jevons 1896: 402-3). The philosophical framework for this hypothesis is inherited from the evolutionist theories of religion as developed by anti-Christian positivists, notably Edward Tylor in 1873, James Frazer in 1890 (1971)¹, Emile Durkheim in the 1910s (1912) and Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s (1925), building on the work begun by the eighteenth-century radicals summarised in chapter 2. Broadly speaking, the evolutionist perspective holds that religion originates as 'primitive' totemism, animism or magic, in which natural forces are animated or anthropomorphised, evolves through polytheism into monotheism and finally, in line with the law of progress, atheist materialism (Evans-Pritchard 1967: 31-3; Hill 1973: 19-43). Thus, if it can be argued that magic is a primitive form of religion, and that religion itself results from primitive error, then astrology can be deemed false purely by defining it as magic. For example, Jerome argued that 'astrology is false because it is magic' and that, consequently, 'to bow to the magical "dictates of the stars" is to abandon free will and rationality' (Jerome 1975: 10, 16). Statements such as those of the sceptic, George Abell, for whom belief in

astrology is necessarily 'incredible and absurd' (Abell 1981: 73, 94) may therefore be understood in their historical context as a manifestation of the positivist proposition that all religious belief is patently false.

The idea that there are such mutually exclusive categories as magic, religion and science, and that the last follows the first two in an evolutionary process, has been critiqued in general terms by Stanley Tambiah (1990) in relation to the sixteenth to eighteenth-centuries, by Charles Webster (1982) and Frances Yates (1983, 1986) and, in respect of the twentieth century, by Yinger (1970: 77). Additionally, Stark (1999: 47) argued that the evolutionist point of view, based in what he regarded as the erroneous notion of the 'primitive mind', was 'incorrect, extremely misleading, and often simply fabricated', and had been discredited once anthropologists began to conduct rigorous fieldwork rather than rely on theory.

Insecurity and Fear

Inextricably tied to the notion that astrology represents the survival of magical, primitive religion is the theory that it originates as a means of providing security to people who are naturally insecure, fearful and unable to deal with their environment or responsibilities without a crutch: an argument made extensively in relation to the origins of astrology in the ancient near-east (Jacobsen 1946: 126-7; see also Kramer 1963: 123).² The assumption that insecurity produces, in stages, fear, low-self-esteem, 'persuasability' and, ultimately, belief in astrology, has entered the psychological literature as a rationale for contemporary belief in astrology (see for example Glick and Snyder 1986: 50; Janis 1954, 1955; Adorno 1991: 3). Bok, for example, cited a statement put out by the 'Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues', which posited personal inadequacy, claiming that,

The principal reason why people turn to astrology and to kindred superstitions is that they lack in their own lives the resources necessary to solve serious personal

problems confronting them. Feeling blocked and bewildered they yield to the pleasant suggestion that a golden key is at hand - a simple solution - an ever present help in time of trouble (Bok and Mayall 1941: 244; see also Bok, Jerome and Kurtz 1975: 18).

However the 'insecurity' rationale for the development of ancient astrology has been challenged by Koch-Westonholtz (1995: 17-18) on the grounds that, firstly, it represents the inappropriate projection of modern concerns on to an ancient society and, secondly, that the omen literature indicates a society which was very certain of its beliefs. Similarly Gollob and Dittes (1965) have questioned the supposed relationship between low self-esteem and belief and, in studies of the wider culture, Stark (1999: 56) has argued that far from religion appealing to the inadequate and insecure, religious people enjoy better than average mental and physical health (Stark 1999: 56). Roof (1993) showed that those attracted to New Age beliefs tend to be more educated than the average.

Marginality

Linked to the fear and insecurity hypothesis is 'deprivation theory', which maintains that paranormal beliefs 'provide people with the means to cope with the psychological and physical strains and disadvantaged social and economic status', and predicts that 'socially marginal people will be more likely to believe in classic [paranormal] phenomena' (Rice 2003: 95, 104; see also Wuthnow 1978: 45; Glock and Stark 1966, Geertz 1966; Stark and Bainbridge 1980). This may be defined as classic, or 'type 1' marginality. However, Wuthnow interchanges this definition with a second, characterised by adventurousness and what he called 'cognitive sophistication', an ability to think independently and a higher level of education (Wuthnow 1976: 173). This may be defined as type 2 marginality. New religious movements, a category in which Wuthnow includes astrology, may therefore appeal to those people, typical representatives of the 1960s counter-culture, whose marginality is defined by their having lived in communes, used drugs, participated in radical politics or having a

liberal background (Wuthnow 1976: 184). When such experimentation takes place, Wuthnow argues, the normative order, that is, adherence to traditional religious belief breaks down (Wuthnow 1976: 196). Thus cultural pluralism, as characterised by the counter-culture, is a factor in encouraging new ideas, such as astrology (Wuthnow 1976: 217). Wuthnow's findings, though, were mixed. He found evidence both that astrology appeals primarily to type 1 marginality (1978: 49, 53-4) and type 2 (1978: 57); in other words, that astrology appeals to both the poor and dispossessed on the one hand and young, educated whites on the other.

Gullibility

A major etic explanation for belief in astrology, one which is found especially in the sceptical literature (Sherriff 2001: 7; see also Dean and Mather 1977: 7, 15), is gullibility: a willingness by certain people to believe whatever they are told. Belief in astrology then arises from a series of 'reasoning errors' (see Phillipson 2000: 136-7, Dean, Kelly and Mather 1996b 89-90; Glick and Snyder (1982: 50) of which one is self-attribution, the natural tendency to agree with what one is told about one's self (Mosher 1965: 400; Babbage and Ronan 1998: 418). However, gullibility is itself only a plausible explanation if astrology is patently false, while self-attribution may equally explain belief in psychology or science (Alcock 1981: 61; see also Forer 1949: 118; Snyder and Larson 1972: 388; Snyder, Larson and Bloom 1976: 263-4). It is then unclear why such arguments should apply particularly to astrology.

Psychology

The argument that belief in astrology has psychological causes is, though, supported elsewhere in the psychological literature. Rice (2003: 105), for example, has argued that 'innate and learned personality characteristics', may play a greater role in belief in astrology than do social factors. Plug (1975: 172-4) found that belief in astrology may be correlated with emotionality, as measured in the Eysenck Personality Inventory

(Eysenck and Wilson 1976), suggestibility and persuasability, while Belter and Brinkmann (1981: 427-432), found a higher probability that believers in 'magical...supernatural powers' (such as 'luck, chance, fate, superstition and astrology' (1981: 427) would be more likely to locate control in their lives in external forces. However, as most publicly accepted definitions of astrology posit the existence of external forces, this is not surprising.

Pathology

The theory that belief in astrology is pathological was developed in the pioneering work of the Freudian Marxist Theodor Adorno (1903-1969). Adorno identified a personality type which he termed 'authoritarian', distinguished by excessive conformism, bullying and submission to higher authority, of which two varieties were provided by astrology and fascism (Adorno *et al.* 1982). Belief in astrology then becomes a warning sign of possible fascist tendencies. It was in this context that the sceptical astronomer George Abell (1981: 94) cited Voltaire's aphorism that 'Men will cease to commit atrocities only when they cease to believe absurdities, and that the 'use of astrology' is considered an indication of neurotic or psychotic behaviour (Welsh 2000).³ The existence of the authoritarian personality, though, was challenged by Steiner (1954; see also Steiner and Johnson 1967; Stark 1999: 56).

Ignorance of or hostility to science

The notion of belief in astrology as inherently false, as opposed to science which, *a priori*, represents truth, is linked to the argument that such belief results from ignorance of science. One aspect of this ignorance is public confusion between astronomy and astrology with the latter, according to this hypothesis, benefiting in the public mind from the credibility of the former (Bok and Mayall 1941: 233; Snow and Brownsberger 1997: 7). At its most extreme, the sceptical argument continues, public perceptions are not so much a matter of ignorance as of outright hostility to science

(Kanitscheider 1991: 259). The assumption that scientific knowledge correlates inversely with belief in the paranormal and astrology is the basis of Tobacyk and Milford's (1983) influential scale of paranormal belief.

However, the supposed negative correlation between belief in science and either the paranormal in general or astrology in particular, was challenged or reversed by Wuthnow (1976: 164-8, 173, 181; 1978: 50, 56), Williams, Taylor and Hintze (1987: 356-8) Roof (1993), Broch (2000), Goode (2002: 27) and Rice (2003: 101). Haraldsson (1975: 150-1), meanwhile, showed that the position is complex and that different samples of data produce variable results. As Steve Bruce pointed out (1995: 55) in relation to the decline of mainstream Christianity, there is no reason to suggest that 'modern people, the beneficiaries of science and technology, are incapable of believing in the supernatural'.

Secularisation and the decline of traditional religion

There is today a widespread belief that religion in the western world is in a state of long-term decline (Wuthnow 1976: 41). It is also a matter of record, as Stark and Bainbridge report (1985: 430), that much of the literature on the recent history of religion in the west assumes a decline in religiosity in western countries. Wuthnow (1976: vii) wrote that 'for some years, a gradual, largely imperceptible, yet overwhelmingly profound cultural shift has been taking place in American society', which has 'wrought changes in our basic conceptions of ourselves and in the meanings we ascribe to our worlds'. This process, known as secularisation, has been defined by Stark and Bainbridge (1987: 429) as 'the erosion of belief in the supernatural - a loss of faith in the existence of otherworldly forces'. On a wider level it should be noted, there are also public concerns over the apparent decline of membership in, or respect for, other traditional centres of authority in the UK, such as political parties (*Guardian* 22 April 2000) and faith in the police (Burell 2001).

Although the roots of secularisation may be traced back to the nineteenth-century (Chadwick 1985), to seventeenth-century Puritanism, following Max Weber's arguments (1958) or to earlier stages in the history of western rationalism, including Greek philosophy (Hill 1979: 19-46; Wilson 1979: 11), it is widely assumed that the counter-culture of the 1960s accelerated the process (Wuthnow 1976: 1, 6, 12; see also Caird and Law 1982). Advocates of the theory, those who believe that the process is desirable, take the teleological view that such an intellectual development is the counterpart of biological evolution and argue, in the words of Peter Berger, that 'modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the minds of individuals' (Berger 1999: 2). For example, Bryan Wilson (1979: 11), a leading advocate of the theory, described what he perceived as a long-term trend 'in the nature of human consciousness, towards what might be called a "matter-of-fact" orientation to the world'.

Hill differentiated six varieties of meaning of the term:

1. The decline of religion in terms of the meaning and prestige of its symbols and its practice, although not necessarily its institutions, an argument particularly associated with Bryan Wilson (1966).
2. The shift of attention within religious groups themselves from 'other-worldly' to 'this-worldly' concerns (Shiner 1967; Berger 1969).
3. The disengagement of religion from the rest of society's political and social structures as religious choice becomes a private matter. This process, known as 'privatisation' and proposed by Wilson (1969, 1979), is particularly associated with the increase of religious pluralism since the 1960s (Wuthnow 1976: vii, 1, 2, 6, 207-208). As Rice

wrote, 'beginning with the counterculture movement of the late 1960s, people have increasingly rejected traditional religions in favor of more personalised belief structures (Rice 2003: 105). According to Orenstein this trend 'emphasises personal choice, is ambivalent about religious authority, focuses in experimental practice and personal growth, and mixes together spiritual stimuli from different traditions' (Orenstein 2002: 309; see also Caird and Law 1982: 152; Zinnbauer *et al.* 1997: 51). Thus, Stark and Bainbridge (1987: 316) write of religion becoming a 'cultural speciality'.

4. The transposition of beliefs and activities that once possessed a divine point of reference to an entirely secular context. An example would be the overarching claims of such modern ideologies as communism, humanism, Marxism, nationalism and scientism (Hill 1979: 243).

5. The gradual loss of the world's sacred character, that is the disenchantment of the world strongly associated with the theories of Max Weber (1958). Hill (1979: 247) suggests that astrology's popularity in the 1960s and 70s may have represented an attempt to re-enchant the world.

6. The shift from a sacred to a secular point of reference in society as a whole, rather than just in the more limited sphere of religious beliefs and practices (Becker 1950).

Criticism of Secularisation Theory

In spite of its popular appeal however, secularisation theory is far from universally accepted. A particularly blunt refutation was offered in 1972 by Andrew Greeley (1974: 45), who argued that the theory that society is moving inexorably towards secularism is itself less a matter of empirical observation than of religious faith, one shared by both secularists and churchmen. A huge amount depends, though, on how the data is collected and interpreted. Glock (1962: 100) noted that, of three recent studies of

religion in the United States, one showed that a revival was occurring, the second that there was a continuation of a long-term increase, and the third that secularisation was increasing. The issue depends largely on the extent to which Christianity is taken as the normative definition of religion. As Smart (1973a: 10, 34-5; see also Clayton and Gladden 1974) pointed out, there was a tendency in the 1950s and 1960s to assume that Christianity was normative and that other forms of belief might therefore be mistakenly assumed to be less religious. An increase in non-Christian beliefs is therefore automatically interpreted as a decline in religion. In this respect Herbrechtsmeier (1993: 6) also notes the tendency of western scholars to adopt definitions which suit their ideologies.

However, as Hill points out, the issue is far from clear-cut and depends not only on one's preferred definition of religion but, given that the argument assumes the existence of long-term trends, it also depends on the period taken into consideration (Hill 1979: 228-250; see also Yinger 1969: 88-89; Herbrechtsmeier 1993: 6 Gill, Hadaway and Marler 1998: 514). That is, decline in religious belief might be apparent from one starting point but not from another. The historical argument is a critical one, as part of the secularisation debate depends on the inappropriate comparison of past with present world views. For example, Steve Bruce, noting that in 1976 36% of British adults claimed to have had supernatural experiences, in which he includes 'horoscopes', acknowledged that this is a large figure. Yet he stated that it is small compared to the Middle Ages and hence that the secularisation thesis is maintained (Bruce 1995: 55). However, the phenomena which are now defined as supernatural by virtue of their inexplicability within the framework of natural law, were perfectly capable of naturalistic explanation within a medieval Aristotelian framework, as Thorndike has documented in considerable detail (Thorndike 1923-58). The general absence of a historical perspective, it should be noted, is a weakness in many sociological texts. For example, Hexham and Poewe (1987: 105), in their potted history of astrology, designed

to demonstrate its marginal significance, spoke of its revival in the sixteenth-century following its decline in the third-fourth centuries. This was some four-hundred years after the real date, the twelfth-century (Tester 1987).

Wuthnow's argument illustrates the extent to which the secularisation thesis is based on arbitrary definitions which take Christianity as representative of religion. Having noted that, between 1971 and 1973, the proportion of respondents in the bay area of San Francisco who knew nothing about Transcendental Meditation and Zen Buddhism dropped from 33% to 3% and 9% respectively, he then defines such practices as 'nonreligion' in order to maintain the thesis that the drop in church attendance indicates a corresponding decline in religiosity (Wuthnow 1976: 37-39). He identified stages in this process in which American adults moved progressively from conservative religion to liberal religion to no religious affiliation, but it is clear that religion is defined as theism, that is traditional Christianity (Wuthnow 1976:, 83-6). The significance for New Age culture is that its existence may be seen as a consequence of secularisation and a symptom of privatisation. However, in that the New Age *sensu stricto* gives a high significance to supernatural forces, Bruce (2002: 75-105) has argued that, precisely because such superstition must also be seen as a phase in the secularisation process, its own demise is also inevitable.

Three models can now be identified for the impact of modernity on religion.

1. Modernity is characterised by increasing secularisation and a corresponding growth of scepticism about religion which is therefore in decline, perhaps inevitably, as in the six variants discussed above.

2. Modernity has had little effect on religious belief, which persists relatively undiminished, obscured by the decline in official church attendance. This argument was

proposed influentially by Greeley (1972), Yinger (1969: 90), who coined the phrase 'hidden' religion, and Luckmann (1990), whose devised the term 'the invisible religion', to describe the religiosity of those who retain traditional beliefs but no longer attend a regular church service. Stark and Bainbridge relate this theory to their view that secularisation not only is not new but is a continuous and natural process within 'religious economies' in which the tendency of religious institutions to become more worldly is both continuous and is automatically countered by tendencies to revival, producing 'sects', and innovation, which results in the development of 'cults' (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 429-431). The very concept of the decline of the church, the triumph of science and the shift towards a 'religionless' future is therefore, in their view, contradicted by the historical evidence.

3. As an extension of point 2, modernity is characterised by increasing fragmentation of established religious forms and greater pluralism, an argument which is, perhaps, most congenial to the inclusion of new religious movements and new age beliefs within the framework of the contemporary religious world. Davie (1994: 93-116) has coined the phrase 'believing without belonging', a direct reference to Hornsby-Smith's (1991: 4) consideration of the joint questions of 'beliefs and belonging' in relation to modern English Catholics, in order to describe those individuals for whom religious experience is no longer found in one of the mainstream churches. She adds that 'the sacred does not disappear - indeed in many ways it is becoming more rather than less prevalent in contemporary [British] society' (Davie 1994: 43). In Europe as a whole, she reports, the increase of 'other-faith categories' represents a growth area in religiosity since 1945, rather than the decline predicted by secularisation theory (Davie 1994: 27).

Callum Brown also considers Steve Bruce's insistence that belief in the supernatural, and hence faith in God, has been in decline since the 1960s. He points out that the real shift might be in terms of the shift in the focus of ethical concern towards such matters as environmentalism and nuclear war (about which the Bible had little to say), and also

the revolution in social attitudes affecting such matters as marriage, which made the church seem conservative and out of touch (Brown 2001: 190). That is, levels of religiosity may have little to do with church attendance, a supposition which supports Adorno's finding that people are quite capable of distinguishing between religion and the church (Adorno 1950: 731; see also Batson and Ventris 1982: 142). The crucial issue is whether the church is perceived as being able to satisfy that religiosity.

It should also be noted that the above three arguments are not water tight compartments. Davie, for example, emphasises the persistence of 'traditional' belief within the contemporary

framework of institutional fragmentation, while Wilson's 'privatisation' thesis is particularly applicable to the diversity found within the general category of New Age, as demonstrated by Roof (1993: 194-200) by the simple expedient of dropping Wilson's narrow definition of religion. As Hall (2000: 4) states, 'students of religion now acknowledge what casual observation attests: contrary to the expectations of twentieth-century social theorists...the rise of modern society has failed to bring the thorough-going secularisazation that would undermine widespread religious belief. Instead, as in times past, people who need spiritual and social support continue to turn to religion in huge numbers'.

Astrology as Abnormal or Normal

The central theme, then, of most of the literature on belief in astrology is that it is a phenomenon in urgent need of explanation. However, a counter-argument is to be found within the literature on the sociology and phenomenology of religion. Greeley (1975: 7) launched a substantial critique of Adorno and argued that the definition of the paranormal as abnormal is unsustainable. He claimed that 'the paranormal is normal' and that people who have paranormal experiences are not only 'not kooks...deviants...social misfits', but may actually 'be more emotionally healthy than

those who do not have such experiences'. Stark (1999: 56; see also Best and Kellner 1991: 3, 37), meanwhile, argued that Adorno and his colleagues were authoritarian modernists who themselves were concerned with the control of information and ideas to suit their own purposes. For their part Caird and Law (1982: 151-2) noted that the tendency to regard adherence to non-conventional religions, in which they included theosophy and spiritualism, as a form of social deviance, arises from a flawed model of western religion in which a stable society is said to be currently meeting a unique challenge from new ideological sources which it is obliged to resist. Yinger (1970: 78) observed that 'the social *use* of deviation to reconfirm and re-establish boundaries, a theme so powerfully developed by Durkheim, is, I suspect, a prime source of magical beliefs and practices amongst contemporary people', a category in which he included science. As Ninian Smart said of the psychology of religion, there is a sense that the purpose is to explain away the phenomena under consideration, rather than investigate or understand it (Smart 1973a: 37; see also Hill: 1973: 13-14). Thus the labelling of astrology as deviant may be no more than a device to confirm what Glock and Stark (1966: 10-11) called the 'humanistic value-orientation'; in other words what Herbrechtsmeier (1993: 15) termed the 'imperial' attitudes of modern science, that is the use of 'methodological scienticism' (Stenmark 2001: 2-3), the application of inappropriate scientific methodologies to questions which they cannot answer. The proposition that belief in astrology needs to be explained is itself the product of what Dean *et al.* described as systematic errors of human judgement (Dean, Kelly and Mather 1996b: 89-90). As a result, Stark continued, 'it is now impossible to do credible work in the social scientific study of religion based on the assumption that religiousness is a sign of stupidity, neurosis, poverty, ignorance, false consciousness, or that it represents a flight from modernity' (1999: 56-7). Religion, for Stark, is a category which includes astrology.

The etic literature on belief in astrology is deeply embedded in the prejudice against it noted by the astronomers Culver and Ianna (1988:xii) and the psychologists Eysenck and Nias (1984: 7-11; see also Curry 1987:1-4; Halbronn 1987:213-5). One possible explanation is provided by Stark (1999: 57), who observed that there is a widespread bias, at least in the literature on the sociology of religion, towards antagonism to groups which are small, committed and which include vivid images of the supernatural. Consequently, he argues, groups which come 'closer to disbelief' are judged 'better' than those which do not (Stark 1999: 57). Wuthnow (1976: 69; see also 127), meanwhile, noted that what he called the positivist 'meaning-system' dismisses as false or irrelevant all phenomena that are not deemed consistent with its philosophy. Such judgements, as Michael Hill wrote with particular reference to sociologists, are 'extra-sociological' (Hill 1973: 9), or beyond the scope of the discipline within which the researcher is working. Following Hill, then similar judgements made by scientists against astrology may be designated 'extra-scientific'.

From a phenomenological standpoint, the nature of belief is difficult to understand if it is assumed, *a priori*, to be false. As David Hufford has argued, the investigation of belief traditions has been distorted by the *a priori* assumption that those beliefs are false, even when researchers make obligatory declarations of their own neutrality. As he summarises the situation, the essentially misguided question that such researchers ask is "Why and how do some people manage to believe things which are so patently false?...[and] the interpretations that follow often obtain most or all of their explanatory force from the assumption that the beliefs under study are objectively incorrect' (Hufford 1987: 19). Further, Hufford argued that attempts to debunk supernatural beliefs, or to subject them to rational explanations, may be equally based on statements of faith and that, therefore, 'traditions of disbelief should be recognised as such and no more accepted uncritically than are traditions of belief' (1987: 25, 27). Similarly Herbrechtsmeier (1993: 10) argued that the 'sacred-profane dichotomy' is an

inadequate basis for the definition of religion since it is vague and far too reductionistic'.

Rational Choice

An alternative model for belief in astrology, then, is not that it represents a superstitious flight from reason, a failure of either scientific knowledge or Christian faith, but a perfectly logical means of viewing the world. As Batson and Ventris (1982: 141) pointed out in relation to religious commitment, it may be 'carefully thought out and taken seriously as a major goal in life'. Further, Rodney Stark's findings that the adherents of the groups he regards as 'cults',⁴ including astrology, decide on their affiliations on the basis of a clear assessment of the benefits, implicitly demolishes the supposedly well-defined boundary between the rational and the irrational, arguing that religious affiliation is frequently explained by what he called 'rational choice theory'. 'Humans', Stark and Bainbridge argued (1985: 5), 'seek what they perceive to be rewards and try to avoid what they perceive to be costs'. Further, they argued, 'human beings make rational choices because their desire for certainty is less likely to be met from irrational choices whose outcome will most likely be unpredictable, and prefer rational gods because they are likely to offer them a greater certainty of reward than capricious, irrational ones' (Stark and Bainbridge 1987: 113-4).

Astrologers Responses to Scepticism

The sceptical, positivist point of view, that belief is essentially false, is well known to astrologers. Dean's point of view, supported by some sceptical colleagues, was also given prominent space in a volume of interviews with contemporary astrologers, produced by an astrological publisher and targeted specifically at the astrological market (Phillipson 2000: 124-166). Astrologers who are members of astrological societies for a number of years will become aware of such sceptical arguments, particularly when applied to astrology by sceptical scientists, because they are

summarised in the specialist literature, as by Bowles (2001) in the newsletter of the US based Association for Astrological Networking (AFAN).

Secondly, the sceptical proposition, that belief in astrology requires explanation because scientific evidence does not exist, is contradicted by the existence of positive research results. Notable, in this respect is the so-called 'Mars Effect',⁵ which has been refuted by sceptics but nevertheless remains a part of the pro-astrology literature (Ertel and Irving 1996). These and other positive results may be challenged and undermined, but that does not remove them from the literature, and astrologers respond to sceptical critiques by referring to positive scientific results (see for example Lind 1962: 17-21, Mather 1975/6: 28-30; Downing 2003). The argument, then, that belief in astrology exists in the complete absence of positive scientific data cannot be sustained.

Thirdly, astrologers are aware of the critiques of contemporary science by Feyerabend (1978a, 1978b) and Midgely (1992), and of scientism, the view that 'science alone can and will eventually solve all, or almost all, of our problems' (Stenmark 2001: 15), as well as of the view that science has 'acquired the trappings of a primitive religion' (Raju 2003: 79). This is not an unusual position. Wuthnow, for example, defines 'social science', the idea that human life is shaped primarily by the material environment, as a twentieth-century 'meaning system' or 'belief system' (1976 4, 112). Such literature is available to astrologers and is quoted by them (see for example, Addey 1976/5: 33). The consequence is a lack of respect amongst astrologers for scientific sceptical critiques of astrology. For example, Spencer (2000: 245) considered that 'for astrology's many followers, the approval of physics ultimately doesn't matter'.

A typical example of the interaction of astrologers and sceptics occurred in August 2003, following the publication of a paper in *The Journal of Consciousness Studies* by Dean and Kelly (Dean and Kelly 2003). This then formed the basis of a half-page report

in *The Sunday Telegraph* headed 'Astrologers fail to predict proof they are wrong' (Matthews 2003). The story was syndicated around the world and became the basis for further press reports and countless numbers of radio discussions (Piechowski 2003b; Turner 2003). Astrologers have developed networks which are highly efficient at countering anti-astrology stories in the media (see Dean 2003). In the UK, *Daily Mirror* astrologer Jonathan Cainer's own high-profile response (Cainer 2003: 39) took about five times as much space as the *Mirror's* own report on Dean and Kelly's paper (White 2003). It was republished by the Astrological Association in its bi-monthly *Council News*, following an introduction from President, Roy Gillett (Gillett 2003). The Astrological Association itself coordinated around a dozen of the radio responses by astrologers which were complemented by the generally sympathetic attitude adopted to astrology by the tabloid press. For example, like *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Express* reported the Dean and Kelly paper (Hale 2003) but gave more space to Amanda Platell's response. Platell is a well-known journalist and former press-secretary to conservative prime minister John Major. The reader, then, is left to decide what to believe, Dean and Kelly's statistics or Platell's personal testimony. Platell concluded,

Ultimately, astrologers are like romances - there are good ones and bad ones. But the duds should never deter you from a shot at happiness, whatever the latest research says (Platell 2003: 25).

Similar responses were made through astrological networks in the USA, mainly were either rhetorical scathing attacks on Dean and CSICOP (Perry (2003a, Westin 2003, Piechoski 2003a, 2003b, Muise 2003), or scientific critiques of his arguments (Urban-Lurain (2003a, 2003b; Ertel 2003a).

Astrologers and Belief in Astrology

The question, then of how astrologers respond to the word 'belief' and their response to the question 'do you believe in astrology?' is therefore an important one. The evidence suggests that the word is widely held to have negative connotations. Neil Spencer

(2000: 14) described 'belief' as a 'troublesome word', while when Margaret Hone addressed the problem in 1951 (1973: 15), she advised students to sidestep the question of belief by stating, rather, that they observe 'that certain traits of character and certain types of events appear to correlate with certain planetary relationships'.

According to Kate Czerny, administrator of the Astrological Association of Great Britain, the definition of astrology as a matter of belief is media led (Czerny 2000). Thus a journalist (who was sympathetic to astrology), on interviewing an astrology teacher who justified her use of astrology in terms of experience, reinterpreted her statement as an indication of belief, writing that

There's no doubt that the faculty at Kepler are, to one degree or another, astrology believers. Dr. Lehman claims to have had success in predicting the outcome of sports games and beating the house in Vegas (Fefer 2001b).

The Astrological Association's President, Roy Gillett, confirmed that journalists insist on asking about the level of belief in astrology in spite of protestations that it is not a matter of belief: 'You get this question all the time. You tell them it's not like that and then the words "we don't know how many people believe in it"' (Gillett 2000). The question arises, then, as to whether the word 'belief' is so corrupted by the perjorative associations projected on to it by scepticism, that its use in any debate becomes the automatic cause of misunderstandings. Thus Davie (1994: 43), realising that the word now carries a host of prejudicial assumptions, but also recognising that there is currently no suitable alternative, refers to 'what I have called "belief" (as a convenient shorthand)'.

Chapter Summary

A survey of the public debate on belief in astrology indicates that it emerges primarily from the positivist assumption that astrology, *a priori*, must be false precisely because it conflicts with the positivist world view. As Stephen Hawking (2002: 103) wrote,

explaining scientists' lack of belief in astrology, 'The real reason most scientists don't believe in astrology is not scientific evidence or the lack of it but because it is not consistent with other theories that have been tested by experiment'. The argument is therefore fundamentally one of epistemology, and of competition between different approaches to knowledge. Further, amongst scientific sceptics, the term 'belief' is automatically used to indicate propositions which are false. Thus, the argument continues, the presumed problem of astrology's existence in the modern world can be explained if, first, belief in it can be explained. All such explanations, emerging from the automatic assumption that astrology is false, therefore, assume psychological disorder or weakness, or social deviancy, as explanations. However, the challenge to secularisation theory, questioning the evolutionist view of religion, opens the way to another possibility: that astrology may exist as part of the process of privatisation, the increasing pluralism of religiosity which is a feature of modernity, and that individual affiliation to it may be a consequence of rational choice rather than superstition. The consequence, though, of the debate on the nature of belief in the sceptical, psychological and sociological literature, and the frequent assumption that beliefs are automatically false, may have made astrologers reluctant to admit to belief in astrology.

Notes

1. *The Golden Bough* was published in a two-volume edition in 1890, expanded into three volumes in 1900 and to twelve in 1911-15. The abridged version appeared in 1922.

2. See also Shlain 1998: 22, Pannekoek 1961: 19 this 123; Campbell 1979: 103-4; Van der Waerden 1974: 2.89; Cumont 1960: 11; Perry 1997: 111, Starkey 2000: 264.

3. Citing the 'Piedmont Psychiatric Clinic's Symptom Checklist'.

4. For discussion of the theories on the formation and nature of cults see Hill 1979: 47-97; Bromley and Hadden 1993; Saliba 1995; Dawson 1998: 13-40.

5. The French statistician Michel Gauquelin (1928-1991) demonstrated, amongst a series of results, that Mars tends to be either rising or culminating at the birth of sports champions (1988). For a comprehensive review of Gauquelin's work see Ertel and Irving (1996).

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Part 3

Chapter 9

Astrology, Religion and Belief

Chapter Description

The discussion of astrology as a matter of belief is closely associated with the proposition that it is a religion. This chapter considers astrologers' responses to the definition of astrology as a religion, and continues the discussion in chapter 8 concerning astrologers' responses to the word 'belief'. It also considers whether astrology is necessarily a rival to Christianity.

Astrology as Religion

Modern astrology is frequently defined as a religion both by its evangelical (Reachout Trust) and scientific critics. According to the astronomer scientist George Abell, 'astrology is the polytheistic religion of ancient Babylonia and Greece and is based in symbolism - a magical correspondence between the gods and the planets that bear the same names' (Abell 1981: 73). Eliade (1976: 61) calls it 'parareligious'. Even some astrologers, critical of what they see as deficiencies in the general condition of modern astrology, call it a 'substitute religion' (Koch 1959: 81). Hunt (2003: 173), argues that astrology is popular religion and, following Stark and Bainbridge (1985), that those 'committed' to it constitute a 'cultist' movement. There is general agreement within the academic literature that contemporary astrology may be characterised as a 'new religious movement' (Bruce 1995: 105; Hexham and Poewe 1997: 85-6, 104; Melton 2001a: 53), although Barker (2001: 18; see also Holm 2001: 103) more cautiously says that some such new religious movements merely draw on astrology which is, therefore, itself not necessarily religious.

Definitions of Religion

There is no single accepted definition of religion. As Herbrechtsmeier (1993: 1) wrote, 'The definition of religion continues to be a matter of dispute among scholars. And I suspect that disagreement about the topic will persist so long as religion is studied in academic circles'. A useful distinction between different theories of religion was provided by Zinnbauer *et al.* (1997: 550), who distinguished the 'substantive' approach, which focuses on 'beliefs, emotions, practices, and relationships of individuals in relation to a higher power or divine being', from the 'functional', which emphasizes 'the function that religiousness serves in the life of the individual [and] how they are used in dealing with the fundamental problems of existence such as life, death, suffering and injustice'.

The arguments concern such matters as whether belief in spiritual beings is necessary, as Tylor argued (1873: 491), whether all that is required is a sense of the numinous, of something greater and sacred outside one's self (Otto 1958: 1-7) or whether social function is vital (Durkheim 1995: 41, 206-8). The latter position leads naturally to the proposition that ideologies which have no supernatural component, such as science or Marxism, may be considered religions (Yinger 1979: 11-12, 196-200). In their response, though, Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 5; see also Berger 1969: 177) point out that such inclusive definitions inevitably make it difficult to establish conceptual tools for the study of religion.

Nevertheless, inclusive approaches such as Luckmann's (1967) and Yinger's (1969: 89) may be seen as a necessary response to the previous attitude that religion is expressed primarily through Christianity or the church, and allow the study of wider forms of religiosity in society. Thus for Luckmann (1967: 44) religions generate 'symbolic universes [which] are objectivated meaning-systems that relate the experiences of everyday life to a 'transcendent layer of reality'.

Yinger's solution (1969: 90) is a useful one: to treat as religions 'those phenomena labelled religious by the individuals or societies in question', yet to recognise that 'some groups labelled religious, may deny the appellation'. Herbrechtsmeier pursued this problem in his discussion of the controversial issue, for Buddhists, as to whether Buddhism may legitimately be defined as a religion. He raised the dual problem of western emic definitions of eastern Buddhism, and hence of its western version, as a 'philosophy', and of academic definition of it as either a philosophy or a religion, depending on its various etic perspectives. He observed that,

A primary methodological issue to be decided in attempting to establish a definition of religion is whether and how any specific *etic* concept can allow for a sympathetic nondistortional understanding of the various *emic* religious phenomena within the universe of human cultures (Herbrechtsmeier 1993: 1)

He added that, even though, since Durkheim, it has not been considered essential that reverence for superhuman beings is a universal trait of religion, there is still a widespread tendency in the west to argue that this should be so. Such definitions are 'exclusivist' (Herbrechtsmeier 1993: 2), excluding as they do systems which may not include such a reverence, such as Theravada Buddhism. Durkheim's inclusivist position therefore allows for a wider definition of religion. Thus, the very fact that astrology is labelled a religion means that, from an etic perspective, it may be considered one for sociological purposes, yet the emic statements of astrologers themselves must also be taken into account.

The Origins of Astrology in Religion

The origins of astrology as an 'adjunct' (Ness 1998: 81) to the Mesopotamian religion of the third to second millennia BCE are not in doubt (Cumont 1960: 12-21; Baigent 1994: 78-92). Weber (1993: 22) argued that astrology was a consequence of astral religion while Cumont (1912:16) proposed the reverse, claiming that the development as astral

religion in the sixth-century BCE was instead a consequence of the rise of astrology. According to modern scholarship, the Babylonians saw the stars as 'the writing of heaven' (Gadd 1945: 57), the means by which divine wishes were expressed, and it is thus commonly understood that Mesopotamian astrology should be categorised as divination (Rochberg-Halton 1988a, Swerdlow 1999, Koch-Westonholz 1995). In turn, Babylonian astrology was imported into the Greek world (Rochberg-Halton 1988s; Jones 1977, 1993, 1996) where it was to be intimately linked to Hellenistic astral theology, mainly through Hermeticism (Martin 1987: 146-50), and was closely tied to Gnostic beliefs (Jonas 1963: 254-260; Yates 1978: 22). Astrology's ancient religious connections are used by evangelical Christians as evidence for their argument that it remains a pagan practice (Strohmer 1988: 15-26), yet having religious origins does not mean that modern astrology is necessarily a religion any more than modern science's descent from magic (Webster 1982) means that it is itself necessarily magic.

Astrology as a Substitute for religion

It is widely argued that, if not a religion, astrology may be a substitute religion (Kanitscheider 1991: 259-260), or what Hill (1979: 247) considered a 'God of the Gaps', that is, one of many popular responses to the 'disenchantment', or loss of sacred character, of the modern world. That this argument follows naturally from popular accounts of secularisation theory is indicated by the related media reports. For example, in an article by Derek Draper (2001: 3) in *The Times*, the question was posed, 'as religious belief dies in Britain, is it being replaced with a tendency towards superstition, magic or obscure cults?' Nigella Lawson (1996: 17), citing the 1996 Church of England report, *The Search for Faith*, argued that 'star signs' and 'the cult of the clairvoyant' are replacing the Church as 'the new religion', a view echoed in the sceptical literature (Grossman 2002: 7). The prevailing hypothesis is therefore that religious and classical paranormal beliefs should be negatively correlated, because they are naturally competing sets of beliefs. Plug (1975: 176-7), Wuthnow (1978: 58-9) Gill (1999: 42,

51) and Hunt (2003: 17) all found support for this, confirming that belief in astrology correlates inversely with church attendance (see also Persinger and Makarec 1990).

However, Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 384-6) point to a more complex position suggesting that, while 'traditional religious affiliation' may inhibit 'the acceptance of occult practices and cult movements' including astrology, those which claim no religious affiliation are not secular rationalists, but show a high acceptance of occultism and cults and hence of astrology. Thus, modernity, as discussed in chapter 8, proceeds via a shift in the forms of religiosity rather than a decline. The notion of a rivalry between astrology and traditional religion, is, though, retained in such a model.

An alternative proposition, one that is not necessarily incompatible with the notion of a rivalry between astrology and Christianity, is that religiosity and belief in astrology might actually be positively correlated on the grounds that they both appeal to anti-scientific sentiments. Williams, Taylor and Hintze (1987: 356-8) found support for the latter hypothesis, concluding that strong belief in the paranormal, including astrology, is likely to correlate with strong belief in either religion or science, or both. In other words, the unifying principle is belief and that object of belief may be irrelevant.

Rice (2003: 101; see also 105) argued, though, that 'there are many belief patterns', and that attempts to distinguish religion, science and the paranormal as if they are mutually exclusive categories are therefore deeply flawed. Supporting evidence for this proposition was found by Sparks (2001) in a recent survey of two hundred randomly selected individuals. He found that there was no relationship between belief in astrology and religious belief, a conclusion which receives backing from Gallup Polls (1978: I.574; 1979: 184), which found that there is no relationship between either church-going or Christian belief and belief in astrology in the USA.

Astrology as a Cult

The typology of church, sect and cult has been widely debated and the definitions of each seriously challenged, particularly in view of the pejorative associations attached to 'cult' as opposed to 'church' (Hill 1979: 47-97). Stark and Bainbridge (1987: 157-168) have summarised those models of cults which define them as inherently deviant or pathological. However, within the literature on the sociology of religion the term cult can have a more neutral meaning than in more popular understanding. Hill (1973: 63) cites Troeltsch's¹ opinion that, to be a member, it is not necessary actually to join a cult, making a declaration of adherence to a set of dogma and secure the consent of the other members, but merely to accept particular theories or follow certain practices. The individual therefore remains at the centre of his or her own personal cosmos, a condition typical of the modern secular world. Examples relevant to the position of New Age astrology included Theosophy, Spiritualism and 'a variety of "pseudo-Hinduisms"' imported to the west by various Indian sages. What links all these practices and further differentiates a cult from a sect or a church is the supposed break they represent with the religious traditions of the host society (Becker 1950; Hill 1973: 81). However, such an argument depends on the narrow definitions of religion as broadly identical with Christianity. Looser models indicate quite clearly that Theosophy and Spiritualism have profound roots in the European spiritual identity (Faivre 1994; 2000; Faivre and Needleman 1998).

Notably Stark and Bainbridge include discussion of astrology in their influential work *The Future of Religion* and define it and its organisations as 'cults'. For example, they state that 'Personalized horoscopes cast for specific clients represent pure cult activity; impersonal mass media horoscopes are pure audience cult communications' (1985:227). Given Stark and Bainbridge's description of cults it has to be doubtful whether their assessment is correct. They state that cults are 'deviant religious bodies – that is, they are in a state of relatively high tension with their surrounding sociocultural

environment' (1985:25). Indeed, in their opinion, 'astrology is most commonly a limited client or audience phenomenon' (1985:227): the typical audience cult,

most closely resembles a very loose lecture circuit. Persons with a cult doctrine to offer rely on ads, publicity, and direct mail to assemble an audience to hear their lectures. Efforts almost invariably are made at these lectures to sell their ancillary materials – books, magazines, souvenirs and the like – but no significant efforts are made to organize the audience.

'Visiting an astrologer or actually being one', meanwhile, 'is a public cult activity rather than a private belief' (Stark and Bainbridge 1985:230). A client cult is defined as a 'service and therapy occupation', and *est*, Scientology, rolfing and psychoanalysis are given as examples. The weakness of Stark and Bainbridge's typology, though, is that anything can be defined as a cult; if a visit to a therapist is a cult activity, then so must be a visit to a doctor for reassurance. The National Health Service may then be a cult organisation. In other words, Stark and Bainbridge's inclusive typology can be applied to almost any public activity. If every form of public behaviour can be cultic then the argument about what is or is not a cult breaks down.

Astrology as a Religion

The question of whether astrology is a religion depends on the definition of religion. When William Lilly (1647), in his 'Epistle to the Student in ASTROLOGY', published in 1647, defined astrology as 'this heavenly knowledge of the Stars, wherein the great and admirable works of the invisible and al-glorious God are so manifestly apparent', or Barclay (1999: 30) states that the rules of astrology come from God, is astrology then an 'adjunct to religion' (Ness 1998: 81) or actually religious? Alan Leo was convinced that astrology was itself a religion. By the end of the twentieth century, he predicted, 'Astrology (will) once again (be) established as a bright facet in the diamond of the coming World Religion (Leo 1911: 8.8.311). In the meantime, Leo claimed that the subscribers to *Modern Astrology*, his 'true friends' and 'valued supporters', backed his

view that 'Astrology was a religion and a hope for the betterment of human life' (Leo 1911: 8.8.311).

However, there is currently a strong rhetorical resistance amongst astrologers to astrology's categorisation as a religion. For example, in his discussion of belief in astrology, former *Observer* astrological columnist Neil Spencer considers that 'Astrology is not a religion – as we have seen, attempts to turn it into one annoy even astrologers'. This is so in spite of the fact that, he adds, they often regard it as having a high spiritual value (2000: 245). Demetra George, author of a number of influential astrological texts, argues that 'most astrologers today would deny that astrology is a religion', even though she personally considers that it has religious origins (2001a). There is, then, amongst astrologers, a profound antipathy to its categorisation as a religion. According to James Holden,

horoscopic astrology itself has little or nothing to do with religion. It was not "revealed" in remote antiquity to priests of a particular religion or to leaders of mystical societies by divinities or "transcendental masters." It is not "occult" in the usual sense of the word. It is a clear-cut empirical science that was invented by human beings and that operates on the basis of definite rules that have been established by experience...It is independent of religion and independent of philosophy (Holden 1996: 261 and n.1),

However, while Holden separates astrology from religion on accounts of its origins, his argument is partly based on astrology's cultural context. In India, he adds, where there is no conflict between religion and astrology, there is no need to make the distinction (1996: 261 n.2).

Is astrology incompatible with Christianity?

Astrology is frequently identified as a rival to Christianity by both fundamentalist Christians, who regard it as overtly Satanic - 'If God condemns astrology then we are left with no alternative but to conclude that this power is from the demonic realm'

(Reachout Trust: 5) - and Christian commentators on Christianity's current sociological and political status, whose opinion is less harsh, though still hostile (*The Search for Faith* 1996: 85-6). The report's problem with astrology is not that it is actively anti-Christian but only that it makes a sin of omission by failing to acknowledge the primacy of Christ in all matters. The Roman Catholic catechism of 1994 is unequivocal in its condemnation of astrology on the grounds that it is a form of divination:

2116 All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to "unveil" the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone (Catechism 1994).

It is precisely the definition of astrology as divination which prompted the Independent Television commission to investigate its possible dangers (Sancho 2001). The notion that astrology as a divinatory practice or a religious belief is in direct competition with Christianity is also automatically assumed by academic authorities such as Robin Gill, Michael Ramsey Professor of Modern Theology at the University of Kent at Canterbury, in his seminal survey of contemporary religious statistics (1999). However, this orthodox view is an *etic* one, formulated by those who have no particular knowledge of, or involvement in, astrology, and have done no fieldwork amongst either its users or practitioners. As discussed in chapter 10, such research has instead been based on potentially flawed questionnaire surveys of the general public, or on a cursory examination of astrological literature.

However, as far as astrology's possible New Age identity is concerned, there are serious questions. This proposition is actually a central part of the religious ideology of the New Age *sensu stricto*. For example, although Dane Rudhyar's theosophy owed more to Alice Bailey's esoteric Christianity than to Blavatsky's anti-clericalism, he strongly

supported the argument that the coming of the Age of Aquarius will see the eclipse of the traditional churches by the new theosophical Christianity. In this sense Rudhyar saw astrology and the established churches in direct competition. In his opinion,

Men question the stars because they [men] are in chaos, in darkness, in a bewildering fog. Astrology must answer for men the question of the existence of order. The known order of the earth and of human society is shattered. Souls that are dark and anguished turn to the stars - others turn to God and his supposed representatives among men (Rudhyar 1975b: 23).

Theosophical Christianity

Blavatsky's profound hostility to the Christian church was noted in chapter 4, as was the fact that her respect for Christ was based only on his identity as one of a series of great teachers, along with Krishna and Buddha. However, it was also noted that in the 1890s there was a split in theosophy between the 'easterners' and the 'westerners', the latter group adherents of existing traditions of Christian esotericism. Amongst theosophists the leading westerners were to be Alice Bailey and Rudolf Steiner, both of whom placed a huge emphasis on the coming of the 'Christ' at the beginning of the Aquarian Age (Hanegraaff 1996: 189-194). Rudhyar followed in this tradition, being a friend and student of Alice Bailey. Rudhyar (1963: 11) believed that the established Christian church was incapable of satisfying the spiritual hunger that resulted from the historical crisis of the post-war world. What was needed, he argued, was a new, revitalised Christianity which might generally manifest the 'Christ-impulse' and end its stale obsession with Jesus the man and the worn out institutions, dogma and rituals of the church. Thus, in a curious anticipation of evangelical Christian attacks on the New Age (see Cumbe 1983), Rudhyar argued that the coming of the New Age was actually necessary if the eastern religions were to be prevented from overwhelming western civilisation. He argued that,

The challenge we must meet goes far deeper than to be merely 'good Christians' in the usual taken-for-granted manner. What one takes for granted, that one loses spiritually. One does not create a new world, a new society, with values taken for granted; with images, idols, or ideas worn thin and pale by familiarity and an unquestioning,

unthinking sense of superiority. One does not thus create a new world; but we *are* challenged to create a new world, or at least to try, and to lead in the attempt...The revival of old forms is not creation. Creative leadership is a dynamic process of projection of values. These values must have the freshness of mystery of a superconscious, God-inspired, spirit releasing origin if they are to arouse and impel to action. They must be of the now. They must be warm with the feel and immediacy of personal experience if they are to convince and transform...no one can truly and dynamically be a *Christian* leader who has not experienced in some measure the reality of the Christ (Rudhyar 1963: 8-9).

Rudhyar's words are a profound statement of Christian faith. That their context is his Gnostic emphasis on the Christ-within, as noted in chapter 6, does not detract from their Christianity. They are a direct continuation of that first century CE 'Christian Gnosticism [which] emerged as a reaffirmation, though in somewhat different terms, of the original stance of transcendence central to the very beginnings of Christianity' (Robinson 1988: 4). The key, then to evangelical Christianity's hostility to the New Age is, as was noted in chapter 4, its Gnosticism. The clash between the two, when the western theosophical tradition is considered, is not one of Christianity versus anti-Christianity, but of the competition between two Christianities.

Astrology and Belief

There is also a debate amongst some mainstream Christians, who question the definition of astrology as a matter of belief. Father Lawrence Cassidy, Professor of Philosophy and teacher of astrology at Saint Peter's Jesuit College in New Jersey, is one of the most prominent. In response to the new Roman Catholic Catechism's criticism of astrology in 1994, he considered whether,

one [can] really be a believing Christian and, at the same time, conscientiously accept the principles of astrological art/science? To put this baldly, the only possible answer must be "yes," but with distinctions. Just what they are will depend, naturally, on how you understand the two general names, Christianity and astrology. (1994: 3)

In other words, it can be misleading to make simple assumptions about the beliefs and practices of either Christians or astrologers, let alone the relationship between them,

without carefully defining the terms. Cassidy also concluded that orthodox Christian hostility to astrology, at least from Catholic priests, is less a consequence of theology than of 'scientific reason' and adherence to the positivist, evolutionist view of religion. Discussing astrology's religious critics, he writes that,

In this, they follow the consensus of the contemporary academic community who consider it to be an outmoded myth of medieval man. On the other hand, there are few indeed who consider the study of astrology any more a matter for ecclesiastical disapproval than they would one's interest in flying saucers or the flat earth society. They do not ignore astrology because it offends their faith, but because it seems to contradict what they believe to be their scientific reason (1994: 9).

Cassidy is clearly keen to remove astrology from the religious sphere. He talks of the 'believing' Christian, but of 'accepting the principles' of astrology rather than 'belief' in astrology. Indeed, the use of the word 'belief' can suggest that the object of belief is automatically religious in nature, an assumption which provokes resistance from astrologers to the categorisation of astrology as religion. In other words he frees himself from the burden of the Catechism by disputing its definition of astrology as divination.

The Pursuit of Meaning

While there is a deep antipathy to presumed connections between astrology and religion, there is a strong support for the idea that astrology provides a sense of meaning, particularly from astrologers within a New Age milieu. According to Mircea Eliade (1976: 61),

the discovery that your life is related to astral phenomena does confer a new meaning on your existence. You are no longer merely the anonymous individual described by Heidegger and Sartre, a stranger thrown into an absurd and meaningless world, condemned to be free, as Sartre used to say, with a freedom confined to your situation and conditioned by your historical moment. Rather, the horoscope reveals to you a new dignity: it shows how intimately you are related to the entire universe. It is true that your life is determined by the movements of the stars, but at least this determinant has an incomparable grandeur.

The function of astrology according to Hill (2000: 247) is 'to keep the world sacred' (Hill 2000: 247).² James R. Lewis (1990: Introduction) summarised the problem of modern life: 'To understand the attraction of astrology and astrology's world view for the typical citizen of an industrialized society, one has to see that, even for many "believers", ordinary, everyday life - the world as it is experienced on a day-to-day basis - appears to be empty of significance'. As astrological columnist Neil Spencer (2000: 245) wrote, 'For astrology's many followers, the approval of physics ultimately doesn't matter. For all the tremendous successes and insights of physics, biology and the other branches of science, they remain unable to supply the answer to the questions that hang over numerous heads: "What am I doing here? What is my life for?"'

Yet the reality can be mundane, as Gerald Pitchforth, who practiced continuously from the 1930s until the present day, stated in respect of his experiences in the 1930s, 'astrology gave clues that you got nowhere else, it told you things that you knew nothing about' (Akhtar and Humphries 1999: 112). In this sense, Dane Rudhyar's explanation of astrology's appeal may be seen as primarily pragmatic. While he conceded the appeal of an astrology presented in a technical, scientific manner, he argued that astrology's current popularity rested on a profound need for self-understanding, to provide a means to 'assist individuals in the solution of the personal and inter-personal problems, and especially in actualising more fully their birth potential' (1970: xi). Young people in the 1960s and 70s, he argued, 'hope to find in astrology not only answers to their poignant personal problems but even more some sort of inner security' (1970: ix). He continues,

Many of them, having broken away from their family traditions and refusing to participate in a culture increasingly dominated by a de-humanised and de-natured approach to knowledge, to social organisation, and to interpersonal relationships, long to discover their place and function in a more-than-human, universal or cosmic order. They want to know where they "belong", what they "really are" when the ego games are played out.

Thus, when Jane Ridder-Patrick (2000d) stated that, 'If I have any belief in relation to astrology it is that life is meaningful and purposeful, and that astrology has a part to play in illuminating this meaning and purpose', she may be pointing to astrology's ability to satisfy a need which is essentially and unavoidably human. For Stephen Arroyo (1975: xv-xvi), this was the key to astrology's contemporary popularity. He wrote that,

I have often been asked why astrology has witnessed such renewed popularity in recent years. I think part of the answer lies in the fact that Western culture no longer has any viable mythology to sustain it. Myth always serves as a vitalizing force in any culture by showing man's relationship to a larger, more universal reality. People have always needed a pattern of order to guide their collective lives and to infuse their individual experience with meaning. In this sense astrology comprises within itself an entire mythological framework.

For Greene and Sasportas (1987: xiii), it is this very ability of astrology to provide a framework of meaning that allows it to replace the role once played by the church. They do not claim that astrology has undermined church attendance though, but that the decline in traditional religious affiliation created a vacuum which astrology, and similar world-views, have filled. The issue, then, is not one of rivalry between the two, but of astrology compensating for mainstream Christianity's failings.

Chapter Summary

Astrology may quite clearly be defined as a religion if an inclusivist definition is applied, but so may science, belief in progress and various political ideologies. The problem then, is that the categorisation of astrology as religion reveals no new information about its cultural identity or its relationship with Christianity. There are additional complications. If, for example, it is defined as magic, as discussed in chapter 8 then, in Durkheim's view it cannot be religion. Neither does it have a church: if the schools and societies that comprise astrology's institutional structure are regarded as churches then so may every other school and society. Stark and Bainbridge's categorisation of astrology as a cult is likewise flawed by their excessively broad

definition of what constitutes a cult. Nevertheless astrology is widely regarded as a religion by etic commentators, and frequently condemned for this very reason.

Therefore, astrology's own emic statements should be considered. It is clear then, that New Age astrology *sensu stricto*, as defined by Leo and Rudhyar (see chapter 6) rests in a world view which may be considered religious. It relies on a deep numinous awe of the universe and posits a cosmos which is primarily spiritual in nature and is populated by invisible supernatural beings. However, such notions are based on a combination of the Neoplatonic and Hermetic traditions in the west, and Hindu and Buddhist ideas from the east. As Herbrechtsmeier observed, the unresolved problem is whether one may make an etic judgement that these world views are religions, or respect the emic opinions of those who say they are not. The question of whether astrology is or is not a religion, then, is primarily a semantic one which may add nothing new to an understanding of either its content or relationship with New Age culture and Christianity. It has already been noted that Alan Leo's opinion was that astrology is the coming religion of the New Age. Chapters 11-13 will consider the emic perspective, examining statements first by members of the public and then by astrologers concerning their own attitudes to religion and astrology.

Notes

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1. Troeltsch, Ernst, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 Vols., London: George Allen and Unwin 1931.
 2. Citing Driver, Christopher, 'Bibles and bazookas', *The Guardian*, 17 May 1969.

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Part 3

Chapter 10.

The Extent of Belief in Astrology

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the assumption that belief in astrology is growing. It considers the historical background which posits an apparent decline of astrology in the seventeenth-century a revival in the nineteenth-century, and a move towards universal acceptance in the twentieth-century. It then reviews attempts to quantify belief in astrology. Results from previous surveys are summarised in appendices 2 and 3,

Introduction

It is widely assumed by astrologers that astrology is increasing in popularity. Writing of the situation in 1980, Dane Rudhyar (1980: 67; see also Arroyo 1975: xv) claimed that 'astrology is becoming widely accepted'. For many astrologers the growth of belief in astrology is a symptom of the decline of traditional religion, which itself, it is argued, accompanies the transition to the Aquarian Age (Rudhyar 1975b: 23; see also Hone 1970: 272; Levine 1997: 4; Grasse 12000: 20; Caton 2002: 20; McDevitt 2002: 1, 16; Nobel 2003:1, 28-9). Stearn considered that astrology had experienced a 'meteoric rise' and 'spectacular comeback' following centuries in which it had been associated with the Dark Ages, and put a date on the beginning of this process: the Uranus-Pluto conjunction in 1966. Rose (1982: 25) also picks the 1960s, but associates astrology's fortunes with the growth of the New Age movement. West and Toonder (1973: 109), on the other hand, identified a sharp increase of interest in astrology 'after the First World War', with a further turning point after the Second World War (1973: 119). Mayo (1981: 9; see also Oken 1974: 3) noted the increase in astrology since the 1960s and picked 1977 (1979: foreword) as the key year. Hand (2003: 109) also identifies the

1970s as critical while Greene and Sasportas (1987: xi) identify 1983 as a year which saw a sharply increased interest. There are also widespread predictions amongst astrologers that astrology is about to experience a major breakthrough (Toonder and West 1973: 273; Sullivan and Sasportas 1992: 106), often citing Jung's forecast in this respect (Moore 1960: 33; Mayo 1979 front matter).

Amongst external commentators on astrology, Underwood's statements (1972: 1, 34) that 'there is probably a greater interest in the subject than there has been for centuries' and that its study 'has never been more widespread and popular than it is today', are typical but clearly exaggerated, if the present is compared to the Renaissance, imperial Rome or eighth-century BCE Assyria.

Amongst scholars of the New Age, the tone is set by Melton, Clarke and Kelly (1991: 277), who regard the 'growth of interest in astrology' as 'the most widespread indication of the modern renewal of interest in all manner of things occult'. The argument that belief in astrology is growing is shared by astrology's sceptical critics. Indeed the assumption that astrology's popularity is increasing has been a major factor in the development of the organised sceptic movement (Bok, Jerome and Kurtz 1975: 4).

However, the assumption that interest in astrology has recently undergone a major increase is not confined to the 1970s to 1990s. It was remarked on by the astronomer Bart Bok in 1941 (1941: 233) and the astrologers Marsom (1939: 20), quoting an unnamed American astronomer, and Charles Carter (1939: 2) in 1939. Yet, as long ago as 1911 Alan Leo (1911: 265) identified a 'revolution in astrologic thought' since 1891 using very much the same evidence, the increasing publication of astrological periodicals, as did Bok in 1941 (see also Howe 1967: 67).

Astrology was no stranger to the media in the 1890s and 1900s. When Alan Leo was attacked in *The Daily News* on 27 August 1890 under the headline 'Cheap Astrology', his collaborator Frederick Lacey regarded it as good publicity in spite of the adverse content (Lacey 1919: 36). Conversely, an absence of comment on astrology might indicate its general social acceptance. When Annie Besant's address on the laying of the foundation stone of the new Theosophical Society headquarters in London was not reported in the press, Alan Leo, who had chosen the moment astrologically, remarked that 'The very silence of the newspapers shows that; for they do not mention it. A few years ago, they would have made a headline of it' (Leo 1911: 8.10.403).

Two major problems may therefore be identified in the argument that the popularity of, or belief in, astrology is increasing. First is that the assumption that this is the case appears to have been taken for granted throughout the twentieth-century, mainly on the basis of recent impressions. Secondly, it depends on the concept of a previous decline.

The 'Decline' of Astrology

Tester (1987: 243) represented the typical historical view when he concluded his history of astrology with the assumption that it died out at the end of the seventeenth-century. However Curry (1989: 95-152) argued that the situation was more complicated and depended on the distinction between three varieties of astrology. The first, the astrology of philosophers and academicians, he defined as high. The second, 'middling', form of astrology was based on the casting of horoscopes, usually as a commercial enterprise for individual clients. The third, 'low' astrology, was expressed primarily through the production and sale of mass-market almanacs. Curry demonstrated that it was only 'high' astrology which died out in the mid to late-seventeenth century, while 'middling' survived in isolated examples and 'low' continued to thrive. The collapse of 'high' astrology' and, to an extent, 'middling', was associated, as Geneva (1995: 281) has pointed out, with the dismantling of the neo-Platonic universe. Such philosophical

changes, though, had no relevance for popular culture. Thus Capp (1979: 238-269) and Perkins (1996) have demonstrated the continuation of a consistent popular astrological tradition throughout the eighteenth-century and up to the latter part of the nineteenth-century, represented mainly by the almanacs, whose content was based around astrological forecasts for the coming year. *Old Moore's Almanac*, the largest selling publication of its kind, sold 362,449 copies in 1801 (Perkins, Appendix I), a figure which dwindled to 50,000 in 1895 and 16,000 in the 1920s. This decline was more than offset by the launch of a cheaper version, *Old Moore's Penny Almanac*, which had been founded in 1842 and of which over a million were printed in 1898 (Capp 1979: 268-9). *Raphael's Almanac* and *Zadkiel's Almanac*, which contained more detailed general astrological forecasts than *Old Moore's* sold around 300,000 in 1898 (Capp 1979: 269), the latter a six-fold increase on sales in 1851 (Godwin 1994: 177) and more than the figure of 90,000 quoted in 1929 (Robson 1929: 3). As a comparison the fourth best-selling book of 1993 was *1994 Horoscopes*, selling 480,000 copies in the UK (Bruce 1995: 106), while Capp (1979: 269) noted a print-run of *Old Moore's Almanac* of 1.75 million in 1975. While these figures are variable, they do not indicate an increase in readership, given the increase in population in the nineteenth-century from just over 18 million in 1801 to over 45 million in 1901.¹

Capp (1979: 191) also noted the survival of lunar lore in nineteenth-century British agriculture. It is also possible to discern continuity in north America in the eighteenth-century (Butler 1979) and the nineteenth, particular amongst apocalyptic groups, including the Mormons (Brooke 1994; Quinn 1998). In addition, there is evidence for continuity outside the English-speaking world. Devlin (1987: 1-9, 92-99), for example, argued that, in France, popular astrology flourished throughout the nineteenth-century as a form of 'popular religion'.

The proposition that astrology has enjoyed a substantial revival in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries is therefore dependent on the notion that it died out in the seventeenth century. If the notion of decline must be qualified, as Curry indicates, then so must the nature of the revival. While Curry's 'high' astrology was scarcely to be found in post-seventeenth-century Britain with the exception of a few thinkers such as Jung (in the twentieth-century) whose astrological writings were all translated into English from the 1950s onwards (Main 1999), 'middling' astrology has enjoyed a measurable revival since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. The evidence for this is to be found in the successful publication of magazines and books devoted to the casting and interpretation of horoscopes in the early nineteenth-century (Curry 1992), and the organisation of sustained societies and schools of astrology since the early twentieth-century (Campion 1988). However, most journalistic interest in astrology's contemporary popularity is concerned with 'low' astrology in its modern form of newspaper and magazine columns which, it may be argued, fill the place once occupied by almanacs. In Britain, the USA and much of the western world, horoscope columns are carried by most of the popular press and women's magazines. According to Gallup (1979: 185), 'Attesting to the popularity of astrology in the United States today is the fact that astrology columns are carried by 1,200 of the nation's 1,750 daily newspapers'. The journalist and religious commentator Anne Atkins stated in 1999 that, in her opinion, the horoscope column is the most popular piece in any newspaper, with the agony aunt coming a close second (Atkins 1999). A more recent development is the spread of astrology to the internet, a medium which can expand the print formula of the standard twelve paragraph horoscope column to the supply of downloadable computerised readings based on the customer's exact birth data. Jonathan Cainer, *The Daily Mirror* astrologer, reported that his web site www.Cainer.com, receives 100,000 'unique' visits per day; each page the visitor then looks at constitutes a 'hit' so, if each visitor looks at between three and six pages, the site receives between 300,000 and 600,000 hits per day which, in 2001, made it Britain's fourth most popular web site

(Cainer 2001). Rick Levine (2001) of the Seattle based website www.Star-IQ.com, reported in 2001 that the site received 300,000 'page views' per month and, on the basis that 10% of visitors accounted for 70% of those page views, he estimated a figure of 80,000 visitors per month. As an insider in the internet astrology business Levine also estimated that the Astrology.com website sent around 2.5 million standard horoscope columns to customers each day. However, such figures may be unreliable indicators of public interest. A casual browser may find themselves on Astrology.com's mail list, while 50,000 page hits on www.findastrologer.com was reduced to 900 actual visits when web host statistics were replaced by more accurate figures computed by a web counter (*APA Newsletter* 2001, issue 29).

Cainer also reported that when he worked on *Today* newspaper in the late 1980s, when the first horoscope phone lines, running pre-recorded tapes, were launched, the weekly call figures were 25,000 out of a circulation of half-a-million, representing 5% of the circulation.. By 1999 he was working for *The Daily Mail* where his lines were receiving around 17,000 a week, less than 1% of the circulation of two-and-a-half-million, bringing in a gross income of approximately a million pounds per annum. While the headline figure of a million pound turnover can make for dramatic headlines, the actual percentage of readers calling was very small.

Sean Lovatt described the situation he found when he was engaged in producing computerised horoscopes for *The Daily Express*. In around 1991 the newspaper offered readers a computerised horoscope which could be obtained by sending in a cut-out coupon. About 5200 were sold at £9.99 each, a gross income of £520,000 but a response of only 0.5% of the circulation of over a million. He recalled that,

When the Express didn't put a coupon that was cuttable out in the paper, just an advert saying please send these details off to this PO Box number, the response was much, much smaller. By the time that we had been doing it for a few years, this is for birth charts, for character analysis that I am talking about. By the time we had been doing

it for a few years, it seemed to me that the pool of Express readers who were interested in this had dried up somewhat and we were getting about 2,200 to 2,500 each time they did a reader's special offer, which they did twice a year. Some of those people, I recognised from my database were past purchasers of the reports who were buying them for other people. Their children, friends, husbands, family and others were new people. So it seemed that there was only a percentage of Express readers who were prepared to part with their pounds to get an astrological printed report and once they had got that, they didn't necessarily want another one. We then introduced another product which was a 12 monthly forecast. That did better. People seemed to be more interested in their future than their character. Of course the fact that the two are indivisible is another matter. We did better with that and more reorders and there would be people who would over a period of five to six years, every year order their 12 monthly forecast (Lovatt interview 2001)

There is then, a demand for astrology but the percentage who take the active step to purchase a birth chart interpretation is, when compared to those who read their horoscope in the newspaper, very small and heavily dependent on the nature of the commercial promotion.

Numbers of Astrologers.

The most accurate measurement of the current extent of Curry's 'middling astrology' may be the number of professional astrologers in the country. There is, though, no census of the number of professional astrologers. The Christian evangelical Anderson (1988: 9) estimated that there are 60,000 'fortune-tellers, clairvoyants and astrologers' in France while Melton, Clarke and Kelly (1991: 277) estimated that there were '10,000 professional astrologers in the United States serving more than 20 million clients'. However, there is no indication of how they arrived at this figure. It is, though, double the figure of 5,000 astrologers catering for 10 million customers given by Louis MacNeice in 1964,² suggesting that it may be an extrapolation from MacNeice's estimate.

Many reported figures, even in the academic literature, are based on vague assertions. For example, Dean and Kelly (2003: 175, 182-3) report that 1 in 10,000 of either the 'general population' (2003: 182-3) or of 'western countries' as a whole (2003: 175) are practitioners or students of astrology, a figure, which applied to the UK, means that

there are 5,000 such people. However, Dean and Kelly's source is Dean, Mather and Kelly (1996: 60), which contains no further information. Their estimate is based on an unsourced 'reconciliation of association memberships, conference sales and software sales' (1996: 60).

In the UK, the Astrological Association (AA) had 1302 members in October 2003 (Czerny 2003) while the Astrological Lodge of London (ALL) had 205 in March 2003 (Blake 2003). The largest astrological gathering in the UK, the annual AA conference, usually attracts between 250 and 300 delegates. The 2002/3 edition of the *Guide to Worldwide Astrology* (2002/3 111-7) lists seventy-three local astrology groups in the UK. This figure may be reduced to around sixty-five if various schools and national societies are ignored. A flourishing group, such as the Suffolk Astrological Society, which has been meeting continuously since 1981, has around '20 - 30 paid up members' and holds twenty-two meetings per year which may attract 'between 8 and 12 members/non-members' or 'around 18 on a good evening' (Gray 2003). We may extrapolate from this figure to estimate that between 650 and 1300 individuals attend meetings of local astrology groups in the UK.

By comparison, in the USA, the National Council for Geocosmic Research (NCGR) had 2225 members in November 2003, of whom 115 were outside the USA. Its nearest rival, the International Society for Astrological Research (ISAR) had 984 members, of whom 830 are in the USA and 154 international (Boggia 2003). The ISAR conference in Anaheim in October 2003 attracted around 600 delegates while the ISAR education conference in Minnesota in November 2003 was attended by almost 200 delegates.

The largest private school of astrology in the UK, The Faculty of Astrological Studies, has 474 students working for the basic qualification, the certificate, and 163 studying for the Diploma, a total of 637 which is boosted to 809 when students at occasional

seminars and the annual summer school are added (Martin 2003). Of the 637 active students, 578 are based in the UK and 165 attend classes in London. The Mayo School, which split from the Faculty in the early 1970s and teaches only correspondence courses has 289 diploma students, around 70-100 certificate students. Around 60% of the total is UK based.

The London School of Astrology (LSA), a smaller college founded in London in the late 1990s by former Faculty tutor and council member, Sue Tompkins, has 28 diploma students, together with 'Perhaps another 10 who are studying/revising etc and intend taking exams at some point', and 33 Certificate students. In addition, an average of 25 attend one-off workshops in London, with a minimum of 14, a maximum of 80 and a total of 150 different individuals in a year. The Centre for Psychological Astrology, meanwhile, has 26 diploma students, a number which is deliberately restricted as the teaching is intensive. The smallest and newest British astrological society, the British Association of Vedic Astrology (BAVA), which was founded in 1998, has 6 'advanced' students and 18 'beginners'. An average of 15-20 attend one-off workshops, usually in London, a total of 250 different individuals in a year, with 70 of those accounted for by the annual conference (Brennan 2003).

The above figures suggest that about 1000 individuals are currently taking astrology classes in the UK, a figure which may, perhaps, be doubled if the other small schools of astrology are taken into account, as well as the unregistered number of informal classes up and down the country which may be taken in community halls or private homes. A reasonable estimate is therefore a thousand individuals working for an astrology qualification and an unknown number, up to a thousand, taking classes informally.

Previous Studies

The existing research into levels of belief in astrology is mainly based on large-scale surveys and hence suffers from the problems identified by Bennett (1987: 26): this is that respondents are asked to make simple yes/no judgments about matters on which they may have no clear view, and may also be influenced by a reluctance to admit to belief in 'superstition'. In addition, the types of questions asked vary from survey to survey. Some pose direct questions about belief, others about readership of horoscope columns (Miller 1992) and still others inquire into respondents' opinions on matters such as connections between birth signs and character (Paulik and Buse 1984). The results are then used to infer levels of belief.

The figures given for public interest in astrology vary widely. Crowe (1990: 181) quoted numbers, based on Gallup Polls, indicating that 55% of American teenagers aged 13 to 18, 'believe that astrology works'. In the UK Spencer (2000: 104) cited an unsourced article in the *Guardian* newspaper which apparently reported that 45% of young people 'gave credence' to astrology, while the same paper in the same year quoted sceptical psychologist Richard Wiseman's 'own research' indicating that 60% of the population regularly read their own horoscopes (Chaudhuri 2000). Such vague figures extend to the sceptical literature. For example, astronomer George Abell recorded that, 'according to my polls and my colleagues', about a third of the people in the United States and Western Europe believe in astrology. And at least 90 percent are "open-minded", meaning they do not dismiss astrology as outmoded or nonsense' (Abell 1981: 72).

However, in the academic literature the most quoted sources for statistics on belief in astrology are the Gallup Polls, which have been asking related questions on the subject since 1962. The questions asked are a mixture of direct, overtly concerning belief and indirect, seeking information about attitudes from which belief may then be inferred

(see chapter 11). The direct question, 'Do you believe in Horoscopes?' resulted in positive figures amongst British adults of 14% in 1975 (Gallup 1976a: 2.1417) and 20% in 1978 (Gallup 1980: 329). Also in 1975 the question 'Do you believe in astrology or not?' found positive responses amongst 22% of American adults (Gallup 1978: 573). The equivalent figure for American adults was 29% in 1978 (Gallup 1979: 184). In 1995 and 1996 the question was extended as follows: 'do you believe in astrology, or that the positions of the stars and planets can affect people's lives?' Positive responses of 23% were obtained in the first year and 25% in the second (Gallup 1996: 10; Gallup 1997: 205).

These figures form the basis of most considerations of the extent of belief in astrology in the academic literature. For example, Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 228-30) rely on Gallup's 1975 (1978) figures while Gill (1999: 70-1; see also Gill, Hadaway and Marler 1998: 513) relies heavily on Gallup polls from the 1970s to 90s for his figures of 'belief' in astrology amongst British adults of 23% in the 1970s and 26% in the 1980s and 1990s, though the former figure is 9% higher than that given by Gallup for 1975 and 3 % higher than Gallup's figure for 1978. The American National Science Foundation (2002) used Gallup's 1996 figure (1997) in its discussion of the extent of 'pseudoscience'. The figures cited by Roof (1993: 72), that 26% of 'boomers', that is American adults born after 1940, believe in astrology, or Hunt (2003: 173), that between 15% and 25% of American adults believe in astrology, are derived from Gallup statistics. Elsewhere Gallup figures are quoted but appear to be exaggerated. For example, the Astrology Now web site (2002) reported that 'a recent Gallup poll found that over 50% of Americans believe in Astrology'. Meanwhile, Christian evangelicals such as Chandler (1989: 21) and Harris (1999: 23) rely on Gallup statistics to indicate that belief in astrology is rising and is a threat both to Christian belief and society.

Nevertheless, such figures do find their way into the secondary literature and can form the basis on which policy is made by concerned institutions. Thus, Gill (1999: 51, 80, 126, 128, 135) interpreted Gallup poll results in the light of what he sees as the essential rivalry between 'traditional' and 'non traditional' belief and the decline in mainstream church attendance. His survey achieved widespread publicity and was trumpeted in the press under headlines such as 'Christianity "in crisis" as pews empty' (Petre 1999). We should suspect though, that his figures are unreliable: his percentage of disbelievers, derived from Gallup, is over double the figure obtained by Paulik and Buse (1984) and Bauer and Durant (1997).

Most of the questions from which statistics about belief in astrology are deduced are framed on the basis of assumptions about the nature of astrology, or astrological claims which may themselves be suspect. Different sets of figures may be drawn from questions which vary widely. It is likely that the nature of the question and the context in which it is asked are likely to have an effect on the level of the answer. For example, Gallup's 1975 question, 'Do you Believe in Horoscopes?' may test for attitudes to the accuracy of horoscope columns but not for astrology as a whole. Similarly the statistics cited by Bruce (2002: 81), based on 'Opinion Research Business (2000)', that 16% 'have tried or experienced' astrology, and which form a crucial part of his argument that New Age culture as a whole is in decline, are highly dubious. In a study of students' belief in paranormal phenomena, Gaynard (1992: 179) found that experience of a phenomenon is not necessary for belief. In addition, if it is considered that anyone who has ever encountered astrology has 'experienced' it then the figure is more likely to be close to the 76% who, in 1975 (Gallup 1978: 1.572) knew their sun signs. Hunt (2003: 17) bases his figures on similarly vague assumptions. His use of statistics which claim that 18% of non-church-going teenagers have been 'involved' in astrology, as opposed to 10% of church-goers, gives no indication of the nature of that involvement, any more than Bruce gives of the nature of experience.

Readership of horoscope columns

One limit on the readership of horoscope columns is the circulation of the titles which carry them. In the UK in October 2003, the total circulation of daily national newspapers carrying horoscopes was just under 10 million and, of Sunday papers, just over 10 million.³ Beyond this figure there are a number of imponderables. For example, while it may be calculated that four people read each newspaper sold, most people will not read every section. In addition, some papers, such as the *News of the World*, give their astrologer a very high profile whereas in others, such as the *Independent on Sunday*, the horoscope is an insignificant feature.

Indirect questions posed by Gallup include those on the readership of horoscope columns. In 1975 15% of French adults claimed to read a horoscope column 'regularly' (Gallup 1976b: 1.309) and in the same year 23% of American adults gave a positive answer (Gallup 1978: 1.572). However, as Stark and Bainbridge (1985: 230) noted, the same poll indicated that 17% of those who claimed not to believe in astrology also read a horoscope column regularly. Their conclusion was that what they call 'actual belief' in astrology is held by members of a 'client cult' in which the members, or 'clients', have faith in the astrologer's ability to provide real results. The readership of horoscope columns is indicative of no more than membership of an 'audience cult', in which the reader, or 'cult member', is seeking no more than entertainment.

Research conducted by the French Public Opinion Institute in 1963 found that 58% of the population knew their birth signs, 53% 'regularly read their horoscopes in the press', 38% 'have at one time or another wished to have a personal horoscope made, 37% believe 'that there is a relationship between the character of persons and the sign under which they were born' and 23% believe that predictions come true (Gauquelin 1982: 37-8). Such nuanced research, posing a variety of questions, enables the examination of

attitudes to astrology as more than a matter of simple belief or disbelief. It is also clear that the definition of astrology itself plays a role: more people 'believe', if belief is defined as the existence of connections between character and birth sign than if it is necessary for its predictions to come true. However, there is still the matter of the discrepancy between the number of people who regularly read their horoscopes and those who admit to belief in the relationship between character and birth sign; an excess of 16% of the former over the latter in the French figures.

Later surveys added to the picture, though not consistently. In Germany Paulik and Buse (1984) asked a series of questions about astrology, from which they then deduced that 38% of their sample were 'strong believers', 32% were 'believers' and 30% non-believers. In the UK John Bauer and Martin Durant (1997) inferred levels of belief from the frequency with which their subjects read newspaper and magazine horoscopes and obtained the following figures:

'Serious believers' (read horoscopes often or fairly often and take them seriously or fairly seriously) 5%.

'Non serious believers' (read horoscopes often but take them not very seriously) 18%.

'Non serious believers' (read horoscopes fairly often but take them not very seriously) 21%.

'Non serious believers' (read horoscopes not very often and take them not very seriously) 29%

'Non-believers' (do not read horoscopes) 27%.

Bauer and Durant's attempt to convert attitudes to horoscope columns into belief in astrology led to sharply differing conclusions to those obtained by Paulik and Buse. Although figures for non-believers in both studies (27% and 30%) roughly coincide, Bauer and Durant's 'serious believers' number 5%, while Paulik and Buse's 'strong

believers' are almost eight times as numerous at 38%. It is evidence that both methodology and terminology may make a great deal of difference to the eventual reporting on the conclusions of such surveys.

The linear concept of strength of belief on a single scale suggested by both Paulik and Buse, and Bauer and Durant, is unlikely to take account of countless individual variations, let alone the possibility that a daily reader of sun-sign columns, rated as a weak believer, might be considered far more devout than a professional astrologer for whom their work may be primarily a money-making activity. Meanwhile, readership of horoscope columns is not necessarily an indicator of belief in astrology. Sherriff remarked that most people, including her, read horoscope columns 'for a laugh' (2001: 7), while Plug concluded that while more women read horoscope columns than men, there is no difference between the sexes when it comes to belief in astrology (Plug 1975: 174).

However, the psychologist Crowe (1990: 181) disputed claims that horoscope columns are read 'for entertainment value only' and concluded that 'the evidence suggests otherwise'. An alternative explanation for the discrepancy between relatively high figures for readership of columns and relatively low figures for belief in astrology is therefore that a proportion of those who read columns react negatively to the word belief.

Shelley von Strunckel, astrologer for *The Sunday Times* and the *London Evening Standard*, is likewise sceptical that the word belief has any value when applied to the readership of horoscope columns:

when people are asked if they believe in astrology, we are really discussing two questions. How they hold the art/science of astrology is one thing but what they get out of a column may be quite another and it may be that it is their only moment of stillness in the day or week. Now if that column is written by someone who has some

degree of spiritual content in their own life, then what they are going to get is not just something to read but it is going to take them to some place within themselves that they don't have the skill to visit on their own. Patrick⁴ had that as well. He was an altar boy as a kid... So when we are talking about what goes on in reading a column, we are talking about the astrological skill and the astrological structure but we are also talking about the content. And the reason I bring this up, particularly in context of what you are writing is that it is important to discuss what we consider to be belief today because when people say 'Do you believe in astrology?' I would propose that people don't actually know what the term belief means (von Strunckel interview 2002).

Denial of Belief

The figures on horoscope readership show a wide range of variation. In 1977 Dean and Mather summarised previous surveys in the UK, Germany, France and the USA. They estimated that 70% of the adult population read horoscopes, while only 20% 'believe that there is something in it' (Dean and Mather 1977: 79, 83). To take these figures at face value, 50% of the adult population read horoscopes while believing that there is nothing in them. The question, then, is why so many people should do something that is apparently so meaningless. A simple explanation is that the figures are distorted by the problems noted by the psychologist Gustav Jahoda. When he considered the problems arising from direct questions concerning belief he observed that adherents of 'superstitious beliefs' in England 'are apt to be somewhat shamefaced about superstition and liable to deny holding any such beliefs when faced with a strange interviewer' (Jahoda 1969: 25-6). If they are influenced by critiques of beliefs such as Park's (above), they may well answer in the negative even when their position is ambivalent. The consequence, as Gillian Bennett noted, is that questionnaires which seek simple yes/no answers to questions of belief are liable to elicit misleading responses. She reports that respondents

very often like to phrase their answers with a little face-saving ambiguity. In these circumstances, if they are pushed to say whether "I think there may be something in it" means "definitely yes" or "definitely no", they will probably say "no", even though that is far from their real opinion' (Bennett 1987: 27).

Simple questions about religious affiliation are likely to produce misleading answers. A simple example was given by Hadaway, Elifson and Petersen, who report on studies in which institutionalised youths felt it was clearly in their interests to claim to be religious, 'leading to the "finding" that delinquent boys were much more likely to be church members than non-delinquent boys' (1984: 109). Thus Bennett observed that, by moving away from a strict requirement for yes/no answers, interviewees are allowed to express shades of opinion.

Adorno *et al* discussed a subject who, in both interview and questionnaire responses, had been shown to be highly 'authoritarian' and hence, in their terms, likely to be highly superstitious. He agreed with the statement 'some day it will be shown that astrology can explain a lot of things', is an indication of 'authoritarian' tendencies, yet his overall score on superstition was very low. Adorno suggests that the subject had therefore given misleading answers because he had 'a general need to appear hard-headed and realistic and unlikely to be 'taken in' (Adorno *et al* 1950: 185, 205). Wuthnow (1976: 226), meanwhile, concluded that, if a respondent gave contradictory answers, he or she had either misunderstood the question or made a mistake. The alternative explanation, for which the rationale is Festinger's (1968) 'cognitive dissonance', is the recognition that it is perfectly natural to hold mutually contradictory opinions.

If a large number of astrologers are aware of the argument that a belief is automatically false, and even potentially dangerous, we may assume that they are likely to take this into account when questions of belief arise. For example, if the question, 'do you believe in God?' is regarded as hostile, it can be interpreted as assuming ignorance on the part of the person being questioned and will not elicit an accurate response (Quigley 2001). We can therefore expect defensiveness amongst subjects when the question 'do you believe...?' is asked by a questioner who is perceived to be critical.

It is possible, therefore, that respondents are afraid to answer 'yes' to questions which they fear might expose them to ridicule. The fact that individuals may be embarrassed to admit to an interest in astrology in public situations was noted by Laurel Sanford who, at the time, was a student on the BA programme in Astrology and the Liberal Arts at Kepler College in Seattle. Sanford,

who works as a 'personal coach,' says, "If I'm talking to an individual client and say, 'Well, how about if I read your chart?' they'll say, 'You can do *that*?' But if they're in a group with other co-workers, no way' (Fefer 2001a).

The astrologer and psychotherapist Mavis Klein took the issue further and suggested that strong protestations of disbelief might actually indicate strong belief. In an echo of the divide between Curry's 'low' astrology on the one hand, and a combined 'middling' and 'high' on the other, she suggested that

There are two groups of people who believe in astrology. There's the 'Daily Mail, Daily Mirror people' mass of the population who say 'yes I believe in it, it works for me', but couldn't possibly justify it. Then there's the cognoscenti. But the mass of educated middle-class people react with pure fear, fear of its presumed fatalism. I lecture to lots of middle class, educated people and I get this hysterical, foot-stamping reaction. It's complete bullshit. But this fear actually indicates belief (Klein 2002b)

Klein's point is that publicly declared attitudes to astrology, at least in Britain, are partly conditioned by class-determined attitudes. As Rice found, whilst less-educated, lower income people are more likely to believe in traditional paranormal phenomena, 'the only classic paranormal phenomenon that they subscribe to more than better educated people is astrology (Rice 2003: 100). Klein's point, though, is that better educated people may not be opposed to astrology because they have necessarily thought about the issues, but because it challenges attitudes which come with their education as part of a package. As Wallis and Bruce argued,

No-one will adequately explain social action who does not understand how individuals interpret their world. But no-one will understand how individuals interpret their world who is not aware of the social and historical context within which they do it (Wallis and Bruce 1983: 109).

The attempt to quantify belief as if it is a static state of mind which may be graded on a two dimensional scale is therefore highly problematic. Wuthnow, for example, noted that social experimentation may be of limited duration, down to the weekend festival, such as Woodstock (Wuthnow 1976: 209). Glock and Stark (1966: 25) argued that there is a difference between holding a belief and attaching importance to that belief. Bruce (1995: 105-6) correctly points out that there is a distinction between those for whom astrology 'is no more than reading a book and entertaining an idea, while for others 'it is a change of world view and direction comparable to conversion to more traditional religions'. Thus Wuthnow (1978: 44-60) distinguished belief as indicated by level of interest in astrology from that defined by level of commitment.

Chapter Summary

It has been argued that the model of astrology which posits decline of astrology in the seventeenth-century followed by a revival in the nineteenth applied only to what Curry called 'high' and 'middling' astrology and not to the popular astrology of almanacs and, in the twentieth-century, sun-sign guides. It has also been shown that the figures for belief in astrology are highly variable, ranging from less than 20% to over 70%. The larger context is an absence of data. For example, Wuthnow (1976: 9. 172) argued that, in the absence of similar questionnaires asking the same question over long periods, it is possible to assess neither trends nor the rate of change in belief. With reference to the specific question of whether belief in astrology is increasing, Gill (1999: 80-1) suggested that, after comparing data from the 1970s to 1990s to that gathered by Gorer⁵ in 1950, the natural fluctuations in the figures do not suggest a pronounced trend. In spite of anecdotal evidence it cannot, therefore, be shown that belief in astrology is increasing. In terms of Curry's 'middling' astrology, the evidence from membership of astrological societies and number of students on courses, is that numbers are tiny.

The argument, introduced in chapter 1, over whether the contemporary belief in astrology is anachronistic, and that it therefore represents some of difficult-to-explain cultural anomaly, may therefore be answered in part by the conclusion that Curry's 'low' astrology is fundamentally a normal part of popular culture.

Notes

1. Figures for Great Britain and Ireland supplied by *Whitakers Almanak* from www.gendocs.demon.co.uk/pop. 29 November 2003.
2. Cited in Gauquelin 1982: 36.
3. Figures from <http://abc.co.uk>, 12 December 2003. See also <http://udel.edu/~semmel/Circulation.htm>, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/pressoffice/graphics/research/nrsjul02jun03.pdf> 29 November 2003.
4. Patrick Walker, former astrologer to *The Mail on Sunday* and *Evening Standard*.
5. Gorer, Geoffrey, *Exploring English Character*, London: Cresset Press 1955.

**Prophecy Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Part 3

Chapter 11

Belief in Astrology: A Public Survey

Chapter Description

In chapter 10 it was argued that attempts to quantify belief are highly problematic. Given the concerns over attitudes to belief discussed in chapters 8 and 9, I designed a questionnaire with the following aims.

1. To test the reliability of previous surveys by examining the extent to which different types of questions may elicit different types of answer,
2. To examine the extent to which individuals may give apparently contradictory replies within the same questionnaire and
3. To test whether the results in previous surveys may be replicated.

In order to fulfil these criteria the questionnaire was designed partly on the basis of the surveys conducted by Paulik and Buse (1984), Miller (1992), Bauer and Durant (1997), Blackmore and Seebold (2000-1) and Gallup (1976a, 1976b, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1996, 1997).

After the initial questionnaire was designed and distributed, it became clear that certain additions were required. The questionnaire was therefore adapted following feedback from respondents. The questionnaire along with the details of these amendments are given in Appendix 1. The full results are given in Appendix 2. The headline results are discussed in this chapter and should be seen as indicative rather than definitive. They may be used as the basis for further studies within the field.

Tables

All tables are given at the end of the chapter.

Ethical Considerations: Anonymity of Respondents

Respondents were invited to fill in their name and contact details for possible follow-up only. They were told that they might leave out these details if they did not wish to be contacted. The anonymity of all respondents will be respected and they will be identified in the text only by a letter code and number.

Methodological Issues: Discussion

The quantification of belief is widely understood to be highly problematic, and there are substantial problems with both the collection and interpretation of statistical data concerning religious affiliation, practice and attitude. The problems were defined by Caird and Law (1982: 161), who made seven criticisms of previous research into religious affiliation. Amongst the issues they identified¹ were a failure to define religion, a lack of differentiation between the different levels at which religion may be viewed, a failure to investigate multiple affiliations, a reliance on items of belief which are not representative of the whole domain and inadequate scaling methods. Such criticism were not new. As long ago as 1913 Edmund Husserl criticised deductive, quantitative investigations for reaching grand conclusions based on little evidence, or as he put it, resting either on 'an infinitude of axioms' or 'a very few axioms' (Husserl 1972: 6). More recently Glock (1962: 100; see also Yinger 1970: 32) attributed the contradictory results of studies of religion in the USA to the conceptualisation of religion in universal terms and a failure to recognise its other dimensions. As Yinger pointed out,

We cannot quantify without precise measurement. But what are we going to measure? So long as there are disagreements over the definition of religion we shall design different measuring instruments and apply them to different bodies of data. Almost certainly, as a result, we will arrive at different views of the religious situation (Yinger 1969: 88).

Regarding the measurement of religious affiliation, Glock (1962: 98-99) and Glock and Stark (1965: 20-1) proposed the existence of five universal dimensions in all world

religions: ideological (belief), intellectual (knowledge), ritualistic (behaviour traditionally defined as religious), experiential (inner emotional experiences which may be defined as spiritual) and consequential (the effects of the first four dimensions on the secular world). Although Glock and Stark's efforts represented a recognition that existing measures of religious affiliation were inadequate, and their scale provided a means for differentiating different levels of religiosity or commitment to religion, they were overtly concerned with examples drawn from Christianity (Glock 1962: 100). Yet Clayton and Gladden (1974: 135-143) observed that many people involved in 'non-conventional religions', including those characterised as New Age, in which they included theosophy and spiritualism, 'tend to have multiple group memberships'. Research which has assumed that individuals have one religious affiliation may therefore be unreliable. They suggest that the key element of religiosity is primarily defined by commitment to an ideology, and that Glock and Stark's other dimensions are merely expressions of the strength of that commitment. The crucial task in the study of religiosity is then to pinpoint the belief system, or ideology, with which the believer identifies. The individual's religiosity can then be determined by 'the degree of acceptance or non-acceptance of the traditional - and/or nontraditional - beliefs indigenous to the ideology' (Glock and Stark 1966: 142). The strongest evidence of religiosity, they argue, should be provided by the translation of ideological commitment into religious practice and conclude that more subtle measures of religiosity need to be created, especially acknowledging the religiosity of people who may not identify with the religion that is dominant in their society.

The result of such debates is a widespread scepticism concerning previous attempts to demonstrate such phenomena as secularisation. Grace Davie (1994: 45), for example, a critic of secularisation theory, noted that 'Sociologists are always suspicious of statistics, often with good reason. They are even more suspicious of religious statistics, which are, undoubtedly, among the most difficult sources of social data to handle. For

example, church membership may be both an unreliable guide to belief and a poor measure even of attendance'. Indeed, Davie adds, the 'disjunction between practice and 'belief' characterises much of British religious life since 1945. Shiels and Berg provided support for Davie's claim, reporting that 'Church attendance appears to be a grossly inadequate indicator of religiosity. While many respondents scored medium to high on orthodox beliefs (63%), a full 60% of the respondents attended church only once or not at all during a four-week period. Moreover only 20% attended church four or more times in a month' (Shiels and Berg 1977: 27). As Hill (1979: 14) recognised, there is no certainty that inner commitment will take a social or institutional form. In relation to astrology, then Plug (1975: 174), found that readership of horoscope columns is not necessarily an indication of belief. In addition, belief in one thing does not necessarily suggest belief in another, so that, for example, 'to believe that witches do exist does not make one a 'believer in witches', that is, a disciple or a follower of witchcraft' (Williams, Taylor and Hintze 1987: 358).

As Michael Hornsby-Smith (1991: 3) argued in the introduction to his study of modern English Catholic belief patterns, each item of dogma, from teachings on contraception to papal infallibility, and each activity from church attendance to pilgrimage, may be a different indicator of belief or, to use a more socially functional word, 'commitment'. Thus, astrologers' differing attitudes and commitment may be distinguished by opinions on whether astrology can forecast the future or transform the soul, by attendance at classes or conferences. The latter scale though, may fail to identify those committed astrologers who dislike such gatherings, or those who attend them out of habit.

Belter and Brinkmann (1981: 431), meanwhile, even wondered whether the attempt to quantify belief, as opposed to non-belief, was so epistemologically flawed as to be pointless. They found that the results obtained when testing whether believers in God placed the locus of control in their lives externally or internally, were inconsistent. They

concluded that there was a general 'problem in conceptualizing and measuring belief in God', adding that 'it is apparent that such a belief is more complex than a simple belief-disbelief dimension' and that therefore to contrast belief with disbelief as if the two are mutually exclusive opposite positions would not 'relate adequately to the individual's locus of control orientation'; that is, reveal the true complexity of an individual's world view or meaning system. The result, then, is an understanding that quantitative results have little significance in isolation from phenomenological considerations, particularly the understanding that belief may be a highly flexible phenomenon. According to McCutcheon (1999a: 10),

For scholars who adopt the reflexive option, studying others explicitly involved a high degree of reflexivity, a turning back onto the researcher of his or her own questions and answers. Claims that the researcher is able to make objective or neutral claims about the world at large are therefore highly suspect to the reflexive scholar for he or she would maintain that the world at large is just what it is for you or I precisely because you and I are what, who, and where we are. For instance our choice of question shapes the answer we will receive; a researcher's presuppositions and biases regarding who counts in a society as it tells us about the society under question.

This bias, some would argue, is unavoidable. Thus, as Cantrill (1980: x) argued, the composition and interpretation of questionnaires is always subject to 'personal value judgements at every stage'. As noted by Edwards (1957: 12), the nature of the response to particular questions may depend on the wording of those questions. Stanley Payne (1980: 6, 16) also observed just how often the assumptions behind questions are unacknowledged and the wording ill-defined questions. The present survey is therefore intended to reflect on previous quantitative studies and examine the extent to which they may be considered reliable.

Questionnaires

A total of 252 questionnaires were distributed in 6 batches.

1. 48 questionnaires were distributed to BA students in the Study of Religions Department at Bath Spa University College in November 2002. These replies are summarised as snBathSpa 2. In the text these are given the code SR1.

2. The questionnaire was then adapted and distributed to a further 59 BA students in the Study of Religions Department at Bath Spa University College in November 2002. These replies are summarised as snBathSpa 4. In the text these are given the code SR2.

3. 51 questionnaires were distributed to BA students in the Food Technology Department at Bath Spa University College in November 2002. These replies are summarised as snBathSpa 1. In the text these are given the code FT.

4. The questionnaire was further adapted and around 40 copies were distributed at the Long Ashton Golf Club, near Bristol, in March 2003. 29 replies were received. These replies are summarised as snBathSpa5. In the text these are given the code GC.

5. The questionnaire was further adapted and around 200 copies were distributed at the MAJMA Middle Eastern dance festival in Glastonbury on 4th-6th April 2003. 46 replies were received. These replies are summarised as snBathSpa6. In the text these are given the code MJ.

6. The questionnaire was further adapted and around 100 copies were distributed by Michelle Pender, who had been present at the MAJMA festival, to her Arabic dance classes in Manchester. 19 replies were received. These replies are summarised as snBathSpa7. In the text these are given the code AD.

My samples were small, following the model set by Bennett (1987: 11), who argued, 'folklore study is unlike social sciences such as sociology in that it prefers small-scale studies to large scale surveys. What it loses in universal significance by this approach, it gains in understanding'. I do not wish to generalise about society as a whole, but rather attempt to illuminate questions surrounding the quantification of belief. The consequence of small samples, though, is that small variations in the number of responses can result in substantial variations in percentage results.

Response Rates

I obtained a response rate of 100% amongst the student groups who all completed the questionnaires as a class exercise even though they were informed that it was voluntary. In the other distribution groups responses were much lower as I was dependent on willing supporters, family members and friends, to persuade respondents to complete the questionnaires.

Headline figures on Belief in Astrology

The figures given by Gallup polls for belief in astrology, based on direct questions, are generally placed between 20% and 29%. However, both Paulik and Buse (1984) and Bauer and Durant (1997) arrived at much higher figures as a result of inference based on indirect questions. It therefore seems apparent that individuals may deny belief, yet give favourable answers to other questions. My own questionnaire combined direct with indirect questions and obtained higher figures. The results varied between 23.6% for Food Technology students and 69.6% for respondents at the MAJMA festival. These figures, together with my own results, are summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

Reasons for Variation in Headline Belief Figures

The lowest figures for belief were obtained from Food Technology students and members of the Long Ashton Golf Club. Given that over 60% of the former were aged under thirty and 100% of the latter were aged over fifty, it may be concluded that age in itself is not a determining factor, that is, that young people are no more likely to state belief in astrology than older people. However, Rose (1996: 389) noted that the average demographic profile of participants in his research who had ever had an astrological reading was between thirty-five and fifty-five. Thus the MAJMA group is within the target age range and has the greatest figure for the purchase of personal horoscopes. Following Dean (1998/9: 26-28, 47- 51) then, who argued that belief in astrology may follow a visit to an astrologer, the MAJMA group's high level of belief may be sustained by positive experiences of such visits.

It is noticeable, though, that the Study of Religions students scored almost twice as much for belief in astrology as the Food Technology students, and MAJMA festival dancers three times as much, the latter statistic confirmed by the figure obtained from the smaller sample of Arabic dancers. The figures therefore indicate a clear contrast between undergraduates taking a vocational course and Golf Club members aged over fifty on the one hand, and women who take up Arabic dance on the other. The former may be considered more conventional, the latter less conventional. This contrast may, then, be confirmation of Wuthnow's marginality hypothesis (discussed in chapter 10), using his 'type 2' definition of the term as adventurousness and a tendency to think independently (Wuthnow 1976: 173). In this sense, attendees at the MAJMA festival may be defined as marginal, whereas the Food Technology students and the members of the Golf Club are not.

Religious Affiliation

However, there may also be a connection between these varying figures for belief and religious affiliation. If it is assumed that those professing both Christianity (and

attending a regular church service) and atheism are likely to be hostile to astrology, while those defining themselves as pagan or 'spiritual but non-aligned', are more likely to be sympathetic then the headline result for religious affiliation may indeed support this hypothesis (Table 3). Thus the MAJMA sample produced the lowest figure for Christian affiliation, a low figure for atheism and the highest for paganism and 'spiritual but non-aligned'. Its headline figure for belief was the highest. The Food Technology group produced the highest figure for atheism, a low figure for 'spiritual but non-aligned' and, like the Golf Club group, had no pagans at all. Accordingly it had the lowest figure for belief in astrology. The Study of Religions group, meanwhile, produced almost exactly the same figure as the Food Technology sample for Christian affiliation, but a much lower figure for atheism and higher ones for paganism and 'spiritual', and accordingly produced a higher level for belief. The second lowest figure for belief in astrology was produced by the Golf Club group, which also was 96.5% Christian with no positive responses for pagan or 'spiritual' and the highest level of church attendance.

Readership of Horoscope Columns

Paulik and Buse (1984) and Bauer and Durant (1997) both inferred belief in astrology from readership of horoscope columns while Gallup poll figures on readership of columns are used in the secondary literature to infer belief. The Gallup questions are vague and the figures variable. For example, in Great Britain in 1975 15% claimed to read a horoscope column 'regularly' and 38% 'from time to time', a total of 52% (Gallup 1976a: 2.1417). In the same year in the USA 23% claimed to read columns 'regularly'. Both 'regularly' and 'time to time', though, are periods of time which invite widely differing interpretations; they might be presumed to be anywhere between once a day and once a month, or even longer. Miller (1992) found that between 16 and 22 of respondents read columns (or 'personal reports') on an unspecified timescale, while for Blackmore and Seebold (2001) the figure of 'regular' readers was 70%.

Paulik and Buse did not publish their raw data but Bauer and Durant attempted to refine the question into four frequencies: often, fairly often, not often and not at all. Table 4 compares these figures with those from my survey. The results are surprisingly similar, given that Bauer and Durant's general definitions of time periods may not coincide with my specific ones. The totals also correspond with Blackmore and Seebold's figures. It should be noted, though, that the numbers reading horoscope columns every day are tiny and that the Food Technology students, low on belief, scored the highest percentage for daily readership.

General Conclusions

Questions 7 to 25 are summarised in Table 5. It is immediately apparent that the Gallup poll figures are, in general, low, and that of my six groups the Golf Club results are the most cautious and the MAJMA group the most sympathetic to astrology. The difference between questions which apparently require an objective judgment about the real state of the world and those which ask for a subjective response are evident in the difference between questions 18 and 20 on the one hand, and 7 and 8 on the other in the MAJMA group: 50% think the stars influence life on earth and 28.3% think astrology can make accurate forecasts, yet 69.6% would like a personal chart and 73.9% value the astrologer's advice. The discrepancy between these figures is apparent in all my six samples. Blackmore and Seebold's survey did not show this pattern; however, the reason being that their question on whether the astrologer's advice is valued asked for a simple yes/no answer, whereas mine allowed for 'always', 'often' and 'sometimes'. Whereas behaviour, such as the purchase of books or computerised horoscope reports, may be subject to yes/no answers, attitudes and opinions are not.

The wording of questions and the options offered as answers are crucial to the final figures. A dramatic example was provided by the amendment of question 14, on the

accuracy of sun-sign character descriptions, in the last sample, distributed to Arabic dancers. Previously this question only allowed for a yes/no answer. In response to feedback following the MAJMA festival though, a third option, 'partly', was added, and whereas 47.4% said their sun-sign was accurate, a figure in line with other groups, when the positive answers for 'partly' were added, the resulting figure rose to 79%, the highest in any of my samples.

It must be asked which question should be taken as indicating belief in astrology. For the MAJMA group is it the 73.9% who value the astrologer's advice, the 63% who regard their sun-sign as an accurate description of their character or the 28.3% who consider that astrology can make accurate forecasts about the future? However, it may be possible to discern different levels of involvement in astrology between, for example, those for whom astrology consists solely of sun-sign delineations and columns on the one hand, and the greater involvement indicated by a personal visit to an astrologer on the other. Other indications of greater involvement might be the reading of a teach-yourself book, the taking of a course, knowledge of moon or rising signs, the use of astrology as a spiritual discipline or a willingness to alter behaviour. Figures for all these questions rarely rise above 20%, except amongst the MAJMA sample, together with the 35.4% of the first Study of Religions sample (SR1) who had purchased a teach-yourself book. Amongst the MAJMA sample 19.6% had purchased a computerised horoscope, 26% knew their moon sign and 23.9% their rising sign, and 17.4% had taken an astrology course. The positive answers in the MAJMA group may have been boosted by the fact that respondents were self-selecting, unlike those in the three student groups. Yet the Golf Club group was also self-selecting and produced the least positive answers. It is clear that it is difficult to generalise across the population as a whole and that the nature of the sample is crucial. In addition, generalisation on the basis of large samples may conceal sharp variations between different groups, such as between the Golf Club and MAJMA groups.

Regarding astrology's identity as a new age discipline, the personality profiles represented by the sun-signs are Alan Leo's most significant contribution to astrology. Sun-sign astrology as a general cultural phenomenon is, as was argued in chapter 7, part of the New Age *sensu lato*. The evidence indicates that between 82% and 100% of adults know which sun-sign they were born under, and anywhere between 37% and 79% think that their sun-sign describes their character, depending on the group and how the question is asked. Leaving out the conservative Golf Club group, between 45% and 67% of my samples discover the sun-sign of people they're having relationships with, and between 31% and 64% have brought a book about their sun-sign for the year ahead. If York (2003: 25-6) argues that astrology was the 'lingua franca' of the 1960s counter-culture and New Age movement, then my samples indicate that it has also become an essential part of the language of popular culture and mass psychology.

Methodological Implications of Figures of Stated Levels of Belief

The three groups most sympathetic to astrology (SR2, MJ, AD) each showed a strong tendency to admit to moderate belief in astrology. In two groups (MJ and AD) close to 60% chose this option. In all five groups levels of 'moderate belief' were far greater than levels of 'strong belief', while the gap between the two options was much greater than that between 'moderate disbelief' and 'strong disbelief'. This suggests that, in general, respondents were happier to admit to strong disbelief than strong belief and that, when they did admit to belief, moderate belief was the chosen option.

This observation would seem to support Jahoda (1969: 25-6) and Bennett (1987: 27) in their contention that there is a general reluctance to admit to belief in anything which has been labelled as superstitious. However, there is a further implication with significance for the general view that belief in astrology presents peculiar problems. For example, as has been discussed in chapter 10, Dean and Mather (1977: 79, 83)

commented that 70% of the adult population read horoscopes while only 20% 'believe that there is something in it'. This raises the problem of why 50% of the adult population does something it regards as meaningless. Yet, with higher figures for belief the discrepancy between the headline figures for belief (moderate and strong) and readership of horoscope columns (daily, weekly and monthly) shrinks to a range of 47% for the FT group to just 1% for the AD group. It might perhaps be possible to speculate, then, as did Paulik and Buse (1984) and Bauer and Durant (1997) that frequency of readership of columns translates directly into intensity of belief. Yet, among the groups in my study, there is no indication of which level of belief might correlate with level of belief when the respondents' own statements about their belief are taken into account.

Further, the relationship between positive answers to questions on astrology correlates only weakly with stated levels of belief, supporting Plug's (1975) proposition that readership of horoscope columns may be a poor indicator of belief. Thus, one respondent (MJ/33) gave indications of strong belief: has visited an astrologer for a private consultation, would alter behaviour depending on astrological advice and uses astrology as a spiritual tool, but never reads horoscope columns and declared a level of 'moderate belief'. Another 'moderate believer' (MJ/38), though, had also been to an astrologer for a consultation, reads horoscope columns once a month and sometimes values the advice given, but was uniformly negative in all other answers. A third 'moderate believer' (MJ/37) read horoscope columns once a month, sometimes values the advice and would like to have a personal horoscope but was otherwise uniformly negative. Between the range of these three respondents, it is apparent that the answers to specific questions have only a loose relationship with stated levels of belief. Further, the answers given by one of the few 'strong believers' (MJ/5) are actually slightly less positive than those given by the moderate believer MJ/38, while another 'moderate disbeliever' (MJ/16) sometimes values the advice given in horoscope columns and finds

out the sun-signs of people with whom s/he is having relationships. Thus, the theory that the wide discrepancy between figures for belief in astrology and the readership of horoscope columns may be explained by the claim that many readers don't take astrology seriously is contradicted by the generally high figure for actions such as finding out partners' sun-signs.

A similar lack of clarity was found amongst the other groups. For example, in the Golf Club group GC/23 is a 'strong believer' and has visited an astrologer but would not wish to have a personal chart. GC/13, a 'moderate believer', would alter behaviour on astrological advice, but reads horoscope columns only once a month. Two (GC/25, GC/26) chose 'Not at all' on the line scale of belief in astrology but, of the five levels of belief, the former chose 'moderate disbelief' while the latter chose 'no opinion'. That is, asked to choose between levels of belief on different scales, individuals choose substantially different options. The same patterns are found in the student samples. For example 'moderate believer' FT/27 was a Roman Catholic, answered yes to all the religious questions, read horoscope columns every day and gave very positive answers to most of the other questions,

Methodological Implications of Answers on Religious Affiliation

Three questions were asked with a view to establishing whether evangelical Christianity correlates inversely with belief in, or attitudes to, astrology. These were: 'Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God', 'The Bible is the word of God' and 'God really does answer prayer'. The level of Christian affiliation was very small. However, there are certain indicative trends. Evangelical Christians may indeed be deeply hostile to astrology, but the same tendency is evident amongst atheists (for example, FT/15, FT/16). Both groups may have been influenced by anti-astrology literature, although the picture is by no means clear. In the Golf Club group it is apparent that a high level of Christian affiliation correlates with a low level of acceptance of astrology. However, when

individual responses are considered, this conclusion is questioned. For example, of the five who had visited astrologers, one (GC/1) answered yes to all three religious questions, two (GC/5, GC/7) answered yes to two, one (GC/25) to one and one (GC/23) didn't answer. There is in these examples, no sense in which attitudes to astrology necessarily correlate with religious affiliation. Another who read horoscopes every day answered yes to all three religious questions, adding to the statement that Jesus was the divine son of God, 'that is our teaching as Christians'. The apparent relationship between religious belief and attitude to astrology therefore disappears when individual responses are considered and an alternative explanation for the coincidence of high religious affiliation and low interest in astrology is therefore, as suggested above, conservatism.

In addition, amongst those who may claim Christian affiliation but who are not 'born-again' or evangelical, there does not seem to be any marked hostility to astrology. Instead it seems not to be an issue. In addition, amongst this group the answers to the three questions can be a mixture of yes and no. For example, MJ/38, a non-denominational Christian agreed that the Bible is the word of God but disagreed that Jesus is God's divine son or that God answers prayer.

Also significant is the extent to which non-Christians may give positive answers to the above questions. For example, amongst the MAJMA group two respondents, MJ/24 and MJ/33, both answered yes to all three religious questions while the former's religious affiliation was 'spiritual but non aligned' and the latter's was 'Buddhist'. Another who was 'spiritual but non aligned' (MJ/36) denied that Jesus is the divine son of God or that the Bible is the word of God, but agreed that God answers prayer and so do 'Jesus and Mary because they seem to have more time to spare'.

It is therefore suggested, as Glock and Stark (1966: 93) observed, that the traditional questions to test for religious affiliation may be inappropriate in an increasingly pluralistic context. In order to investigate the problem of apparently inconsistent answers on religious affiliation and attitude to astrology I conducted a number of interviews with students from the Study of Religions group. The respondent SR2/2 gave religious affiliation as Protestant, ticked 'yes' to Jesus as the divine son of God and God answers prayer, but 'no' to the 'Bible is the word of God'. S/he then gave very strong positive answers for astrology, but picked a level of belief in the middle of the line scale, claiming neither belief nor disbelief. In a follow-up interview the respondent gave further details, giving a picture of deep religiosity, though low attachment to the church, an interest in New Age or paranormal phenomena, and a sense that these are valuable, even though they are condemned by fundamentalist Christians:

I was raised in a Church of England home and I went to Church regularly as a child... I am in the Church choir and you know...as I got older I got more interested in religion and especially through studying religion...I am not devout Christian...but.. I agree with the statements that Jesus is the Son of God. I ticked the Protestant box for which denomination I am but I don't think the Bible is solely the word of God. I think it is the product of the time it was written in... I have practised meditation. Not just on my own. I have some books on yoga and I like to practise yoga. I am not, I am not really, you know, solely into it but I do find it interesting. I have done also...meditation. I have done candlegating - that's kind of meditating if you are looking at a candle. I am also very interested in psychics and life after death, mediums, that kind of thing. What happens when we die, that kind of stuff and also, it is very conflicting. Christians would say that mediums is a no-go area. It does say in the Bible that you shouldn't visit mediums but I am quite interested in that and I think I have read things on that by people who are Christians but also are mediums and how that works. So yes, I am in to it, all that kind of stuff.

I do read [horoscope columns] and...they are almost like a bit of a help to how to just go about life and stuff and that is kind of, kind of spiritual, it is almost like guidance from what I read...I don't take it literally but I do I do take it to heart a bit, what I read...it says oh 'You are going to have.. um.. Your relationship with this person is going to become more involved this week.' So, if I have been spending a lot of time with this particular person, then I think 'Oh well it must mean, must mean this person and um' and then I think that that would affect how I behave with that person that week and do, they do stick in my head. I don't just read them and forget about them.

I think about [Christian opposition to astrology] a lot because obviously it is, it is a big conflict, especially with one of my housemates who if we are speaking about it she will say that I shouldn't read them and that that it is hard to reconcile the two...But at the same time I can't deny that I am interested in it so that even though I do say that I am Christian, I wouldn't go so far as to say that I wouldn't read them.

Lastly, the respondent stated her belief in astrology as 'middle' (in the middle of the line scale), that is neither belief nor disbelief because even though

I do say that I believe in it, I am still very sceptical of everything and I could never, I could never completely believe in it. There is always a part of me, I don't know for certain that it is true and that is the same with Christianity. That's the thing of always holding back.

When, therefore, the personal feeling behind the answers are investigated, the apparent confusion of the questionnaire results is replaced by a situation of multiple affiliation and the individual reconciliation of competing world views. As Caird and Law (1982: 161-2) observed, 'a substantial proportion of persons involved in non-conventional religion tend to have multiple group memberships. Most researchers simply ask subjects their religion, thus missing this feature'. Nelson *et al.* (1976: 267) pointed out, additionally, that 'non-doctrinal or invisible religion does not form a unitary belief system'. Complexity is therefore to be expected. Moreover, as Roof *et al.* argued (1977: 407), the 'multidimensional' aspects of 'non-doctrinal' religion are shared with 'traditional, church religion'. It should be noted, then, that the confused picture arising from the questionnaire results is not necessarily an artifact resulting from the varying nature of the questions, but might instead indicate a genuinely complex situation which is of concern to the study of all religious belief which, as McCutcheon (1999: 10) argued, only a phenomenological approach can reveal.

Chapter Summary

It is clear that there is a difference between studies which seek to quantify belief on the basis of yes/no questions and those which offer variable answers. The former appear to be flawed by a general public tendency to deny belief in areas which may be considered superstitious. It may be that the type of anti-astrology literature surveyed in chapter 8 may have entered the public consciousness to the extent that it distorts the answers to questions on belief. This problem is most clearly evident in the Gallup polls, producing

low figures on belief in astrology and readership of horoscope columns, and it may therefore be argued that research and debate which relies on such data is itself flawed (Stark and Bainbridge 1985: 228-30; Gill 1999: 70-1; Gill, Hadaway and Marler 1998: 513; Roof 1993: 72; Hunt 2003: 173; Spencer 2003). Paulik and Buse (1984) and Bauer and Durant (1997), meanwhile, achieve headline figures for belief in astrology which are greater than those of the present study. The question then becomes one of the different ways of establishing belief; either by asking individuals about their behaviour and then assuming that this translates into belief, or asking direct questions about belief. In the latter case it is clear that variable questions result in higher results than do yes/no ones. It has therefore been argued that many of the existing figures on belief in astrology may be wildly inaccurate and that the methodology used to obtain them may be deeply flawed.

Table 1. Belief in Astrology: comparison of headline figures %

Great Britain 1975	14	(Gallup 1976a: 2.1417)
USA 1975	22	(Gallup 1978: 1.572)
USA 1978	29	(Gallup 1979: 184)
Great Britain 1978	20	(Gallup 1980: 329)
USA 1995	23	(Gallup 1996: 10)
USA 1996	25	(Gallup 1997: 205)
Germany 1980s	70 ²	(Paulik and Buse 1984)
Great Britain 1990s	73 ³	(Bauer and Durant 1997)
SnBathSpa1 (FT)	23.6 ⁴	
SnBathSpa4 (SR2)	42.4	
SnBathSpa5 (GC)	31	
SnBathSpa6 (MJ)	69.6	
SnBathSpa7 (AD)	63.2	

Table 2. Belief in Astrology: comparison of strong and moderate, belief and disbelief %

	FT	SR2	GC	MJ	AD
Strong Belief	2	5.1	3.4	10.9	5.3
Mod. Belief	21.6	37.3	27.6	58.7	57.9
No Opinion	25.5	18.6	17.2	4.3	5.3
Mod. Disbelief	27.5	27.1	31	13	15.8
Strong Disbelief	23.5	10.2	17.2	0	10.5

Table 3. Religious Affiliation and Belief in Astrology %

	Food Technology	Study of Religions	Golf Club	MAJMA	Arabic Dancers
Christian ⁵	41.1	40.7	96.5	34.8	36.9
Atheist	23.5	8.5	3.4	8.7	0
Pagan	0	8.5	0	15.2	10.5
Spiritual	15.7	25.4	0	37	5.3
Attend service	15.7	18.6	27.5	15.2	5.3

Table 4. Comparison of readership of horoscope columns with Gallup (1976a, 1978), Miller (1992) and Bauer and Durant (1997) %

	B&D ⁶	FT	SR1	SR2	GC	MJ	AD	Gallup	Miller
Every day	21	13.7	4.2	3.4	3.4	6.5	3.4	n/a	n/a
Once a week	23	29.4	37.5	33.9	24.1	26.1	24.1	n/a	n/a
Once a month	29	27.5	35.4	35.6	34.5	54.3	34.5	n/a	n/a
Never	<u>27</u>	<u>27.5</u>	<u>20.8</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>37.9</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>37.6</u>	<u>n/a</u>	<u>n/a</u>
Total readers	73	70.6	77.1	87.7	62	86.9	62	52 ⁷ /23 ⁸	16-22

Table 5. Headline figures for questions on astrology compared to Gallup (1976a, 1976b, 1978, 1996, 1997) and Blackmore and Seebold 2000-1) %

* Questions 16 and 17 were the same question, 8, in Blackmore and Seebold.

Question	Gallup	B&S	FT	SR1	SR2	GC	MJ	AD
7.Values advice ⁹	-	39	51	62.5	50.9	31	73.9	68.4
8.Would like horoscope	38 ¹⁰	-	-	-	-	-	69.6	68.4
9.Computer reading	-	15	7.8	22.9	11.9	3.4	19.6	5.3
10.Personal chart	-	-	7.8	6.3	3.4	17.2	26.1	5.3
11.Knows sun-sign	57 ¹¹ 76 ¹²	100	98	89.6	88.1	100	82.6	84.2
12.Knows moon-sign	-	22	3.9	14.6	10.2	0	26.1	10.5
13.Knows rising sign	-	-	5.9	20.8	6.8	3.4	23.9	10.5
14.Sun-sign accurate	37 ¹³	85	45.1	60.4	37.3	44.8	63	47.4 79 ¹⁴
15.Consult astrologer	-	13	0	2.1	5.1	3.4	13	5.3
16. Teach-yourself book	-	24*	11.8	35.4	18.6	6.9	37	15.8
17. Astrology course	-	24*	2	0	5.1	0	17.4	0
18. Stars influence	23 ¹⁵ 25 ¹⁶	-	19.6	54.26	35.6	17.2	50	36.8
19. Not Superstition ¹⁷	-	72	37.3	66.7	52.5	31	56.5	57.4
20.Accurate forecasts	15 ¹⁸	-	25.5	37.5	27.1	6.9	28.3	21.1
21.Alter behaviour	-	15	2	4.2	13.6	10.3	17.4	5.3
22.Find out sun-signs	-	89	45.1	62.5	52.5	17.2	67.4	57.9
23.Book: love/year ahead	-	78	31.4	64.6	49.2	17.2	59.4	63.2
24.Spiritual person?	-	-	33.3	77.1	57.6	41.4	69.6	63.2
25.Spiritual tool?	-	-	5.9	16.7	11.9	6.9	30.4	15.8

Notes

1. Lack of explicit definition of religion. 2 No differentiation between the different levels at which religion may be viewed. 3. The dimensionality, that is the multiple affiliations, of religious belief was not investigated properly. 4. Items of belief are not representative of the whole domain. 5. The sampling of subjects is often limited to university undergraduates, a group not representative of the population as a whole. 6. The methods of scaling are inadequate. 7. Problems of validity of the measuring instrument are nearly always ignored (Caird and Law 1982: 161).
2. Total of 'strong believers' and 'believers'.
3. Total of all 'serious' and 'non-serious believers'.
4. This and the following Bath Spa figures are combinations of 'strong belief' and 'moderate belief'.
5. Combining Protestant, Roman Catholic and Non-denominational Christian.
6. Bauer and Durant's options were 'Often', 'Fairly often', and 'Not often'.
7. Great Britain 1975 (Gallup 1976a: 2.1417).
8. USA 1975 (Gallup 1978: 1.572).
9. Combines figures for 'Always', 'Often' and 'Sometimes'.
10. Great Britain 1975 (Gallup 1976a: 2.1417).
11. France 1962 (Gallup 1976b: 1.309).
12. USA 1975 (Gallup 1978: 1.572).
13. 'Do you think that the character traits attributed to individuals according to their signs contain a good deal of truth, a moderate degree of truth or none at all?': Good deal 6; Moderate degree 31 (Gallup 1976a: 2.1417).
14. For this version the option 'partly' was added. The result was 31.6, , boosting the figure to 71.
15. 'Which, if either, of the following do you believe in? In astrology, or that the positions of the stars and planets can affect people's lives?'. USA 1995 (Gallup 1996: 10).
16. 'Do you believe 'in astrology, or that the positions of the stars and planets can affect people's lives?'. USA 1996 (Gallup 1997: 205).
17. The figure given is those who do not think astrology is superstition.
18. 'Do you think it is possible to see the future in the stars?'. Sweden October 1978 (Gallup 1980: 329).

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Part 3

Chapter 12

Astrologers' Attitudes: A Survey

Chapter Summary

In line with the phenomenological approach outlined in chapter 1, I conducted questionnaire surveys amongst astrologers in order to gain some insights into how they regard their own beliefs and practices, and the extent to which these indicate either hostility to Christianity or New Age affiliation. This chapter reports on two questionnaires. Questionnaire 1 was an extensive survey of astrologers' opinions. Questionnaire 2 was more limited and was concerned with the specific question of how astrologers respond to questions about belief in astrology.

Questionnaire 1: Survey of Astrologers' Opinions

After conducting a pilot study at the Northwest Astrology Conference (NORWAC) in Seattle in May 1999, I distributed a revised questionnaire at the Astrological Association Conference of Great Britain (AA) in Plymouth in August 1999 and the United Astrology Congress in Orlando, Florida, in July 2002. This questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix 3.

Response Rates

At the AA conference 159 questionnaires (31.8%) were returned out of a total of 500 distributed. At UAC 152 (12.6%) questionnaires were returned out of a total of 1200 distributed. The difference between the two figures is indicative of my ability to exploit my emic position at the AA by asking the organisers if I could publicise the questionnaire before plenary sessions of the whole conference. At UAC I was able to

use a similar position to persuade the conference newsletter editor, a student of mine, to give me publicity but was unable to influence the entire conference organisation as successfully as the AA. In addition, the relative size of UAC as compared to the AA, meant that delegates were more likely to suffer from an excess of information and that my questionnaire was therefore likely to be ignored.

Methodological Issues

As Silverman (2002: 51) stated, the first step in any research programme is to define the question. My initial question centred on whether astrology's survival in the modern world should be viewed as paradoxical; in other words, as the strange survival of a pre-modern superstition in the modern world. The research programme became a personal process in which I gradually refined my priorities. My initial questionnaire posed questions designed to elicit astrologers' social status and attitudes to science.

However, during this process my interest became focused on questions concerning astrologers' religious affiliations; namely whether astrology is a New Age discipline and whether its apparent popularity is implicated in the decline of mainstream Christianity. A subsidiary question was whether the existing measures of belief in astrology were reliable. For current purposes I have therefore extracted from my questionnaires only data which is relevant to those issues.

The questionnaire is given in Appendix 3. The numbering of questions is occasionally out of order. This is because the questionnaire was developed out of various prototypes and I wished to preserve the original numbering sequence, even when an intermediate question was dropped. In addition, the figures below may add up to over 100% where respondents were allowed to choose more than one option.

Ethical Considerations: Anonymity

Respondents were invited to fill in their name and contact details for possible follow-up only. The questionnaire carried the statement that 'all information will be treated in absolute confidence' and respondents will not be identified unless their written permission is secured.

Headline Results

Questions 4 and 6.

Following Batson and Ventis (1982) and Byrnes (1984), it was suggested that those developing a sudden interest in astrology might go through a process equivalent to a religious conversion. 81 answered that their interest in astrology developed gradually and 74 that it developed suddenly. There was no difference in emphasis between interest being triggered by books, columns or friends. In interview (chapter 13) it was often the case that the book which triggered interest was, for example, given by a friend. In addition, the sudden triggering of a deep interest after, say, reading a book, was usually within the context of a long-term awareness of astrology's existence. Indeed, it is impossible to live in the modern west without such an awareness. This question therefore failed to yield any significant results.

Questions 6 and 7

These questions were designed to secure information on the extent of professional astrology. The figures for the AA Conference were very low. Of the three astrologers who claimed to earn 100% of their income from astrology, two were American keynote speakers. In total 75 delegates claimed to be professional but, in order to gain a better measure of astrology in the UK, non-British respondents were excluded. Of the British astrologers at the conference, 45 claimed to be professional and ten claimed to be full time, but only one claimed to earn all his/her income from astrology. Of the remainder

three earned 75% of their income from astrology, three earned between 60% and 70% and the rest below 30%, of which fifteen earned less than 10% of their income from astrology. Four even stated that they earned 0% of their income from astrology. As a guide to earning potential it may be estimated that those who claimed they earned 30-50% of their income from astrology would earn a total of around £2500 - £5000 a year from their astrological activities. Five saw more than ten clients a week, eleven saw one a week, three saw less than one a week and one saw none. Most, sixteen, saw two to four clients a week. These figures are not an indication that astrological consultancy is either a popular or profitable activity in the UK.

At UAC, 54 delegates (35.5%) stated that they are full time astrologers and 50 (32.8%) part-time. One was both full and part-time. The majority claimed to do around five readings per week although some do one and thirteen do ten or over. Of these one claimed to do 50, a figure which may be explained by working for an '0900' phone line service in which clients phone for short readings. Taking all these figures at face value, the total number of clients is approximately 440 per week, or an average of four per astrologer. From information gleaned from my interviews (see chapter 13), a common rate for a reading is \$150 for a session lasting an hour-and-a-half. At this rate the gross income earned from ten readings per week will be \$1500 and from four it will be \$600. When the percentage of income earned from astrology is analysed, twenty astrologers earn 100% of their income from astrology and an almost equivalent number, eighteen, earn under 10%. Twenty-nine earn under 50%. Although stronger than in the UK, these figures do not indicate a thriving profession. Sixty-six (63%) of the total number of professionals, though, were also teaching astrology suggesting that this is a means by which potential clients are approached but also that the total income received from clients is only a proportion of that which they earned from astrological activities as whole.

While the opportunities for professional astrology consultancy in the USA appear to be greater than in the UK, the scope still appears to be limited. Taken together both the AA and UAC figures contradict the widespread journalistic view, discussed in chapter 1, that astrology is 'a huge worldwide business' (Matthews 2003).

Question 10 (Table 1)

This question was asked in order to replicate Stuart Rose's (1996) conclusions concerning the use of astrology in New Age culture. Without either defining the time period or distinguishing different types of reading, he found that 3% of his sample had an 'astrological or psychical reading' frequently, 7% regularly, 76% occasionally, 4% never and 10% failed to answer. He concluded from this figure that the most common sort of reading for a New Ager to have was astrological, but that overall 'the influence of divinatory arts in the New Age is not particularly significant' (1996: 3). This conclusion, as far as astrology is concerned, was based not on the percentage who had received a reading (908, or 70%), but on the frequency. However, he did not ask how frequently it would be reasonable to have an astrological consultation. From my experience as a consultant astrologer from 1976 to 1984 most clients have their horoscope read once in their life. I therefore decided to ask astrologers, who might be expected to have had more readings than non-astrologers, how many readings they had had.

I have extracted the results for astrology readings only from my results (see Table 1). These figures are difficult to compare to Rose's because his time periods are not defined: there is no indication as to whether twice a year is 'frequently' or 'regularly', while once a year may be 'regularly' or 'occasionally'. However, the headline figure shows that, 31% of delegates at the AA conference had never had a professional reading, 1% more than Rose's sample of New Agers. That a higher percentage of Rose's

sample of New Agers has had an astrological reading than delegates to an astrology conference suggests that conclusions may not be drawn about the importance of astrology from such a question. In addition I checked these figures in my interviews, asking how many of those who visit astrologers for readings might be regular. The number is quite small. For example, Ronnie Dreyer (1999) told me that 25% of her clients are repeat visits, and that a 'regular' consultation may be no more frequently than annual. Rose's conclusion that astrology plays little part in New Age practice can not, therefore, be sustained on the basis of the figures he presents.

Table 1. Astrologers and Frequency of Astrological Readings

Number of readings	AA	UAC
Never	31 (19.4%)	15 (9.9%)
1	33 (33.2%)	19 (12.5%)
2	28 (17.6%)	16 (10.5%)
3	17 (10.7%)	15 (9.9%)
4	14 (8.8%)	14 (9.2%)
5	5 (3.1%)	14 (9.2%)
6	8 (5%)	13 (8.6%)
7	2 (1.2%)	3 (2%)
8	4 (2.5%)	3 (2%)
9	0	4 (2.6%)
10	4 (2.5%)	7 (4.6%)
More than 10	14 (8.8%)	37 (24.3%)

The figure of 15% at UAC who had never had an astrology reading is lower than at the AA but still high considering they had all made the effort to attend an astrology conference. It is also clear that, if 'regularly' in Rose's terms might be considered to be

one a year, the figures suggest that the majority of delegates at both UAC and AA have readings less than regularly.

In addition, the number who have never had a reading shed further doubt on those measures of belief which are based on a linear scale of activity, from reading sun columns to having a professional reading to studying astrology.

Questions 18-19: religious affiliation

These questions were asked in order to investigate levels of eclecticism in religious and spiritual belief as a test of New Age identity, as discussed in chapter 4, and the model of secularisation as increasing pluralism discussed in chapter 8. These results are summarised in table 2.

The most noticeable finding is the dramatic collapse of Christian affiliation. At the AA 74.1% declared Christian affiliation as children, a figure which drops to 26.4% as adults. When non-denominational Christianity (the rise in which merits further investigation) is excluded, the figure drops from 59.6% to 8.8%. The UAC figure is more dramatic; a fall from 81.5% to 11.8%. The shift, though, is not to atheism which remains weak; 5.6% at the AA and 1.37% at UAC. Even when agnosticism and atheism are added together it is found that 86.9% at AA and 85% at UAC still declared a religious or spiritual affiliation. There are, then, very strong similarities between the UK and US figures. Each, for example, shows a small but similar rise in the number of pagans and Buddhists. The virtual absence of Hindus and Muslims is unsurprising in a mainly white, western sample.

The most dramatic figure in the UAC sample, though, became apparent as a result of a question inserted as a result of feedback after the AA conference. An option was added allowing respondents to choose 'spiritual but non aligned' as their current affiliation.

The figure for this, 60%, was far greater than any other, and may be taken as supporting evidence for the 'privatisation' hypothesis discussed in chapter 8; the theory that modernity is accompanied not by a decline in religious affiliation but in much greater pluralism. It also supports the common contention that, increasingly, to be spiritual is seen as far preferable to being religious (Roof 1993: 123-2 194-200).

The 'spiritual but non aligned' option was then added to my 'Public Awareness of Astrology' questionnaires discussed in chapter 11.

Table 2. Astrologers' Religious Affiliation

Religion	AA		UAC	
	Upbringing	Now	Upbringing	Now
(a) Protestant	75 (47%)	6 (3.8%)	67 (44%)	3 (2%)
(b) Roman Catholic	20 (12.6%)	8 (5%)	45 (29.6%)	9 (5.9%)
(c) non-denominational Christian	23 (14.5%)	28 (17.6%)	12 (7.9%)	6 (3.9%)
(d) Jew	3 (1.9%)	3 (1.9%)	12 (7.9%)	7 (4.6%)
(e) Muslim	0	0	1 (0.6%)	1 (0.6%)
(d) Buddhist	0	5 (3.1%)	1 (0.6%)	5 (3.2%)
(e) Hindu	0	1 (0.6%)	0	2 (1.3%)
(f) Pagan	1 (0.6%)	12 (7.5%)	1 (0.6%)	11 (7.2%)
(g) Agnostic	10 (6.3%)	12 (7.5%)	3 (2%)	11 (7.2%)
(h) Atheist	3 (1.9%)	9 (5.6%)	3 (2%)	2 (1.3%)
(i) Other	3 (1.9%)	9 (5.6%)	7 (4.6%)	25 (16.4%)
Spiritual but non aligned	n/a	n/a	n/a	91 (60%)

Questions 20-24 Religious behaviour and attitude

These questions, summarised in table 3, were designed to establish present levels of attendance at a religious service, the penetration of feminist theology, Buddhist and deist ideas into astrology and levels of belief in reincarnation and karma which, for Alan Leo, was central to his astrology New Age *sensu stricto*.

The number who attend a church or religious service regularly is small but, in the case of the UAC figure, larger than the total who declare Christian affiliation. This suggests

	AA	UAC
Attends service regularly	15 (9.4%)	26 (17.1%)
Believes in God	42 (26.4%)	74 (48.6%)
Believes in Goddess	19 (11.9%)	36 (23.6%)
Believes in Supreme Consciousness	83 (52.2%)	74 (48.6%)
Personal God who answers prayer	35 (22%)	58 (38.1%)
Astrology influenced by religion	52 (32.7%)	58 (38.2%)
Believes in reincarnation	164 (78%)	125 (82.2%)
Believes in law of karma	101 (63.5%)	119 (78.2%)

that in the US it may be more common for those who have a broader spiritual affiliation to attend a service than in the UK. The numbers declaring belief in the Goddess are also higher in the US than UK and, at 36%, indicate a substantial penetration of feminist theology into astrological circles. The high figures declaring belief in a supreme consciousness also indicates the popularity of the neo-Platonic creator, an indication of New Age culture discussed in chapter 4. The very high figures claiming belief in reincarnation and, to a lesser extent, karma, attests to the success of Alan Leo's argument that astrology is meaningless without reincarnation, discussed in chapter 6,

and hence to the penetration of his New Age astrology *sensu stricto* into the wider astrological world. That around a third at both AA and UAC stated that their practice of astrology is influenced by their religion indicates that a high proportion of those who selected non-Christian options in question 19 regard themselves as religious.

However, the high number, particularly at UAC, declaring belief in God (48.6%) and a personal God who answers prayer (38.1%), far exceeds those declaring conventional Christian affiliation. It may be that a residual Christian belief remains strong, perhaps supported by Bailey and Steiner's emphasis on Christ-consciousness. As suggested in chapter 4, then, the New Age may be hostile not to Christianity, only to the church. The two are regarded as entirely distinct.

Question 25: Definitions of astrology 1

This question was asked in order to establish how many astrologers would select 'New Age' definitions of astrology: b, c, d, f, g, and h are all New Age options, a, e and j 'old age'.

Table 4. Astrologers' Definitions of Astrology		
Definition	AA	UAC
(a) a science	39 (24.5%)	55 (36.1%)
(b) a divine science	67 (42%)	79 (52%)
(c) a psychological tool	103 (64.8%)	92 (60.5%)
(d) a form of divination	53 (33.3%)	61 (40.1%)
(e) a religion	11 (6.9%)	12 (7.9%)
(f) a path to spiritual growth	105 (66%)	85 (55.9%)
(g) a form of counselling	92 (57.8%)	99 (65.1%)
(h) a healing art	85 (53.4%)	88 (57.9%)
(j) a means of predicting the future	67 (42%)	66 (43.4%)

In this question respondents were invited to tick multiple options. The results indicate a clear resistance to the definition of astrology as science but a profound hostility to its categorisation as religion. Of the eleven who chose religion at the AA, five selected every option, reducing the number for whom religion might be considered a meaningful category. However, when this figure is compared to the answers given to questions 18-19 and 20-24, which indicate profound religiosity, it may be suggested that, as discussed in chapter 9, there is a tendency to take Christianity, in the sense of the church, as normative of religion.

It is noticeable that all the definitions indicating Leo and Rudhyar's New Age legacy receive high scores with 'path to spirituality' receiving the highest score, 66%, at the AA, and receiving 55.9% at UAC. Rudhyar's legacy is also evident in the 65.1% who chose 'a form of counselling' as a definition of astrology at UAC, while the broader field of psychological astrology fares well at both AA (64.8%) and UAC (60.5%). The pervasive influence of Leo and Rudhyar's astrology in this sample though, is indicated by a small number, under five in each case, who failed to choose any New Age options.

Question 26: Definitions of astrology 2

This question was asked in order to establish emic, as opposed to etic, definitions of astrology. As noted in chapter 1, there is no single definition of astrology. Definitions in dictionaries tend to emphasise such concepts as 'occult' influence, while those published by astrologers focus on the 'study' of celestial symbolism. The definitions given by respondents on my questionnaires indicate a great diversity. The following sample is taken from the last twelve questionnaires. Only two (161 and 164) are naturalistic. The other ten all conform to models of New Age astrology as outlined in chapter 6. Some (159, 166) may be strongly Hermetic in tone, but it may be argued, as in chapters 3 and

4, that Hermeticism has been carried into modern astrology largely through Blavatsky's influence. The twelve sample definitions are listed below.

- 155. A helpful guide to the centre of one's life.
- 157. A system of meaning derived from planetary positions in space and time.
- 159. As above, so below.
- 160. A blue print of psycho/emotional etc. make up.
- 161. The science of the relation between the bodies of our planetary system and life on earth and the art of interpreting the results of the same.
- 162. A tool for those who want to attune themselves to the continuing creation of the universe and particularly those who want to take as constructive a part in it as possible.
- 163. A hermetic system containing all the different psychological combinations.
- 164. Use of natural energy forces, possibly magnetic, given out by the planets.
- 165. A sort of "glasses" through which you can see the true reality of the world.
- 166. A means by which we can observe spiritual law.
- 167. The study and practice of the dynamic, intelligent interconnectedness of all things, through the macrocosmic language of frequency - or! - god's film-script! (PC)
- 168. A form of communication with unseen minds.

Question 30

This question was based on Rose's (1996: 369) survey in which respondents were asked to assess the change in their mood after encountering New Age ideas and practices. I applied the scale to ask respondents how astrology had affected their lives.

There is a very close match between the AA and UAC figures. In each sample 'meaningful' is the top choice, followed by 'spiritual' and 'self-empowered', though in a different order. The following six options are then ranked in almost the same order, only pleasurable and happier changing places. This again shows consistency between the British and American samples. It also indicates the pursuit of meaning as astrology's principal purpose, with self-empowerment and greater spirituality coming close behind.

The prominence of self-empowerment points to astrology's strongly activist role as a means of developing freedom of choice.

Rose's results are similar. Spiritual and meaningful were top of his list, fulfilled was fourth and playful last. In other words, astrology generates very similar subjective consequences as does involvement in New Age activities.

Table 5. Consequences of Astrology

State of Mind	Rose %	AA	UAC
More pleasurable	47	46 (28.9%)	56 (36.8%)
More spiritual	82	86 (54%)	105 (69.1%)
More responsible	58	54 (34%)	65 (42.7%)
More self-empowered	71	100 (62.2%)	107 (70.4%)
More playful	37	27 (17%)	32 (21%)
Happier	72	47 (29.5%)	52 (34.2%)
More healed	66	61 (38.4%)	68 (44.2%)
More meaningful	80	140 (88%)	113 (74.3%)
More fulfilled	71	78 (49%)	85 (55.9%)

Questions 41 and 45 ix.

These questions were asked in order to establish levels of agreement with the notion that the New Age and Age of Aquarius are currently beginning, or are about to begin. The imminence of the arrival of the next age, as was noted in chapter 2, is a key feature of millenarian belief. Separate questions were asked about the New Age and the Age of Aquarius in order to allow for those astrologers who might believe that the Age of Aquarius is beginning, but that this does not indicate the coming of the New Age as a

time of spiritual evolution. As a comparison Rose (1996: 365) found that 69% of his respondents believed that 'we are entering a new era'.

The percentage stating that the New Age is beginning were significantly higher at the AA Conference than at UAC, but those stating that the Age of Aquarius is beginning were roughly comparable. Nevertheless, these figures indicate that around half, or over half, of all astrologers operate within a millenarian context.

However, only 22% at both AA and UAC claimed that the New Age is not beginning and around 10% stated that the Age of Aquarius is not beginning. Apart from indicating that a minority accept the Age of Aquarius while resisting the New Age, this suggests that a low positive figure might result from the phrasing of the question, which appears to call for a statement of objective fact (see the discussion in chapter 11).

Table 6. The New Age and the Age of Aquarius.

New Age beginning	AA	UAC
Yes	97 (61%)	73 (48%)
No	36 (22.6%)	34 (22.4%)
Don't know	21 (13.2%)	33 (21.7%)
Age of Aquarius beginning		
Agree	88 (55.3%)	78 (51%)
Disagree	15 (9.4%)	16 (10.5%)
No opinion	12 (7.5%)	45 (29.6%)

Question 45. New Age ideas and astrological method.

These questions were asked in order to establish the extent to which the metaphysics of Leo and Rudhyar and the latter's relativism have penetrated astrological thought and

method. Questions iii , v and vii are designed to elicit 'old age' opinions, the others to indicate New Age attitudes. Question ix was summarised separately, above.

Table 7. Attitudes to Astrology

	AA	UAC
i) each astrologer finds the techniques which suits them	153 (96.2%)	148 (97.3%)
ii) the right house system is 'the one which works for you'	113 (71%)	106 (69.7%)
iii) the planets exert a physical influence on events on earth	81 (50.9%)	92 (60.5%)
iv) astrology is a language	139 (87.4%)	141 (92.7%)
v) astrology can make accurate predictions	94 (54.1%)	110 (72.3%)
vi) signs of the zodiac are archetypes	120 (75.5%)	129 (84.9%)
vii) astrology should take other factors, e.g. environment and heredity, into account	120 (75%)	109 (71.7%)
viii) astrology is a form of divination	77 (48.4%)	78 (51.3%)
x) the birth chart contains our potential, and it's up to us how we use it	139 (87.4%)	133 (87.5%)
xi) intuition is necessary for a good astrological reading	129 (81.1%)	98 (64.5%)

The results indicate generally high scores for New Age definitions.

Questions i and ii were designed to test the relativistic consequences of Rudhyar's astrology. Question iv tested for Leo's argument that astrology is a language.

Question vi tests for Jung's influence.

Question vii reflects Rudhyar's statement that astrology is divination (but received a relatively low score).

Question x expresses the Rudhyarian view which has become the basic proposition of psychological astrology.

Question xi expresses a widely held argument in New Age circles that, as discussed in chapter 4, one should listen to the inner divine.

Question v tests for attitudes to prediction, which Leo and Rudhyar argued was irrelevant in natal astrology. As in question 25, it receives a relatively low score. It is

still high enough, though, to indicate that prediction remains one of astrology's core purposes. It may be that the question is itself inadequate and needs to be refined to account for specific contexts.

The score for Question iii on planetary influence was much higher than expected as personal experience indicates that most astrologers reject this concept and it is rare to find it discussed in modern astrology books. However, it may indicate a strong influence from Alice Bailey who did discuss astrology in terms of physical influences.

Question 51. New Age Practices

This question was designed to produce a direct comparison with Rose's (1996) questionnaire. He provided a list of thirty-one activities, involvement in any one of which might be evidence of New Age identity. I compressed the list to the following fifteen for space reasons. Rose asked his respondents if they had been involved in such practices in the past or were currently still involved. I asked for a simple statement of involvement now or in the past.

If Rose's figures set a standard for the levels of involvement in New Age activities amongst readers of a New Age magazine (*Kindred Spirit*) that indicate affiliation with New Age culture, then my figures should provide a measure for New Age affiliation amongst astrologers. In each case the AA and UAC figures are comparable to or higher than Rose's figures, indicating that astrologers have a deeper New Age identity than *Kindred Spirit* readers. Why this should be so is not clear, unless the implications of chapters 2 and 3 are taken into account: that astrology may actually play a role in generating millenarian belief; some of the most formative influences on the New Age, Blavatsky, Steiner and Bailey, accorded astrology a central position in their systems.

Table 8. Astrologers and New Age Activities

	Rose 'ever' %	Rose 'currently' %	AA	UAC
Acupuncture	57	15	94 (59.1%)	91 (59.9%)
Channelling/ Clairvoyance	9	18	100 (62.8%)	91 (59.9%)
Crystals	71	32	78 (49%)	92 (60.5%)
Earth Mysteries	43	16	40 (25.1%)	42 (27.6%)
Ethical investing	18	10	29 (18.2%)	40 (26.5%)
Green politics	45	13	54 (34%)	55 (36.2%)
Healing workshops	67	26	91 (57.2%)	107 (70.4%)
Herbalism	57	20	76 (47.8%)	102 (67%)
Homeopathy	39	28	98 (61.6%)	106 (69.7%)
Hypnotherapy	39	8	54 (34%)	63 (41.4%)
Past Life Therapy	39	8	32 (35.2%)	68 (44.7%)
Psychotherapy/ counselling	42	13	101 (63.5%)	106 (69.7%)
Shaman/Pagan Rituals	35	15	43 (27%)	63 (41.4%)
Veganism	14	4	11 (6.9%)	24 (15.8%)
Vegetarianism	71	39	81 (50.9%)	78 (51.3%)

Questionnaire 2: Belief in Astrology

In view of the problems surrounding public reaction to the word 'belief' discussed in chapters 8, 9 and 10, I devised a questionnaire (Appendix 4) asking students and practitioners of astrology (defined as attendees at the 2000 British Astrological Association conference) how they would respond to the question 'do you believe in astrology?' and invited them to explain their reasons. I sought a quantitative result, but

one which could be further examined in the light of qualitative material, the respondents' justification of their answers.

This questionnaire was distributed at the Astrological Association Conference in Reading on September 1-3 2000 and I received 47 replies out of a total of 220 questionnaires distributed. All were anonymous and each questionnaire was numbered. The numbers are given in brackets in the text below.

Correspondents were offered four answers to the question, 'if you were asked whether you believe in astrology, would you answer:

A; Yes, B: No, C: Don't Know and D: Other.

The responses were as follows:

Yes: 27 (57%).

No: 3 (6%).

Don't Know: 1 (2%).

Other: 14 (30%).

Of the remainder one ticked both 'yes' and 'no', and one ticked both 'yes' and 'other'.

Although the percentages, rounded to the nearest whole figure, are meaningless when applied to a figure of one, it is useful to note that only 57% ticked 'yes', and that 30% ticked 'other', disputing the terms in which the question was asked. The 'no' figure is so small as to suggest that the alternative to 'yes I believe' is not 'no I don't believe' but a search for alternative words to 'belief', following Lawrence Cassidy (see chapter 9). The results are sufficient though, to shed doubt on the relevance of previous statistical surveys. We must assume that delegates at an astrology conference are likely to be

either 'strong believers' according to Paulik and Buse, or 'serious believers' according to Bauer and Durant, yet almost half of them denied belief in astrology at all.

While it may be objected that we cannot extrapolate the results of a survey of astrologers' attitudes to astrology in order to draw conclusions concerning studies of the general public's attitudes to astrology, the nature of those attitudes forms only part of this study. The key consideration concerns responses to the word 'belief'.

Reasons Given by Respondents for their Answers

A. Yes

Of the respondents who ticked 'yes', most defined astrology as something they find useful. Only one stated that astrology 'has now become my way of life' (14).

Of the twenty-seven who ticked 'yes', twenty-five gave further reasons. Of these seventeen (36% of the total sample, 63% of those who ticked 'yes') cited personal experience, the fact that astrology 'works' and that they have studied it. Only one of those addressed the question of whether astrology is a religion and specifically stated 'It is not a religion' (4). For these respondents, experience and empirical observation precedes belief.

Only one tackled the question of the claim made by some astrologers that 'I don't believe in astrology. I use it', arguing that they use it *because* they believe in it and that belief therefore precedes experience (5) .

The concept of pure knowledge was important for some. One wrote, citing Jung (Cox 1985), 'I don't believe, I know' (6). Some of those who gave experience as a reason for belief also pointed to the truth of astrology: 'I am convinced of the truth of astrology'

(11), 'the planets don't lie. The truth is out there for us to learn' (14). In addition some people may be astrologically disinclined to believe: 'So many predictions are true. But not everyone has the chart to see! Or the inclination to watch' (22).

Of those who cited other reasons, a number discussed problems of terminology. One argued that astrology is more a matter of faith in a predetermined destiny than belief in a possible future (13). Only one other respondent mentioned faith – and then as a lack of faith in newspaper horoscopes (10).

Only a handful cited reasons for belief which may be considered overtly religious. Of those who claimed that their belief is based on experience, one stated that astrology is also 'very much a spiritual matter' (19) and another that 'it is a personal spiritual pursuit' (21).¹

Only three gave religious reasons without claiming that experience of astrology preceded belief. One wrote that 'there exist correlations between events on earth and planetary positions. The universe is more like a great thought than a great machine. The heavens declare the glory of God. Rather as the mind rules the body, the mind of God rules the universe' (15). Another compared belief in astrology to belief in God: 'I believe astrology works – it is almost as vague as being asked "Do you believe in God?" Well, yes I do – but from within and I "feel" astrology comes from within also' (16). A third stated that 'I believe in astrology because my feeling for God's work in my life and lifes (sic) or existence of all other things and humans is more clear and my faith is stronger' (17).

From the above replies it is clear that for respondents who believe in astrology, belief is seen as primarily based on empirical evidence – the observation and experience of astrology working either in the sense of giving correct predictions (22) or being helpful

(2). There would seem to be no grounds for arguing that belief in astrology is an alternative to belief in Christianity. Of the three who cited religious reasons for their belief in astrology, there seems no reason to suspect an anti-Christian attitude.

B. No

Of the three respondents who answered 'no', two gave further reasons. One of these claimed that 'astrology is not a belief system', but otherwise gave reasons which have elsewhere been cited as evidence for belief – 'astrology...works'. The third posed the question 'Do you believe in television? Do you believe the sun rises in the morning?', arguing that astrology is self-evident in much the same way as the 'yes' respondent's rhetorical question 'do you believe in music' (7). The remainder of the reasons given for not believing – astrology is 'immensely useful...satisfying and stimulating' - could equally well have been cited as reasons for believing by the seventeen who cited this same explanation as a basis for belief.

C. Don't Know

Of the two respondents who answered 'don't know', one stated that astrology is not a religion and that it's better to say that it can be used, and that "I know" astrology maintains truths that are inherent in the human condition' (32), both grounds given for belief for those who ticked 'yes'. The other claimed that belief would only come with irrefutable proof (31), agreeing with the 'yes' camp that experience precedes belief, but that there is at present insufficient evidence.

D. Other

Most of the reasons given by those who answered 'other' overlap with those given by those who ticked 'yes', 'no' and don't know'.

The rhetorical questions 'do you believe in music' (7) and 'do you believe in television' or 'that the sun rises' (29) which were used to justify 'yes' and 'no' respectively were repeated five times in different forms with variations such as 'do you believe in art' (35), 'geography' (36), 'mathematics' (38), 'science' (40) and 'cat food' (42)? One respondent (35) actually said that this could be a reason to answer 'yes'. The statement 'I don't believe, I know', cited as a reason for belief (6) now becomes a reason why the question cannot be answered.

Eight respondents cited as reasons their personal experience of astrology working; hence astrology is not a matter of belief and therefore that the question cannot be answered.

E. Ticked more than one box

One respondent ticked both 'yes' and 'no' citing as reasons 'faith in Astrology's meaning and value' and 'experience' of it working. The other ticked both 'yes' and 'other' arguing that the issue is less about belief than about astrology 'working in practice'.

Belief and experience

It is notable that whatever the answer given to the question, astrologers frequently cited analogies with other commonly accepted phenomena to justify their opinion. This is consistent with other reported opinions. In a report on students at Kepler College of the Astrological Arts it was reported that:

Student Karen Hawkwood, who moonlights as an astrological counsellor, says it makes her laugh when people ask, "Do you believe in astrology?" "Because that's like asking, 'Do you believe in biology?' Of course this thing exists. The question is, what do you believe it can or cannot do?" She says she "violently disbelieves that the planets *cause* anything". But she thinks astrology "can show us patterns, how the pattern in the sky represents synchronistically the pattern in the human being. I don't know how this works. The microcosm reflects the macrocosm. We see patterns in things that there's no objective way to explain. I believe astrology is one of the best ways to see those patterns (Fefer 2001b).

It is apparent that the different answers may be based on different reactions to the word belief. Simply, if the reasoning behind the answers is similar, then the difference between the actual answers may be based on a sense amongst those who answer 'no' that the object of belief of necessity doesn't exist. This opinion is not shared by those who answer 'yes'.

Conclusion

This exercise confirmed the profound suspicion surrounding the concept of belief. Of the sample of practitioners and students of astrology just over half admitted to belief in astrology. The principle reason – that it works – is also the dominant reason cited by the slightly less than half who answered 'no', 'don't know' or 'other'. Thus the reasons cited for sharply conflicting answers to the question do not fundamentally differ. The reasons why individuals respond positively to questions concerning belief in astrology may therefore have little to do with their opinions as to the nature of astrology and a great deal to do with personal experience. As discussed in chapters 8 and 9, the soundest explanation for belief in astrology may be rational choice; experience shows that astrology fulfils the purpose for which it is intended. The overwhelmingly pragmatic justification for respondents' attitudes to astrology are therefore unlikely to be affected by any religious or theological criticism. Such criticism may, though, affect astrologers' religious affiliation by alienating them from the church.

The question of belief in astrology was one I pursued in my interviews with astrologers (see chapter 13). Of thirty-nine astrologers interviewed only one, Alan Oken, was happy to agree to belief in astrology. For almost all the others belief was an inappropriate concept to apply to a practice validated by daily experience.

Chapter Summary

The findings from the general attitudes survey points to astrologers' largely New Age *sensu lato* identity in terms of their involvement in the practices listed under question 51. More dramatic though, is the profound influence of Leo and Rudhyar's New Age philosophy in astrology as a whole. An overwhelming relativism in relation to astrological technique suggests that, as Rudhyar argued, astrology is just a technique for gaining understanding into the 'real', spiritual world. The emphasis on 'spiritual path' as a definition of astrology points directly to Leo's legacy, while its definition as a form of counselling and a psychological tool points to the success of Rudhyar's ideas and is suggestive of Heelas' idea that the 'self-ethic' lies at the heart of New Age philosophy. These findings do not, however, support the proposition that all contemporary astrology is New Age any more than, as was discussed in chapter 4, New Age can itself be defined a single phenomenon. Evidence has also been found for a strong millenarian, historicist framework for contemporary astrology which, along with the activism noted in the popularity of self-empowerment, justifies the use of Popper's historicism/activism model as a rationale for astrology. On a more general level, the privatisation theory of spiritual pluralism (discussed in chapter 8) has been supported. The proposition that yes/no questions on belief do not yield useful information (discussed in chapter 8) was supported. The notion that either the New Age or astrology are necessarily anti-Christian, as opposed to anti-church (discussed in chapters 4 and 9), has been questioned.

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Part 3

Chapter 13

Interviews with Astrologers

Chapter Description

This chapter summarises thirty-nine interviews with astrologers conducted between 1999 and 2003. It also reports on two interviews conducted with the clients of one astrologer.

Methodology

Following Bilgrave and Deluty (1998), who inquired into the religious affiliations and beliefs of clinical and counselling psychologists in the USA, I decided to inquire into the religious interests of astrological 'opinion formers' defined as teachers, lecturers and writers. The resulting discussions were wide-ranging but my main concern was to investigate attitudes to the relationship between astrology, religion, Christianity, New Age culture and belief in the Age of Aquarius. I was also interested in the distinction that is made between the terms 'spiritual' and 'religious' (see for example Roof 1993: 123-2 194-200) .

I conducted thirty-nine interviews with professional astrologers over a period of four years, mainly at astrological conferences, including the Astrological Association of Great Britain Conference in Cirencester in September 2001, and the United Astrology Congress in Orlando, Florida, in July 2002. These interviews are listed, together with interviews conducted with non-astrologers, in the bibliography.

Bryman (2001: 46-9) contrasted structured, interviewer-led conversations, with unstructured, interviewee-led ones. My interviews were semi-structured in that I

prepared a list of well-defined questions, but I allowed interviewees to follow their own line of thought without interruption and I asked my questions in a style and sequence which attempted to respond sympathetically to their statements. My approach was phenomenological, seeking to 'describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied' (Bryman 1992: 46). Although my discussions included a wide range of issues such as number of clients (see chapter 8) or belief in astrology (see chapter 12), the extracts in this chapter focus on astrologers' backgrounds and astrology's relationship with Christianity and the New Age.

Ethical Considerations: Anonymity of Respondents

All interviewees were informed that the purpose of the interview was an examination of their attitudes to astrology, partly in relation to their religious orientation, and were fully informed that they could then, or at any time in the future, request anonymity. Those interviewed were given the option to sign a release form. This form is attached as Appendix 5. Each interviewee was also given a number which is used for anonymous respondents.

Introduction to astrology

I asked the interviewees how their interest in astrology developed as a means of reflecting on the reasons for belief discussed in chapter 8. The means by which the interviewees discovered astrology was often circumstantial; exposure to a book, a horoscope reading, or to counter-cultural influences in the 1960s or all three. According to Alan Oken, 'it was the early 60s and so you had this wave that was coming in through young people about experimenting with all sorts of alternative belief systems'. Ronnie Dreyer was studying drama in New York in the early 1970s and encountered astrology through her theatrical connections. She told me,

I had always been into astronomy and I really loved the sky and the stars and all that and my father would take me to the planetarium when I was a kid. And I was also studying drama in New York and a lot of the people who were involved in the theatre were going to astrologers. They were going to astrologers to find out whether they were going to be successful. I thought "Oh, that's interesting." And at the same time that I started hearing a lot about astrology and people going to astrologers, my father brought home a book, because he would bring home a lot of books that came out from McGraw Hill and he brought home a book called the *Compleat Astrologer* by Derek and Julia Parker...He gave it to me and he said 'Maybe you will find this interesting'. I opened it up and it taught you how to calculate your chart and everything and I couldn't put it down. I opened the book up and read it cover to cover and I was hooked.

Dreyer's interest was deepened through study in India. The eastern connection is persistent: Greg Bogart and Bob Mulligan both reported that experiences with Indian teachers were significant. Demetra George's introduction to astrology was directly through counter-cultural experiences:

I had two friends who were going to the city every week to study with an astrologer that I thought was so exotic, but that wasn't my thing. Then I went travelling in the east for a year after that so my whole belief system really got loosened up after that. I spent about six months in Afghanistan. When I came back to the States a number of my friends from college were living on a commune in Southern Oregon so I decided to go out and visit them and see what they were up to. They were in the middle of the woods and there was a group of people and there was a library of almost 1000 esoteric books that somehow people had brought with them. All of the Bailey books were there and the Theosophical books and books on astrology and Krishnamurti, and that is what we would spend our time doing - reading books and chopping wood and scrubbing clothes on the washboard and having conversations and there were several people doing astrology...So I became interested in someone doing astrology and then taught myself out of Llewellyn George's *ABC Horoscope maker and Delineator*. Then my first two books that I read were Alice Bailey's *Esoteric Astrology* and Rudhyar's *Astrology of Personality* and then did a year of correspondence at least with the Rosicrucians where I could just send a dollar donation and get a lesson.

Shelley von Strunckel happened to live in the right place. She said that,

when I was a kid in LA there was a very metaphysical context to life...the theosophical society was around, the Dante Society was around, the self-realisation fellowship was around. We used to go, my Mom, my Aunt and I used to go to meals sitting under a portrait of Yogananda when he was a kid. So I grew up in an environment where it was perfectly natural to be interested in Eastern thought and philosophy...Also, however, I remember, as a kid, I must have been about 10, being given a diary...I tore out the horoscope pages and threw away the diary. So I was interested in it from a young age.

Melanie Reinhart also encountered astrology as a child: 'I discovered astrology when I was ten and when I did it felt like a rediscovery of something very familiar. When I think of it now it seems odd because I was only ten. At the time it felt perfectly normal'. Once she found it though, it satisfied a deeper purpose.

I think it was a desire to understand life and the human psyche more deeply and the pale reflection of that that I got in this one initial book that I found simply served to whet my appetite and to want to go deeper...I see it very much set in a cosmic context and I think that one of the things that appeals greatly to me about astrology is that it is actually possible to er, to contextualise an individual life or a collective process, anything to do with human life individually or collectively. It is possible to contextualise that in such a way as to arrive intuitively at a sense of participation in something greater.

Liz Greene had a similarly early introduction. She told me,

I don't remember a time when I wasn't conscious of it, going back to childhood, I think it was always there. I had no issue about it but when I was at university I went to an astrologer to have my own chart done and that was really the kick-off. It intrigued me and I wanted to know how it worked, so I started teaching myself ..I had some friends who were going to see Isabel Hickey and they said "why don't you go and get your chart done?"

Jonathan Cainer reported that,

astrology had always been in my life...I was a teenage musician and fan of the alternative, and astrology had always been knocking around and I knew lots of people who were into birth signs and that sort of thing. But it was while I was in America...about 1980...I had had my chart done once or twice. I was kind of impressed by what they were able to see and I was at a real crossroads in my life.

Mavis Klein, a psychotherapist, was initially a sceptic, but was convinced after hearing the tape of a client's readings,

I was an ordinary educated sceptic, thought it was all a load of bullshit or didn't really think about it at all until a man who had been in one of my therapy groups, psychotherapy groups, for two years came one night and said 'I have just consulted an astrologer, made a tape recording. Will you please listen to it'. I said 'Yes of course' indulgently, and without really paying any attention I turned the tape on while the kids were screaming around me, I was doing the ironing and the television was on and within five minutes everything it had taken me three years to find out about the man is on that tape, and more, and I thought I would have to be blocking my eyes and ears very, very hard not to inquire further.

Past and present religious affiliation.

The interviewees came from a complete range of backgrounds, but a drift towards eclecticism and an interest in eastern philosophies was evident. Maria Kay Simms was brought up a Methodist but moved through Catholicism, Unitarianism and was a high Episcopalian before becoming a Wiccan priestess, a step which for her was natural in view of the strong pagan identity of the high church. Rick Tarnas, coming from a devout Catholic family, retains Christian influence but with the addition of Buddhism, Taoism, Shamanism, Steiner and Jung. Arlan Wise, who grew up in a conservative Jewish household is drawn to Tibetan Buddhism, as are Jessica Adams, whose background is Roman Catholic and Demetra George, whose family was originally Greek Orthodox. Melanie Reinhart came from a 'religiously neutral' background, went to a convent school and was confirmed Roman Catholic but became

very distressed by this idea that the interpretation of the 'I am the way, the truth and the light', meaning that anyone who wasn't a Christian was basically condemned...for posterity. This had me like weeping in my bed as a child. I was just frantic with distress and feeling somehow it couldn't be right. So having got confirmed and so on I set myself a task, at thirteen years old, I set myself a task of finding out what everybody else did. My first port of call was the Spiritualist Church who I stayed with for a number of years and there I apprenticed to a healer learning all kinds of stuff, transforming, the whole business. I had a very, very, very wonderful teacher.

Then...eventually [I encountered] Eastern imports, Hinduism, Buddhism and so on, were intriguing me very deeply. The whole notion of life as a quest not just for personal enlightenment but the unfolding of consciousness that took root very deeply in me and I came over to England to find a teacher and I linked up with a Sufi Master. I am still linked with that tradition and I consider it something of a root and in that tradition is a very strong emphasis on unity and in their exoteric church service - it is called the Church of All - they have a table on which is a candle for every one of the world's major religions, including one for everything else, with an acknowledgement that, although the paths be many, the source is one. And that appealed endlessly to me and still does. That unifying intent or process found, for me, a perfect reflection in astrology because we all, on earth, everybody lives as it were, under the same sky.

One tendency is to broaden the childhood religion rather than reject it. Alan Oken argued, from his Baileyite perspective that all religions should be respected, except fundamentalist Christianity, Arlan Wise retains respect for her Jewish roots while

Demetra George maintains respect for God as an aspect of her respect for the Goddess.

She told me that,

when I was a very young astrologer, before each reading I would still, by and large, light a candle, but I have a journal of prayers that I would make to God before I knew about the goddess and I would go, 'Dear Lord, Father in Heaven, please give me the guidance and words I need that this will be of benefit to this client coming in', and date it and sign it before each reading. At that point, I see now, I was going back to that direct, natural divination of understanding that I was a vehicle for some higher celestial power to use me in order to give counselling and advice to a person who comes to that oracle for advice. I wasn't consciously thinking that that was what I was doing. That's just what I did. So, again, I try to keep that connection now by lighting the candle before a reading. At that point I am alone in myself, getting some of that direct or natural flow of energy. As a young woman it was my connection with astrology that brought me very close to a belief in God or a creed of intelligence when I saw the perfection of the patterning that seemed to exist. That nothing was an accident. The impeccable timing. I knew that there was something going on out there that was a lot bigger than I was. That's what brought me - it is interesting that it was astrology that brought me into a belief system of divine reality.

Others place less emphasis on spiritual beliefs. Sean Lovatt, who practiced as an astrologer near Glastonbury in the 1980s and 90s, 'had no religious background at all apart from morning prayers at school which for me, and I think everybody else, had no religious significance at all....'. He was influenced in his life as a whole by his reading of mystical traditions, but declared that it 'has no effect on his astrological work'.

Astrology as a Religion

I asked the interviewees how they responded to the definition of astrology as a religion.

The response was universally negative. Bob Mulligan told me that,

The word religion has a very negative connotation for most thinking people these days because it means subservience to something that you do not understand and sort of, relinquishing any sense of power and living in an atmosphere of fear.

Ronnie Dreyer was put off religion by what she perceived as its exclusivity and intolerance. She told me that,

Kindness, forgiveness, charity. Those are the qualities that I think religion should encourage. Really. That's really the basis. The reason I really turned away from a lot

of religions was that most of them did the opposite. There were elitist, judgmental, punishing rather than forgiving. So I find religion itself very contradictory. That's why Buddhism is for me. The whole idea of just attaining a certain kind of peace within yourself.

As an alternative she turned to Buddhism which 'is more a mind thing than a religion'.

To an extent the question of whether astrology is a religion is meaningless, for astrologers like Ronnie Dreyer and Komilla Sutton. Both practice Indian astrology and may describe astrology in terms which may appear religious in western terms, namely as a practice which is integral to the Hindu world view, but understand that the separation of religion as a distinct practice is a peculiarity of the modern west. When I asked Arlan Wise if astrology is a religion she replied 'No. I just wouldn't think of it as a religion...I don't see how [it can be]'. Alan Oken used an exclusivist definition of religion stating that, 'astrology is not a religion for me. I don't worship astrology and I don't worship through astrology'. Similarly Melanie Reinhart told me that,

astrology is not a religion in any formal sense because you know there isn't a church and there aren't a whole set of prescribed rituals and moral codes and hierarchy of officials and all the rest of it. So in that sense it is not a religion. But I do feel it can be if one wants to take it this way. It can be a very powerful accompaniment to one's spiritual path in the sense that it provides the reflection of - of not only oneself but life. And it can take you as deep as you want to go.

Reinhart's separation of spirituality and religion was echoed by Bob Mulligan. He told me that,

My spiritual practice is to love God and that influences everything that I do including anything in my personal life or professional life [including astrology]. Always in the back of my mind is that when I am talking to somebody that this person is a soul or a whole soul and that infinite intelligence is inside of them and if I can do anything that unleashes that infinite intelligence, the person knows what the right thing is about. There is an inherent embedded value system not so much in astrology as a technical discipline but in the cosmos. There is a moral order to the way that things happen. There is a moral equivalent of cause and effect. Creation sprang into existence for love to experience itself and souls go through creation for the development of consciousness so they can consciously experience that love that sums up the entire meaning of everything.

Glenn Perry elaborated on the religion-spirituality dichotomy, stating that,

religion [is] doctrine...ideology...embodied in various conventional, orthodox, positions...but spirituality... is an experience of the divine... a more mystical kind of participation in something numinous that you can experience through prayer or some other kind of spiritual discipline [or] meditation.

He went on to tell me how astrology is part of his spiritual practice and how,

when I think about the chart in a natal sense I think of it sort of as a set of instructions, a particular kind of fate, a character that I am which is reflected in the chart, which I believe is in some ways a meaningful consequence of whatever the history of my soul is. I believe in reincarnation so I think that the particular birth chart that I have in some way is purposeful and derives out of whatever actions and effects I have set in motion on the basis of my past lives. So in that regard it is kind of a growth model. It is a particular chart that is uniquely organised in such a way to maximize or actualise whatever it is that I need to further develop.

Of those who mentioned spirituality, only Robert Zoller was adamant that the separation of spirituality and religion resulted from a misunderstanding of the nature of both.

Views of God were primarily deist. For Ronnie Dreyer, God is 'a concept... something higher to aspire to'. For Perry God is 'a transcendent ineffable intelligent principle that orders the cosmos and regulates its affairs...It is the essence of all'.

Christianity

I then asked about attitudes to Christianity. The general response was that there is no necessary contradiction between astrology and Christianity. Neither was any hostility expressed towards Christianity, only to fundamentalism, and then unanimously because the fundamentalists were blamed for rejecting ideas which they do not understand. This position was espoused by Lee Lehman ('astrology was, was always understood by Christianity or Islam as being competitive'), and Rob Hand, who said that,

There is definitely a rivalry between astrology and their sort of religion for the very simply reason that their sort of religion is rival - rivals every alternate belief system.

Fundamentalist Christianity disbelieves actively in fundamentalist Judaism which disbelieves actively in fundamentalist Islam and if you go into a Christian bookstore in the States you will find, you will find treatises and books against Mormonism, against Jehovah's Witnesses, people you would think that they would be associated with. They despise all deviations from their own point of view with equal enthusiasm. Astrologers are simply one of the groups with which they disagree.

According to Ken Irving, 'if you are a fundamentalist, an evangelical Christian, there are competitors on every street corner'. Jonathan Cainer agreed: 'So religion doesn't like astrology in much the same way as religion doesn't like other religions. That's all. And astrology is, to some extent, a belief system'. For Jessica Adams the problem came down to a fundamental incompatibility between Christianity's (particularly Roman Catholicism's) social conservatism, for example on the abortion issue, and most astrologers' liberalism. Lynda Hill resented the Christian allegation that astrology is a 'crutch', arguing that it's the Catholic church that becomes the crutch, but pointed out that there are plenty of people who cross the Christianity-astrology divide. Robert Zoller, himself a Lutheran and very much influenced by the mystical tradition of Jacob Boehme, acknowledges Christian hostility to astrology but denies its theological basis and argues that the secular humanists are astrology's real enemies.

Perry distinguished the message of Christianity from the institution, arguing that,

If you can eliminate all the dogma and all the kind of political overlay of Christianity and just get down to the heart, the essence of what Christ embodied and represented, I think it is very interesting. I think that, you know, the story of Christ in and of itself is a wonderful model for striving to actualise one's spiritual attributes. But all the, you know, all the political overlay that occurred, the encrusted on the top of the religion is something that I don't have much patience with.

Sean Lovatt, whose general position is non-religious admitted that 'It is obvious some astrologers - I mean myself...don't have many good feelings about Christianity', but could see no reason for the rivalry: 'I would say that astrology, belief in astrology is fundamentally compatible with Christianity if you were to take the view that the

mechanism by which divine will is delivered to the earth is through the planets'. Greg Bogart took a more sympathetic view of religion, but from a theosophical perspective. He argued that 'one needs to adopt some kind of a religious viewpoint, whether it is Christian or not; but it has to do with the relationship of the individual with the creator, the Absolute, the source'. Von Strunckel, though, is unusual in being a member of a Christian church, but her belief exists within the context of her theosophical background. She told me that,

As it happens I go to Church. I mean my philosophy is very broad obviously. I would be as happy observing a Hindu approach, a Buddhist approach but in this life I was born as a Christian, but anyway, that's the Church I go to, which is very high Church of England' .

Rick Levine pointed out that astrology exists within Christianity: 'My short answer is this: if astrology is so threatening to Christianity, then why if Jesus only invited three people to his birth were they all astrologers?' Bernadette Brady relied on sun-as-god theory to argue that Christianity and astrology are,

the same inherently and in essence....The crisis comes from the, the delineation of the power base in mainstream Catholicism and the power structure and the need to control the thinking of the people within that framework...but actually at the essence Christ was a solar god who died at a solar eclipse, nailed to a cross of matter which we have in the middle of our [astrological birth] charts.

Rick Tarnas argued that the problem exists on both sides: astrology's Christian critics are ignorant of its nature while astrologers themselves still carry 'archaic memories of the deterministic fatalism of the late Hellenistic, late Classical period'. He sees a positive future though,

I think, well understood, Christianity will actually see astrology as being a profoundly ally in Christianity's deeper mission, which is to mediate the incarnational transformation of the divine, of the human being and the cosmos. Astrology can profoundly support that motive or mission that is essential I think to the Christian vision.

When I asked about the religious affiliation of clients, Melanie Reinhart told me that there is no pattern, and that her clients are from all affiliations: atheist, pagan, New Age, Buddhist and Christian.

Astrology as New Age

There was a universal hostility to the definition of astrology as New Age partly because, as Liz Greene said, astrology can't be New Age because it is old. Jonathan Cainer asked,

Well how can it be new age? It is as old age as they bloody get. It is a bit of a funny one that, isn't it? Hey, we know that astrology is older than Christianity so how come it is suddenly New Age?

Greg Bogart accepted though, that, although astrology is old, it is a characteristic of New Age culture to revive old systems of thought. Some even doubt that New Age exists. For Liz Greene it's a 'buzz word' and, for Rick Tarnas, a phenomenon which has become too easy to 'caricature'. Ken Irving claimed that,

I don't think there is any such thing as a New Age system. The New Age is just a ragbag of things that people believe or things that people like or things that are fun to believe...New Age as you will find it commercially, things sold as 'New Age'. If you go into a bookstore nowadays, instead of having an astrology section or a this section, they will have New Age and everything semi-weird goes in the New Age section. It is just a rag bag.

He also identified a hostility to astrology from within a certain quarter of New Age culture.

But there are people, particularly I think in America, there is this class of these sort of - Ken Wilbur types with these PhDs and minds and this very, this sort of sixties babyboomer attitude towards life and the universe and they have developed something which I would call New Age just totally apart from that. Those people don't seem to like astrology at all. They consider astrology as a wretched subject.

Sean Lovatt, was likewise cynical about New Age. He said that,

There is a particular danger and a particularly strange relationship between New Age philosophy and astrology that I personally don't understand but most astrologers would probably, I think, align themselves with a perceived rebirth of spirituality in our culture which they may describe as the Age of Aquarius, as it often is. I don't

necessarily believe that but New Ageism is really a religion. It is a religion without a formal structure. It is a religion because there are certain tenets that are held by a significant proportion of New Age followers.

Jonathan Cainer confirmed the distinction between New Age and astrology: just because New Agers do astrology doesn't mean astrology is New Age. For Liz Greene, New Age is no better than any other sort of religious authority. She said that,

I have always liked John Cooper Powys' line that the devil is any god who requires exact obedience. I think that any authority, whether it is New Age spiritual in the form of a guru, or orthodox religious in the form of the Pope, or scientific in the form of a high-powered academic, or political, that's when we start giving away our capacity to discriminate.

Lee Lehman also took a sceptical line, arguing that,

If astrology ever becomes an exclusively New Age discipline we are in deep doodoo...Because first of all the New Age movement is merely this particular New Age movement, because both you and I know perfectly well there have been multiple New Age movements historically, and you simply call the one of your current era the new one because you are part of it. So this is actually expressing a cyclic phenomenon.

A similar scepticism was expressed about the idea of the Age of Aquarius. The reality of precession is accepted by all (although Perry found it astrologically irrelevant) but only in the sense that, as Bob Mulligan commented, it means another stage in an ongoing process of change.

According to an anonymous interviewee (020),

this precessional age thing is so vague, the timing, as you point out, is so vague, and also I don't believe though in astrology there is a big change. Today is one age, tomorrow is another age. We are moving from one to another anyway over hundreds of years timescale. So I think the whole idea of that is not a useful analysis content. We should just do today.

Rick Levine spoke about it, like the New Age, as 'a PR guy's dream. It's perfect. It is just what we need to promote what we are doing'. Reinhart considered that the Aquarian Age might be a helpful model, arguing that,

perhaps the Age of Aquarius and its incoming energy help people to understand the world from a point of view that is congruent with the discipline of astrology. That's how I would understand it. The other manifestations of change, you know like the computer age and the shift in New Physics and all that, they are all part of the same thing in a way that sort of loosens up people's mental framework sufficiently so that they can - they have a context.

Liz Greene elaborated the same point, arguing that,

It could be and that may have more to do with our potentials rather than with some grand design or evolution. But it is a bit like a human life. By the time you get to a certain age, your experiences are beginning to have become cyclical and you start recognising that you have been in that sitting room before. That could actually produce something better in terms of wisdom or in terms of navigating things better or handling them more creatively, or it may just make people bitter and make them more destructive because they get frenzied when they realise they have been there before. I think there is potentially a genuine evolution possible, but I don't think that it's a given and I am not at all convinced that it is a plan. It is something that we could actually do ourselves if we are intelligent enough to manage it.

Interviews with Clients

Melanie Reinhart mentioned to me that a few of her clients were priests and nuns. In order for me to pursue the question of whether Christianity and astrology are necessarily opposed Melanie agreed to put me in touch with some of her clients. I spoke to two, Diana Grace Jones and Mary Jo Radcliffe. Both are involved in the Guild for Pastoral Psychology, the London-based organisation which treats Jungian psychology in a spiritual context.

Diana appreciates the fact that Melanie herself has a spiritual practice and visits her periodically, perhaps every few years, when she feels that she needs an outside voice to put her life into context. I asked Diana about her Christian practice:

I would say that for me the Christian myth still informs my, my sense of ritual and what I enjoy in ritual and my sense of worship...I find the Eucharist really gives me a

sense of mystery...I go to a Church which is fairly High Church of England but not really high, high, high. But I also go to a Christian monastery where it is Anglican and it is monks and nuns. An experimental community and I go there because...there is more an inner sense of meditation...I have found a few fellow travellers in the Church, yes. And it is difficult...I am not a very good congregant member of the Church, nor would I just in general congregation go to Bible reading classes or whatever. I study, if I do, the Bible either with Rabbis who have been some fellow travellers or with people - but I still often can't find people - I would like to study the Gospel more but I can't find too many fellow travellers who don't, when it comes really down to the nitty gritty, interpret the gospels at some level very literally. There was the Bishop of Durham who tried to say, didn't he, that you know you didn't have to believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ and practically got hounded out of the Church.

Mary Jo Radcliffe had been a Roman Catholic nun for twenty-five years before leaving her order and discovering the Guild. Mary Jo retains her Catholic faith but meets privately with friends for the eucharist rather than attending a church. Her testimony describes her current vision, a theology reintegrated with a cosmology in which all parts of the universe are interdependent.

I spent twenty five years in a Roman Catholic convent and had a breakdown and left and the challenge was there, how do I come to terms with giving up my vows? Because that for me felt the most awful thing to have to do. So that confronted me with putting into question everything that I thought I believed in and um I needed then a new language for my spirituality, for my Christianity and for my understanding of what life was for and about. And so I began to wonder how I could deal with this and the first language that made sense was psychology because I met a therapist who helped me. And the second language I met which was cosmology which was linked very much to astrology...I began to get an understanding of the inter-connectedness of all things. If that is really the case, then I must be affected by how and what is going on in the universe. I can't be just a little separate person which I thought before. Then I began to feel a huge affinity to the Moon and believe that the cycles of the Moon must have something to do with who I am and then I bumped into Melanie in the Guild of Pastoral Psychology and...I knew she had something that I needed, not that I was quite clear what that was or why that was. And my first session with her was an extraordinary experience of her saying things that I would hardly have dared say yet I knew were true and how she presented how I might be was totally true, and that really won me.

I work with clients now and a lot of it is that we all have this unique, very special contribution to make to the universe now, not just as a preparation for hereafter, whatever hereafter might mean. So the context is huge and yet tiny at the same time. Everybody's contribution is minute, is my belief, but it's in this huge picture of the stars and the galaxies and the planets and the earth and our planet and in us in our tiny way and if I don't do it, nobody will do my bit for me. I remember realising that for the first time and being quite awed by what that might mean. In that sense, at the time I'm born and what is happening in the planetary world when I am born makes a difference. That's how I would make the big picture important.

Conclusion

It is clear from both Diana and Mary Jo's testimony that their Christianity is deep but their relationship with the church is uncomfortable in Diana's case and non-existent for Mary Jo. They both use astrology for purely pragmatic purposes; because it is useful, and neither can see any theological reason why the church should condemn it. The issue for them would seem to be the church's exclusivity; that, with no real justification, it rejects a practice which has helped them both. The rivalry between the church and astrology therefore originates with the church, not with astrology.

Chapter Summary

Certain strong patterns emerged from the interviews. Religious eclecticism was notable, though with a preference for spirituality above religion. There was a pronounced move away from Christianity, though not a rejection of it. Rather there was a rejection of the church, but with a sense that the church had begun the process by ignorantly rejecting astrology and failing to offer the wisdom and self-understanding available from other religions or spiritualities. A few interviewees, though, maintained a Christian affiliation if they felt they would experience a sympathetic welcome or supportive theological context. Opposition to the notion of astrology as a New Age discipline, scepticism about the Aquarian Age's apocalyptic associations and hostility to the definition of astrology as a religion were almost universal, to a much stronger degree than was found in the questionnaires (chapter 12). To put these conclusions into context, it has been argued in chapter 6 that the range of expressions of religious or spiritual attitudes expressed in these interviews are New Age, emerging from astrology's encounter with theosophy. The rejection of New Age as a label, though, goes to the heart of whether contemporary New Age culture is any more than an 'emblem' or 'etic formulation', as discussed in chapter 6, and parallels emic opposition to the label from other groups which are subjected to the etic label, New Age.

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

Chapter 14

Conclusion

Introduction

In this thesis I have considered four main questions set out in chapter 1.

Firstly whether astrology is a New Age discipline and, following from this, what is its relationship with millenarianism?

Secondly whether, if astrology is New Age discipline, it is incompatible with Christianity.

Thirdly, whether quantification of belief in astrology is possible.

Fourthly, whether astrology's continued existence represents the anachronistic survival of a pre-modern superstition in the modern world.

As belief in astrology is the central issue, the main concern has been with perceptions of astrology's nature and purpose rather than with the truth of its claims. Evidence has been drawn from the literature, both etic and emic, from questionnaires distributed to selected groups of the public and astrologers, and from interviews with astrologers.

The starting point for discussion throughout has been the existing body of literature, primarily sociological and historical works. However, as Hill (1979: 6) observed, all academic disciplines 'which pursue the goal of a rigorous and systematic investigation of the empirical world sooner or later come up against the "pure" and "applied"

dichotomy' (Hill 1973: 6). Some of the historical texts which have been consulted, such as Garin (1976) and Thomas (1980) deal with what astrologers did, although not to the extent advocated by Geneva (1995). Those sociological works which refer to contemporary astrology tend to ignore the actual theory and practice of modern astrologers and assume *a priori* that astrology should be categorised as a religion, new religious movement, New Age discipline or superstition, and that its claims are false. It is also assumed that astrology can be treated as a single entity, as if all astrologers think the same and work according to a single code. Yet astrology is, like any other discipline, marked as much by its diversity as by its uniformity. As David Hufford (1987: 27) remarked when arguing that belief cannot be considered in isolation from disbelief, 'we must be prepared to tolerate some theoretical uncertainty and even dissonance while we develop a comfortable theoretical consistency primarily by selectively avoiding pertinent information and by forcing that information into appropriate, preconceived patterns'. In this respect Festinger's (1968) notion of cognitive dissonance removes the need to look for consistency of thought or practice amongst astrologers any more than within any other discipline. The goal, as Primino (1995: 41) advocated, has been to 'do justice to belief and lived experience'.

The Nature of Belief

Definitions of belief were discussed in chapter 8, in which it was noted that the word frequently carries pejorative overtones, the result of which is to distort research into the extent of belief. For this reason the very notion of belief in astrology amongst both astrology's detractors and its supporters is bound up with the view that astrology is necessarily false. However, if the word's core meaning, 'to have confidence', is taken as the principal definition, then the issue becomes one of confidence in astrology. But, in view of the diversity of astrological claims, which aspect of astrology might any believer have confidence in? As was discussed in chapters 6, 7, 12 and 13, there are sharply polarised differences of view amongst professionals and students of astrology

concerning, for example, the use of astrology for prediction as opposed to counselling, or the value of sun-sign columns as against the interpretation of the individual birth chart. Additionally, as was found in chapter 11, lay attitudes to astrology can be shown to be inconsistent, once the nature of the questions asked is modified.

The Extent of Belief in Astrology

In chapters 9 and 10 it was argued that quantifying belief in astrology is a deeply problematic exercise, in that questions worded in different ways result in wildly differing figures. It was argued, therefore, that simple yes/no answers of the type favoured by the Gallup polls are unreliable and the majority of sociological discussions of astrology which rely on such figures, are therefore flawed. The results reported in chapter 11 indicate that, when the wording of questions changes, figures for belief in astrology may increase from around 20% to almost 70%. Further, if attitudes to different types of astrological claim are inconsistent, research which posits a simple linear scale moving from disbelief to belief, such as Paulik and Buse (1984) and Bauer and Durant (1996), may disguise a more complex picture, in which individuals may pick and choose which of astrology's claims they have confidence in. In addition, as discussed in chapters 11 and 12, there seems no reason why individuals who read a horoscope column once a month because the astrologer they read is only published monthly, may not believe more intensely than another who visits an astrologer, takes an astrology course or attends a conference, yet actually denies belief in astrology. My thesis therefore supports the doubts expressed by Davie (1994: 45), Shiels and Berg (1977: 27) and Hill (1979: 14) in relation to attempts to quantify belief based on outward behaviour or institutional affiliation. Attempts to derive a single figure for belief in astrology may therefore lack credibility and it may well be that measures based on behaviour, such as readership of horoscope columns, or opinion, such as whether it can predict the future, be left as they are, rather than be converted into scales of belief. From a phenomenological perspective the primary measure of belief should be based on

individual testimony and, even then, as discussed in chapters 8, 11 and 12, individuals tend to answer such questions in the context of widespread pejorative associations with the meaning of belief.

In chapters 10 and 11 the popular assumption that belief in astrology is increasing was examined and it was argued that it is difficult to demonstrate that this is the case. Quite simply the source data do not suggest an increase in belief in astrology in recent decades. In addition the continuation of a tradition of popular astrology from the seventeenth to nineteenth-centuries suggests that belief in astrology never actually died out following the scientific revolution. The popularity of newspaper astrology columns after 1930 may therefore be a symptom of belief in astrology, rather than a cause of it. As Howe (1967: 66) points out, the response to R.H. Naylor's article on Princess Margaret in 1930 was immediate. This suggests that, rather than creating an interest in astrology as Bok (1941: 237-9) implies, the new sun-sign columns catered to an existing interest, one which can be traced back to the nineteenth-century and earlier. Modern popular astrology may therefore be seen as a part of what Grace Davie has identified as the 'common religion' of Britain' (Davie 1994: 77), one which has direct and continuous links with the seventeenth-century and hence with early-modern Britain.

Reasons for Belief in Astrology

Chapter 8 discussed the reasons for belief in astrology given in the sociological literature. These reasons are generally based on the assumption that from a positivist perspective, not only are astrology's claims false, but this information is so widely available that belief in astrology must result either from psychological inadequacy or from social marginality in the sense of poverty, low educational attainment or membership of an ethnic minority. One response to the positivist position is the argument that, in a context of epistemological pluralism there are domains of human experience and knowledge which lie outside the territory of modern science. However,

as noted in chapter 8, for the current discussion it is perhaps more important to point out that there is in the public domain literature which accepts the right of contemporary science to comment on astrology and which both details positive scientific evidence for astrology and criticises the scientific attitude which attacks astrology. For the purposes of the present discussion it is not necessary to comment on the veracity of that work, only to observe that it exists, and therefore that explanations for belief in astrology based on its obvious falsity are themselves derived from a false premise.

It is apparent, both from questionnaire results and interviews, that the vast majority of those who attend astrology conferences do so because their interest was stimulated by a personal experience which showed them that astrology worked. These findings confirm Dean, Kelly and Mather's (1996: 86-88) claim that belief in astrology arises mainly either from reading astrology books or visiting an astrologer, although frequently it is a social acquaintance who provides the chart reading rather than a professional. As Richard Gregory (1998: 50) observed, 'Anyone who has taken even the most casual interest in astrology will have noticed that, contrary to all common sense, it seems to work'. The argument that the experience that astrology works is the result of psychological flaws is supported by some findings, but contradicted by others, so should be regarded both as unproven and, in any case, no more applicable to astrology than any other world-view in which the layperson has to take a great deal of the literature on trust. In this respect Barrett's (2001: 337) views on magic are relevant: 'Does magic actually work? The short answer has to be "Yes", so far as those who use it are concerned. Whether a sceptical observer could be persuaded is another matter, and is perhaps irrelevant. If someone believes that magic works, then magic does work'. The issue of whether particular knowledge skills are required to understand what 'works' is less important in this context than the individual experience that it 'works'.

A suitable model for belief in astrology is therefore Stark and Bainbridge's 'rational choice theory' in which the believer, far from being the victim of a delusion, makes a reasonable choice as to what sort of belief system will most adequately provide a meaningful framework for comprehending their place in the cosmos.

Astrology as a New Age Discipline

Astrology's possible identity as a New Age discipline was discussed in chapter 6 and 7. The function of New Age astrology, it was argued, is primarily to facilitate spiritual development, enhance self-understanding and encourage both personal and collective transformation. For Rudhyar the purpose was to maintain political order and assist in a smooth transit to the New Age. Astrology in this respect conforms to Popper's historicist/activist model described in chapter 1. Using Hanegraaff's (1996) typology, New Age astrology *sensu-stricto* was distinguished from New Age astrology *sensu-lato*, the former being more esoteric and millenarian, the latter more concerned with psychological dynamics. The distinctions may not always be clearly defined though, and individual psychological astrologers may be motivated by millenarian confidence that the Age of Aquarius is about to begin. A development from both forms of astrology is sun-sign astrology, which may be considered New Age *sensu-lato* by virtue of the absence of any requirement for millenarian belief.

The question of the New Age as a movement was discussed in chapter 6 and it was noted that there can be many movements, described as networks or through 'family relationships'. In this sense the network of astrologers who follow Leo and Rudhyar's ideas closely may constitute a New Age movement although astrology is diverse enough and the boundaries between its different schools sufficiently fluid to suggest that the family relationships' model may be most appropriate.

The Appeal of Astrology: the pursuit of meaning

In chapter 12 it was found that more astrologers declared that their lives had become 'more meaningful' as a consequence of their use of astrology than any other option. Holden (2001: 15) suggests that believers in astrology may indeed be 'motivated by a greater need for self-knowledge' than non-believers. As discussed in chapter 9, astrology's function as a means of providing a sense of meaning and to connect humanity with the divine, particularly in the context of the current historical crisis, is the foundation of contemporary psychological astrology, especially when it is closely linked to psychoanalysis, psychotherapy or counselling (Sasportas 1989a: 3). 'Meaning', wrote Greene and Sasportas (1987: xi-xiii), 'is essential for life'. When life is devoid of meaning they add, the very psychological problems may develop which are typically those that, in turn, prompt clients to visit astrologers. Such statements, born of the evolutionary spirituality of theosophy, contain a profound parallel with contemporary evolutionary psychology (see for example Pinker 1997: 24-5, 329-30). In an interview in 1999 the evolutionary psychologist Stephen Pinker claimed that 'We have meaning and purpose here inside our heads, being the organisms that we are. We have brains that make it impossible for us to live our lives except in terms of meaning and purpose' (Douglas 1999: 6). Similarly, Krupp's (2000: 43-4) statement that the projection of order and meaning on to the heavens originated as a necessary survival tool further opens the way to an understanding of astrology as, in Pinker's terms, one of a number of systems which may be essential for an ordered life. Astrology may fulfil this purpose. Other systems may fulfil it. But if every single human requires some such system, and the need is fundamental to human existence, the argument (discussed in chapter 8) that astrology appeals particularly to people who are psychologically inadequate or socially deviant in a way in which other models do not, may be questioned.

There may be many systems which may provide meaning in life. Robert Wuthnow (1976: 3; see also 58-81) defined four meaning-systems in 1970s America, distinguished from each other by 'what they identify as the primary force governing

life', though they are not mutually exclusive: (1) theism, or mainstream religion, in which God watches over and cares for each person; (2) individualism, in which the individual is in charge of his own destiny; (3) social science, in which life is shaped by social forces such as family and class; (4) mysticism.

The essence of a meaning-system, Wuthnow argued, is the manner in which it enables consciousness to construct reality out of symbols and experience, selecting those features of the environment which can be organised into a coherent model (Wuthnow 1976: 60-1). Even the mystic's claim to transcendence and timelessness, he argues, does not exist without the distinctions that an organising concept such as time makes possible (Wuthnow 1976: 62). Further, the organisation of the 'everyday reality...of time and space' into measurable units of time permits action (Wuthnow 1976: 66). Wuthnow's model provides a plausible explanatory hypothesis for the effectiveness of astrology's role in providing the timing mechanism for the coming of the New Age as a historical period; and in galvanising those participants in the New Age culture *sensu stricto* into Popperian activism, the need to participate freely and willingly as an individual in the inevitable historical process. Wuthnow also comments that material which cannot be assimilated into 'everyday reality', and which is usually dismissed as 'a subordinate kind of experience', may be revalued as a 'structured mystery' or 'a symbolic expression of wholeness and transcendence' (Wuthnow 1976: 69, 73); a suitable description of Leo and Rudhyar's New Age astrology.

Wuthnow's concept of the 'meaning-system' may be equated with Glock and Stark's 'value orientation' or 'perspective realm' (1966: 10-11) or Glock's 'alternative reality' (1976: 365). Such phrases may describe more accurately astrologers' own profound resistance to the description of astrology as a religion discussed in chapter 12. Luckmann's concept of 'symbolic universes' is also a useful one. These he defined as 'socially objectivated systems of meaning that refer, on the one hand, to the world of

everyday life and, on the other, to a world that is experienced as transcending everyday life' (Luckmann 1967: 43). Within this model, the transcendent content of New Age astrology *sensu stricto* may be 'objectivated' in organisations such as the Lucis Trust, Rudhyar's International Committee of Humanistic Astrology (Rudhyar 1970: xi), or the original Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society, founded by Alan Leo in 1915 (Campion 1988). The New Age *sensu lato* may be represented in the Lodge's later existence as the Astrological Lodge of London, which was formally constituted in 1982, or in the Astrological Association (although, as noted in chapters 5 and 6, those organisations may also contain explicitly anti-new age elements).

Astrology as a Religion

As discussed in chapter 9, astrology is often categorised as a religion. It was also observed, though, that definitions of what constitutes a religion are many and varied. Neither do such arguments recognise the diversity of astrology. In chapter 1 it was noted that there is a profound difference between astrologers who forecast financial futures or the outcome of sporting contests, on the one hand, and those who may be counselling clients or pursuing their own spiritual development on the other. For current purposes I am considering only the latter forms of astrology, together with sun-sign horoscopes and sun-sign delineations, those varieties of astrology which I have classified as New Age.

It is clear that in this sense astrology does not conform to exclusivist definitions of religion. It has no organised church, set of dogma or priestly hierarchy in the sense required by Durkheim. Neither does it have a moral code. However, esoteric astrology, as developed by Leo and Rudhyar, does posit the existence of supernatural beings, although there is no personal creator. It may therefore correspond to Tylor's key requirement of a religion: belief in supernatural beings. Leo certainly predicted that astrology was to be the religion of the twentieth-century, and the millenarian New Age

astrology *sensu stricto* of Leo and Rudhyar may, therefore, be legitimately considered religious. However, there is no place for supernatural beings in those forms of psychological astrology, as pioneered by Arroyo and Greene, which have become detached from their esoteric roots. The same point may be made of sun-sign delineation and forecasting. It is inevitable that inclusivist definitions of religion may encompass other forms of astrology just as they include science and Marxism. Michael York (1995b: 107) defined religion as the 'shared positing of the identity of any relationship between humanity, the world and the supernatural in terms of meaning assignment, value allocation and validating enactment'. Here, again, problems of definition are encountered. Astrology takes no consistent position on the supernatural. Indeed, some explanations of it are entirely naturalistic (see for example Seymour 1990). However, if it is considered that astrology's explanatory models, such as synchronicity (Jung 1971), are beyond natural explanation then they are by definition 'super-natural', and astrology may be a religion, along with Marxism and scientism, which also take explicit positions in relation to the supernatural. In that case astrology may also be described as hidden (Yinger 1969: 90) or invisible (Luckman 1967) religion; one generally not recognised or respected by other religions. It may also be considered what Hill (1973: 247) defined as a 'God of the Gaps'; that is, one of many popular responses to the 'disenchantment', or the loss of sacred character, which is characteristic of the modern world.

Astrology as a Popular Religion

However, there is an alternative approach that bypasses those exclusivist definitions which tend to see Christianity as normative and which insist that religion requires supernatural dogma and institutional hierarchies. Using this approach astrology may be regarded as a series of 'perspective realms', 'meaning systems' or 'symbolic universes' which flourish at a popular level but are not officially recognised. Indeed they may be widely condemned, as was discussed in chapters 4 and 9, or subject to official restriction, as was noted in chapter 1 in the case of the ITC code. Thus Lewis (1990:

Introduction), described astrology's survival until modern times as being 'at the level of 'folk religion'. This relates to what, in turn Grace Davie has identified as the "common religion" of Britain' (Davie 1994: 77), as opposed to what Hornsby-Smith (1991) referred to in the title of his study of modern English Catholics as 'customary', that is, traditional mainstream religion. Davie considered the diversity of 'common religion' which

at one end of the spectrum...[has] some link to Christian teaching,...[and at] the other...is extremely diverse...ranging through a wide range of heterodox ideas; for example...healing, the paranormal, fortune telling, fate and destiny, life after death, ghosts, spiritual experiences, prayer and meditation, luck and superstition (Davie 1994: 83).

Popular astrology may also reasonably be added to this list. Davie herself observes that these beliefs and practices are now generally included within the overall category of New Age, the popularity of which counters the proposition that Britain is becoming more secular. An alternative to the terms 'folk' and 'popular' religion is 'vernacular' religion (Primiano 1994), which Bowman and Sutcliffe (2000:6) follow Yoder (1974: 14) in defining as 'the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from, and alongside, the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion'. They include New Age culture as a sub-type of 'popular religion' and add that,

If social religion [is] defined as religion founded on authoritative documents and propagated by religious specialists, priests or hierarchy, then the term 'popular' can apply to any layperson, whether peasant or ruling-class, who adopts beliefs and practices which may be at odds with the religious specialist's views (Bowman and Sutcliffe 2003: 11).

However, as reported in chapter 12, the overwhelming majority of astrologers are keen to remove astrology from the religious sphere, while supporting the definition of astrology as a spiritual path. In relation to this problem Bowman and Sutcliffe wrote (2000: 5), 'That converts to belief systems as varied as Buddhism, Islam, and Paganism consistently say "It's not a religion, it's a way of life" speaks volumes about a

previously impoverished understanding of what "religion" is'. It may therefore be argued that astrologers' attitudes to the word religion are both 'impoverished' and as influenced as are their responses to the term belief by negative cultural associations. Such negative attitudes amongst astrologers are evident in the literature on the Age of Aquarius in which, as reported in chapters 5 and 9, there is an overwhelming assumption that the traditional religion of the Christian church is oppressive and is to be overthrown when the Age of Aquarius begins. Astrologers' general resistance to the definition of astrology as religion is, as the Aquarian Age literature demonstrates, itself based on an understanding of Christianity as normative. This assumption, as Smart (1973a: 10, 34-5) noted, was shared by much of the literature on sociology of religion. In addition, astrologers' overwhelmingly pragmatic, rational justifications for their interest in astrology, as noted in chapter 12, may be seen both as an attempt to locate a place for astrology outside religion, and as a rhetorical answer to astrology's scientific and religious critics' etic definitions of astrology as 'superstition', 'substitute religion' or 'alternative belief'. However, if Christianity is no longer regarded as normative and inclusivist definitions are accepted then it may be argued that astrology is a vernacular religion.

I am aware that this definition may be taken out of context by those positivists whose *a priori* assumption is that, if all religion is false then the definition of astrology as a religion must indicate that its claims too, are automatically false. Following Herbrechtsmeier's (1993: 1) discussion of the emic-etic problems raised when Buddhism is defined as a religion in the face of opposition from its western adherents, I am also aware of the issues raised by my challenging the emic position taken by astrologers. Yet, if astrology is a religion within York's (1995: 197) inclusivist model, as discussed in chapter 9, then it is in no different a position to those ideologies which are most hostile to it; that is, evangelical Christianity and sceptical scientism.

This conclusion brings my own emic position, discussed in chapter 1, into sharp relief. At the beginning of my research process I resisted the definition of astrology as New Age and, like the majority of my respondents and interviewees, I was generally hostile to definitions of astrology as a religion, although it was clear from a historical that it may be an adjunct to religious practice. My conclusion, then, that much astrology may be defined as both a 'common', 'vernacular' or 'folk' religion and as New Age, runs contrary to my original assumption. I should make it clear, though, that I am not including in this definition 'natural' astrology as defined in chapter 1. I am therefore not considering any astrology, whether natal or mundane, the rationale for which is derived primarily from the concept of physical relationships between humanity and the cosmos, and which is not based on the complex procedures of horoscope interpretation (see for example, Gauquelin 1982, 1988, 1991; Seymour 1990). As discussed in chapter 1, the boundaries between judicial and natural astrology are not watertight and may overlap, but the distinction is one which has to be recalled whenever conclusions are reached about what astrology as a whole is or is not: all such conclusions refer only to a part of the phenomenon of astrology. My definition of astrology as New Age or as a form of religion therefore applies particularly to popular newspaper and magazine astrology and those applications of astrology to spirituality, psychology or counselling in large part derived from, or inspired by, theosophy.

Lastly, in that my surveys indicate that the typical profile of an astrologer is a very high regard for spirituality yet a low rate of attendance at group religious or spiritual events, I have found support for the theory of 'privatisation', discussed in chapter 8.

Astrology and Christianity

The question is raised, then, as to whether astrology, as a New Age discipline, is a rival to Christianity. In chapters 4, 8 and 9 it was observed that there were two schools of thought within theosophy after the 1890s, the 'eastern' and the 'western'. The former was

truer to Blavatsky's profound hostility to the Christian church but the latter, inspired by traditions of esoteric Christianity, emphasised Blavatsky's gnosticism and respect for Christ as a great teacher. Most of the Aquarian Age and New Age literature forecasts the collapse of traditional church structures yet, for astrologers such as Rudhyar, influenced by the two most prominent westerners, Bailey and Steiner, the coming of the New Age will bring a reform of Christianity rather than its destruction. According to this account, and true to the tradition of Swedenborgianism, the *parousia* will not take place as Christ's literal return, but as the triumph of 'Christ-consciousness' within every human being. It is this essentially humanistic Christianity which alarms astrology's evangelical Christian critics. It is arguable, therefore, that, while, as found in chapters 12 and 13, there is clear antipathy from astrologers to the established institutions both of the church and mainstream Christianity, the rivalry between the two may be seen within the broader historical context as a revival of the two thousand year old clash between two Christianities, Gnostic and Catholic.¹

Millenarianism

In chapters 2, 3, 5 and 6, the widespread assumption that New Age culture is millenarian was considered and the discussion was expanded into the question of the long-established use of astrology as an adjunct to, and often as a central component of, millenarian prophecy. Astrological historiography is clearly, according to Collingwood's categorisation (see chapter 1) 'substantialist'. Like Marxism, its substantialism is derived from neo-Platonism. Karl Popper's model of historicism and activism was identified as a rationale according to which astrology's use as a decision-making tool may be justified within the context of a broadly predetermined historical pattern. Following on from the conclusion that astrology is New Age, New Age astrology *sensu stricto* may be described as overtly millenarian, while the position regarding New Age astrology *sensu lato* may be more nuanced. Psychological astrology, which I have classified generally as New Age *sensu lato*, may be heavily

influenced by Jung's historicist framework, as discussed in chapter 3, and defined as millenarian, even though this blurs the distinctions, central to Hanegraaff's typology, between the two forms of New Age. Yet, while sun-sign forecasts have, as was argued in chapter 7, developed out of Leo's astrology, it is enough to say that they have therefore arisen from a millenarian context, but do not in themselves require any sort of millenarian belief.

Popper's historicist/activist model as applied to millenarianism also permits discussion of astrology's potential function. As an activist discipline its purpose may be to encourage individual decision making within a framework which posits that the future both has a purpose and that, at least for New Age astrology *sensu stricto*, it is bound to represent an improvement over the present. As Hall argued (2000: 7), 'When fully manifest, whatever their contents, apocalyptic narratives work against the grain of existing social orders. They hold the power to reorganise cultural meanings'. Williams (1996: 377), meanwhile, claimed that religion provides a source and shape for ideology and culture, and hence for social movements. In turn, social experimentation, Wuthnow (1976: 203) claimed, has a strategic social value in encouraging innovation. Astrology, with its dual historicist/activist emphasis on personal responsibility within a much greater context, in which individual character and destiny is linked to the changing qualities of time and the heavens, may then, as York suggests (2003), be not only the lingua franca of the New Age but a key organising philosophy of it. However, in view of Irving's point, noticed in chapter 13, that there are some intellectual 'New Agers' who are deeply hostile to astrology, astrology should be called *a*, not *the*, organising principle.

The cultural context of astrology may therefore be considered in relation to other contemporary 'millenarianisms'. The hostility expressed by evangelical Christians to astrology may be seen as an objection to New Age views of the *parousia*, particularly

the rejection of the second coming as a literal event, while Aquarian Age literature, on the other hand, regards the established church as a failed symptom of the Piscean Age. Hostility to astrology from secular quarters may also be seen as a clash between different views of the future. For example, in chapters 2 and 8 it was argued that the positivist world-view has adopted the evolutionist theory of religion; that this is in turn a manifestation of the theory of progress and that, following Bury (1932: 1-36) and Baillie (1951: 64-5), belief in progress may consequently be defined as a modern species of millenarianism. In addition, elsewhere I have argued that positivism itself originated in the millenarian thought of August Comte (Campion 1994: 429-434). Popper (1986: 12-13) argued on similar lines, pointing out that the emphasis on prediction in the social sciences may be interpreted as a variety of historicism. Positivism's hostility to New Age astrology may therefore be based on its competing views of evolution and humanity's future development. Christian, New Age and positivist models of history may all, therefore be forms of what Collingwood (1946: 14-15, 18) defined as quasi-history; each has its own prophecy of the future to champion and proceeds partly by attacking its rivals. This clash of millenarianisms may itself be a feature of modernity. As Baldwin *et al.* (1999: 155-6) argued,

it is one of the great paradoxes of modernity that, on the one hand, time is organised according to an objective, scientific model, and, on the other, everyday life fragments into multiple cultures of time. This is perhaps explained by the revolutionary nature of modernity, which sweeps away old orders in the name of the new, but which is constantly creating new forms of culture which contest a single, normative standard.

Detraditionalisation and Modernism

Although astrology's roots lie in second and third-millennium BCE Mesopotamia and, although it had acquired its current technical basis by the first-century BCE, I have

argued that much of modern astrology, including psychological astrology, esoteric astrology, sun-sign columns and Aquarian Age historicism, is the result of innovations which took place from the 1890s onwards. Comparison may thus be made with Eric Hobsbawm's (1983) study of the invention of historical traditions and Ronald Hutton's (1999) argument that contemporary pagan witchcraft is essentially a creation of the modern world. Both demonstrate that apparently antique beliefs can be of recent origin. They are, as Heelas argues of New Age astrology, 'detraditionalised'. There is no contradiction between this argument and the claim that astrology is part of the common religion of Britain, for the former refers to the form that it takes, the latter to traditions of belief in it.

The question arises then, as to whether astrology's survival in the modern world is anachronistic. This question was addressed in chapters 8 and 9 by challenging the positivist argument that 'belief' as a whole, and hence belief in astrology, is itself anachronistic. The argument is fundamentally an epistemological one and concerns the issue of who has the right to pronounce on matters of truth. The positivist view that only modern science can make such declarations was shown to be deeply flawed. In chapter 10 I argued that contemporary popular astrology should be understood in terms of continuity with the early-modern period, the seventeenth-century, rather than a revival of a lost tradition. In this sense then, popular astrology is a defining condition of the vernacular modern world-view rather than an eruption into it of a extinct superstition.

Moreover, as Bennett (1987: 24-5) argued, the notion that astrology's existence in the modern world is somehow incompatible with post-Enlightenment rationalism is based on a misunderstanding of popular belief. In the sense that New Age astrology is a peculiarly twentieth-century innovation then, following Hanegraaff's (1996) arguments on New Age culture's intellectual lineage, it may be seen in part as a product of

Enlightenment secularisation. Bauer and Durant (1997: 55) concluded that astrology is 'part and parcel of late modernity', while Patrick Curry took a similar line, writing of the esoteric and psychological astrology which was developed at the beginning of the twentieth-century that, 'Far from being an irrational aberration, the new occult astrology was perfectly suited to the capitalism and individualism of the age' (Curry 1992: 132). As Bowman and Sutcliffe (2000 : 11) wrote of New Age culture, the 'alternative' may be now better seen as 'mainstream'. Astrology exists within a view of modernity in which religion and spirituality are not dying out, as traditional secularisation theory claims, but diversifying. Its survival in the twenty-first century is therefore not an anomaly to be explained, but an aspect of the modern world to be examined on its own terms.

Notes

¹ By Catholic I mean that form of Christianity whose dogma was outlined at the Council of Nicaea in 325 and subsequent church councils, accepting the doctrine of the trinity and Christ's divine/human status. See Goring 1992: 90. 370.

Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology

Appendices

Appendix 1

Public Awareness of Astrology Questionnaire with Explanatory Notes

AWARENESS OF ASTROLOGY QUESTIONNAIRE

**Nick Campion, Study of Religions Department,
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This questionnaire is designed to explore people's opinions about astrology as part of a larger survey being conducted at Bath Spa University College. Your help would be very much appreciated. Please answer as quickly and truthfully as possible by ticking the corresponding box. **Leave blank any question you do not wish to answer.**

This questionnaire is designed to test your attitudes to astrology. Please answer as quickly and truthfully as possible by placing a tick in the corresponding box.

Please fill out the following details.

Name _____

Address _____
NB these details are for follow-up contact only. They will be kept confidential, but leave them **blank** if you wish..

1. a) Date of birth:¹ Day ____ Month ____ Year ____

b) Time of birth (if known) ____ am/pm

c) Place of birth _____

2. Male ☐ Female ☐

3. Would you describe yourself now as (a) Protestant ☐ (b) Roman Catholic ☐

(c) Orthodox ☐ (d) non-denominational Christian ☐ (e) Jew ☐ (f) Muslim ☐

(g) Buddhist ☐ (h) Hindu ☐ (i) Pagan ☐ (j) Agnostic ☐ (k) Atheist ☐

(l) Spiritual but non-aligned ☐ (m) Other: please specify _____

4. Do you attend a church or religious service regularly? Yes ☐ No ☐.

5. Do you agree with the following statements?

(a) Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God² Yes ☐ No ☐. Don't know³ ☐

¹ These details are included to check that respondents know their sun, moon and rising signs. Also, from my experience people often ask their birth time in order to tell an astrologer, and without such information they can't have a personal chart. This question was not asked in the questionnaires distributed at the Long Ashton Golf Club as I was advised that reluctance to reveal their age might make potential respondents unwilling to complete the questionnaire.

² These are questions to test for devout Christian belief. See ITN (1968), Martin (1968), Gill Hadaway and Marler. The addition of the word 'divine' to reduce any ambiguity is from Hadaway, Elifson and Petersen (1984) and Chadwick and Top (1993).

- (b) The Bible is the word of God⁴ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
- (c) God really does answer prayer⁵ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
6. Do you read horoscope columns⁶ (a) every day ☐ (b) once a week ☐ (c) once a month ☐ (d) never ☐.
7. Do you value the advice given by the astrologer⁷ (a) always ☐ (b) often ☐ (c) sometimes ☐ (d) never ☐
8. If offered the opportunity, would you like to have your personal horoscope drawn up?⁸ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
9. Have you ever purchased a computerised horoscope reading?⁹ Yes ☐ No ☐
10. Have you ever visited an astrologer for a private consultation?¹⁰ Yes ☐ No ☐
11. Do you know your sun sign (i.e. star sign or birth sign)?¹¹ Yes ☐ No ☐. If yes, please state _____
12. Do you know your moon sign?¹² Yes ☐ No ☐. If yes, please state _____
13. Do you know your Rising Sign (Ascendant)?¹³ Yes ☐ No ☐. If yes, please state _____
-

3 Added Don't know in response to feedback after distribution at the MAJMA festival.

4 Chadwick and Top (1993). See also Gill, Hadaway and Marler (1998).

5 Hadaway, Elifson and Petersen (1984). See also Chadwick and Top (1993).

6 This question refines Blackmore and Seebold (2001) who asked 'regularly', and Paulik and Buse (1984) and Miller (1992) who asked 'ever'. Bauer and Durant (1997) gave options of 'often', 'fairly often', 'not often' and 'not at all'.

7 Blackmore and Seebold (2001) asked 'ever'

I am assuming that a negative score for this equals regarding columns as 'entertainment' (Dean, Mather and Kelly 1996: 62).

8 From Gallup (1975: 309). The question was added following discussion after the MAJMA festival because it represents an aspiration and may give different results to questions 1 I inserted this because it indicates an aspiration and so far, from BSUC studies, I am getting a universal 'no' to questions 9 and 10.

I added Don't Know options to Q 5a, 15, 16, 17 and 18, as these are all opinion questions.

I considered adding Don't Know to Q 3 but felt that the sheet was in danger of becoming too cluttered. I also softened the first paragraph.

9 Previous questionnaires have failed to distinguish magazine horoscopes from computerised readings and personal consultations, e.g. Blackmore and Seebold 2001.

10 Adapted from Paulik and Buse questions 1 and 2

11 Blackmore and Seebold 2001.

12 Blackmore and Seebold 2001.

14. Do you think that your sun sign description accurately reflects your personality?¹⁴
Yes ☐ No ☐. Partly ☐¹⁵ Don't know ☐

15. Would you consult an astrologer before getting married or settling down with a partner?¹⁶
Yes ☐ No ☐.

16. Have you ever read a teach yourself astrology book?¹⁷ Yes ☐ No ☐.

17. Have you ever taken an astrology course?¹⁸ Yes ☐ No ☐.

18. Do you think that the stars influence life on earth?¹⁹ Yes ☐ No ☐. Don't know ☐²⁰

19. Do you think astrology is just superstition?²¹ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐²²

20. Do you think that astrology can make accurate forecasts about the future?²³
Yes ☐ No ☐. Don't know ☐ Don't know ☐²⁴

21. Would you alter your behaviour due to material that you read in your horoscope?²⁵

13 Suggested by Michael York on the grounds that this indicates either having had a horoscope cast or being able to cast one.

14 Blackmore and Seebold 2001

15 'Partly' and 'Don't know' were added after the MAJMA festival as it became clear that too many respondents were having difficulty providing simple yes/no answers.

16 Blackmore and Seebold (2001), see also Paulik and Buse (1984).

17 Adapted from Blackmore and Seebold (2001).

18 Adapted from Blackmore and Seebold (2001).

19 Gallup 1997, 1998. See also E mail from US astrologer Dr. Zip Dobyns, 4 August 2001. Dr Dobyns outline various definitions of astrology in which one can either believe or disbelieve. 'If someone asks me whether I believe that the planets create character, or that they make things happen to people, or that they predict the details of one's life, I say "no" to all three. I believe that the sky is a visible part of the cosmic order and therefore a convenient way to see the order, but that the order shows psychological meanings, not physical forces, life desires that can be manifested in many different life events depending on how life handles its desires'.

20 Added Don't know in response to feedback after distribution to Food Technology Students at Bath Spa.

21 Blackmore and Seebold (2001)

22 Added Don't know in response to feedback after distribution to Food Technology Students at Bath Spa.

23 See note re Zip Dobyns, E mail 4 August 2001.

24 Added Don't know in response to feedback after distribution to Food Technology Students at Bath Spa.

25 Blackmore and Seebold (2001). I have removed an ambiguity from Blackmore and Seebold's question by changing 'horoscope' to 'horoscope column' so there is no chance of this referring to a personalised written consultation by an astrologer. The obvious flaw with this question is that it makes

Yes ☐ No ☐.

22. Do you find out the sun signs of people that you're having relationships with?²⁶

Yes ☐ No ☐.

23. Have you ever read a book concerning your star sign in love or the year ahead for your sun sign?²⁷ Yes ☐ No ☐.

24. Would you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?²⁸ Yes ☐ No ☐.

25. Do you use astrology as a spiritual tool?²⁹ Yes ☐ No ☐.

26. According to what you have read or heard, which sign of the zodiac is supposed to be³⁰

(a) theatrical _____

(b) fastidious³¹ _____

(c) secretive _____

27. How much do you believe in astrology?

A. Please rate your belief on the scale below³².

Not at all _____ Completely
(B and S)

B How strongly would you rate your belief in astrology?³³

Strong belief ☐.

Moderate belief ☐.

No opinion ☐.

Moderate disbelief ☐.

Strong disbelief ☐.

no distinction between minor decisions and major ones, nor the fact that most horoscope columns are so ambiguous that they give no direct instructions. See also Miller (1992).

26 Blackmore and Seebold (2001).

27 Blackmore and Seebold (2001).

28 Question to test possible New Age affiliation from Rose.

29 Suggested by Marion Bowman 23 May 2002.

30 Suggested by Michael York as a measure of knowledge of zodiac characteristics. The correct answers are (a) Leo, (b) Virgo, (c) Scorpio. See Eysenck and Nias (1982) and Hone (1973: 60, 63, 69-70) for a comparison.

31 Fastidious was changed to fussy for the second distribution to Study of Religions students as too few understood the meaning of fastidious.

32 Blackmore and Seebold (2001).

33 Question added after the first distribution to Bath Spa University College Study of Religions students when it became clear that the line-scale for belief was inadequate: students were uncertain how to use it.

Appendix 2

Public Awareness of Astrology Questionnaire: Results

1. Bath Spa University College Study of Religions BA Students November 2002

Summary of responses (SnBathSpa 2)

Number of replies 48

1. Time of birth known

Yes	36 (75%)
No	11 (22.9%)
No reply	1(2.1%)

2. Gender

Male	9 (18.8%)
Female	11 (22.9%)
No reply	0

3. Age

Under 21	20 (41.7%)
21-29	18 (37.5%)
30-39	7 (14.6%)
40-49	2 (4.2%)
50 and over	0

4. Would you describe yourself now as

(a) Protestant	3 (6.3%)
(b) Roman Catholic	3 (6.3%)
(c) Orthodox	0
(d) non-denominational Christian	11 (22.9%)
(e) Jew	0
(f) Muslim	0
(g) Buddhist	0
(h) Hindu	0
(i) Pagan	3 (6.3%)
(j) Agnostic	7 (14.6%)
(k) Atheist	4 (8.3%)
(l) Spiritual but non-aligned	13 (27.1%)
(m) Other	5 (10.4%)
No reply	0

5. Do you attend a church or religious service regularly?

Yes	6 (12.5%)
No	41 (85.4%)
No reply	0

6. Do you agree with the following statements?

(a) Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God	
Yes	21 (43.8%)
No	21 (43.8%)

Don't know n/a
No reply 6 (12.5%)

(b) The Bible is the word of God

Yes 13 (27.1%)
No 30 (62.5%)
Don't know n/a
No reply 5 (10.4%)

(c) God really does answer prayer

Yes 20 (41.7%)
No 21 (43.8%)
Don't know n/a
No reply 7 (14.6%)

7. Do you read horoscope columns

(a) every day 2 (4.2%)
(b) once a week 18 (37.5%)
(c) once a month 17 (35.4%)
(d) never 10 (20.8%)
No reply 1 (2.1%)

8. Do you value the advice given by the astrologer

(a) always 0
(b) often 4 (8.3%)
(c) sometimes 26 (54.2%)
(d) never 16 (33.3%)
No reply 2 (4.2%)

9. If offered the opportunity, would you like to have your personal horoscope drawn up?

Yes n/a
No n/a
Don't know n/a
No reply n/a

10. Have you ever purchased a computerised horoscope reading?

Yes 11 (22.9%)
No 37 (77.1%)
No reply 0

11. Have you ever visited an astrologer for a private consultation?

Yes 3 (6.3%)
No 45 (93.8%)
No reply 0

12. Do you know your sun sign (i.e. star sign or birth sign)?

Yes 43 (89.6%)
No. 4 (8.3%)
No reply 1 (2.1%)

13. Do you know your moon sign?

Yes 7 (14.6%)
No 40 (83.3%)
No reply 1 (2.1%)

14. Do you know your Rising Sign (Ascendant)?

Yes	7 (14.6%)
No	40 (83.3%)
No reply	1 (2.1%)

15. Do you think that your sun sign description accurately reflects your personality?

Yes	29 (60.4%)
No	13 (27.1%)
Partly	n/a
No reply	6 (12.5%)

16. Would you consult an astrologer before getting married or settling down with a partner?

Yes	1 (2.1%)
No	44 (91.7%)
No reply	6.3%

17. Have you ever read a teach yourself astrology book?

Yes	17 (53.4%)
No.	31 (64.6%)
No reply	0

18. Have you ever taken an astrology course?

Yes	0
No	48 (100%)
No reply	0

19. Do you think that the stars influence life on earth?

Yes	26 (54.2%)
No	18 (37.5%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	5 (10.4%)

20. Do you think astrology is just superstition?

Yes	11 (22.9%)
No	32 (66.7%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	5 (10.4%)

21. Do you think that astrology can make accurate forecasts about the future?

Yes	18 (37.5%)
No	26 (54.2%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	4 (8.3%)

22. Would you alter your behaviour due to material that you read in your horoscope?

Yes	2 (4.2%)
No	43 (89.6%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	3 (6.3%)

23. Do you find out the sun signs of people that you're having relationships with?

Yes	30 (62.5%)
No	17 (35.4%)

No reply 1 (2.1%)

24. Have you ever read a book concerning your star sign in love or the year ahead for your sun sign?

Yes 31 (64.6%)

No 17 (35.4%)

No reply 0

25. Would you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?

Yes 37 (77.1%)

No 10 (20.8%)

No reply 1 (2.1%)

26. Do you use astrology as a spiritual tool?

Yes 8 (16.7%)

No 38 (79.2%)

No reply 2 (4.2%)

27. According to what you have read or heard, which sign of the zodiac is supposed to be

(a) theatrical: Leo 10 (20.8%)

(b) fastidious: Virgo 10 (20.8%)

(c) secretive: Scorpio 10 (20.8%)

28. How much do you believe in astrology? Please tick one of the boxes below

(a) Strong belief n/a

(b) Moderate belief n/a

(c) No opinion n/a

(d) Moderate disbelief n/a

(e) Strong disbelief n/a

No reply n/a

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ASTROLOGY QUESTIONNAIRE**2. Bath Spa University College Study of Religions BA Students November 2002****Summary of responses
(SnBathSpa 4)**

Number of replies 59

1. Time of birth known

Yes	33 (55.9%)
No	26 (37.5%)
No reply	4 (6.8%)

2. Gender

Male	11 (18.6%)
Female	48 (81.4%)
No reply	4 (6.8%)

3. Age

Under 21	22 (32.3%)
21-29	18 (30.5%)
30-39	13 (22%)
40-49	4 (6.8%)
50 and over	0
No reply	2 (3.4%)

4. Would you describe yourself now as

(a) Protestant	6 (10.2%)
(b) Roman Catholic	5 (8.5%)
(c) Orthodox	0
(d) non-denominational Christian	13 (22%)
(e) Jew	0
(f) Muslim	0
(g) Buddhist	1 (1.7%)
(h) Hindu	0
(i) Pagan	3 (5.1%)
(j) Agnostic	6 (10.2%)
(k) Atheist	5 (8.5%)
(l) Spiritual but non-aligned	15 (25.4%)
(m) Other	5 (8.5%)
No reply	0

5. Do you attend a church or religious service regularly?

Yes	11 (18.6%)
No	4 (79.7%)
No reply	

6. Do you agree with the following statements?**(a) Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God**

Yes	30 (50.8%)
No	20 (33.9%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	9 (15.3%)

(b) The Bible is the word of God

Yes	23 (39%)
No	28 (47.5%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	8 (13.6%)

(c) God really does answer prayer

Yes	18 (30.5%)
No	28 (47.5%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	13 (22%)

7. Do you read horoscope columns

(a) every day	2 (3.4%)
(b) once a week	20 (34%)
(c) once a month	21 (35.6%)
(d) never	13 (22%)
No reply	3 (5%)

8. Do you value the advice given by the astrologer

(a) always	0
(b) often	4 (6.8%)
(c) sometimes	26 (44.1%)
(d) never	26 (44.1%)
No reply	3 (5.1%)

9. If offered the opportunity, would you like to have your personal horoscope drawn up?

Yes	n/a
No	n/a
Don't know	n/a
No reply	n/a

10. Have you ever purchased a computerised horoscope reading?

Yes	7 (11.9%)
No	52 (88.1%)
No reply	0

11. Have you ever visited an astrologer for a private consultation?

Yes	2 (3.4%)
No	57 (96.6%)
No reply	0

12. Do you know your sun sign (i.e. star sign or birth sign)?

Yes	52 (88.1%)
No	7 (11.9%)
No reply	0

13. Do you know your moon sign?

Yes	6 (10.2%)
No	52 (88.1%)
No reply	1 (1.7%)

14. Do you know your Rising Sign (Ascendant)?

Yes	4 (6.8%)
No	53 (89.8%)
No reply	2 (3.4%)

15. Do you think that your sun sign description accurately reflects your personality?

Yes	22 (37.3%)
No	19 (32.2%)
Partly	n/a
No reply	18 (30.5%)

16. Would you consult an astrologer before getting married or settling down with a partner?

Yes	3 (5.1%)
No	51 (86.4%)
No reply	5 (8.5%)

17. Have you ever read a teach yourself astrology book?

Yes	11 (18.6%)
No	48 (83.1%)
No reply	0

18. Have you ever taken an astrology course?

Yes	3 (5.1%)
No	55 (93.2%)
No reply	1 (1.7%)

19. Do you think that the stars influence life on earth?

Yes	21 (35.6%)
No	26 (44.1%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	12 (20.3%)

20. Do you think astrology is just superstition?

Yes	23 (39%)
No	30 (52.5%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	6 (8.5%)

21. Do you think that astrology can make accurate forecasts about the future?

Yes	16 (27.1%)
No	32 (54.2%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	11 (18.6%)

22. Would you alter your behaviour due to material that you read in your horoscope?

Yes	8 (13.6%)
No	47 (79.7%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	4 (6.8%)

23. Do you find out the sun signs of people that you're having relationships with?

Yes	31 (52.5%)
No	26 (44.1%)
No reply	2 (3.4%)

24. Have you ever read a book concerning your star sign in love or the year ahead for your sun sign?

Yes	29 (49.2%)
No	29 (49.2%)
No reply	1 (1.7%)

25. Would you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?

Yes	34 (57.6%)
No	20 (33.9%)
No reply	5 (8.5%)

26. Do you use astrology as a spiritual tool?

Yes	7 (11.9%)
No	49 (83.1%)
No reply	3 (5.1%)

27. According to what you have read or heard, which sign of the zodiac is supposed to be

(a) theatrical: Leo	7 (11.9%)
(b) fastidious: Virgo	8 (13.6%)
(c) secretive: Scorpio	4 (6.8%)

28. How much do you believe in astrology? Please tick one of the boxes below

(a) Strong belief	3 (5.1%)
(b) Moderate belief	22 (37.3%)
(c) No opinion	11 (18.6%)
(d) Moderate disbelief	16 (27.1%)
(e) Strong disbelief	6 (10.2%)
No reply	4 (6.8%)

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ASTROLOGY QUESTIONNAIRE**3. Bath Spa University College Food Technology BA Students February-March 2003****Summary of responses****(SnBathSpa 1)**

Number of replies 51

1. Time of birth known

Yes 29 (56.9%)

No 19 (37.3%)

No reply 3 (5.9%)

2. Gender

Male 15 (29.4%)

Female 35 (68.6%)

No reply 1 (2%)

3. Age

Under 21 28 (54.9%)

21-29 14 (27.5%)

30-39 6 (11.8%)

40-49 1 (2%)

50 and over 0

no reply 2 (3.9%)

4. Would you describe yourself now as

(a) Protestant 10 (19.6%)

(b) Roman Catholic 4 (7.8%)

(c) Orthodox 0

(d) non-denominational Christian 7 (13.7%)

(e) Jew 0

(f) Muslim 1 (2%)

(g) Buddhist 0

(h) Hindu 1 (2%)

(i) Pagan 0

(j) Agnostic 2 (3.9%)

(k) Atheist 12 (23.5%)

(l) Spiritual but non-aligned 8 (15.7%)

(m) Other 1 (2%)

No reply 5 (9.8%)

5. Do you attend a church or religious service regularly?

Yes 8 (15.7%)

No 41 (82.4%)

No reply 1 (2%)

6. Do you agree with the following statements?

(a) Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God

Yes 21 (41.2%)

No 28 (54.9%)

Don't know n/a

No reply 2 (3.9%)

(b) The Bible is the word of God

Yes	18 (35.3%)
No	27 (52.9%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	6 (11.8%)

(c) God really does answer prayer

Yes	15 (29.4%)
No	28 (54.9%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	8 (15.7%)

7. Do you read horoscope columns

(a) every day	7 (13.7%)
(b) once a week	15 (29.4%)
(c) once a month	14 (27.5%)
(d) never	14 (27.5%)
No reply	1 (2%)

8. Do you value the advice given by the astrologer

(a) always	0
(b) often	3 (5.9%)
(c) sometimes	23 (45.1%)
(d) never	23 (45.1%)
No reply	2 (4%)

9. If offered the opportunity, would you like to have your personal horoscope drawn up?

Yes	n/a
No	n/a
Don't know	n/a
No reply	n/a

10. Have you ever purchased a computerised horoscope reading?

Yes	4 (7.8%)
No	47 (92.2%)
No reply	0

11. Have you ever visited an astrologer for a private consultation?

Yes	4 (7.8%)
No	47 (92.2%)
No reply	0

12. Do you know your sun sign (i.e. star sign or birth sign)?

Yes	50 (3.9%)
No	1 (2%)
No reply	0

13. Do you know your moon sign?

Yes	2 (3.9%)
No	48 (94.1%)
No reply	1 (2%)

14. Do you know your Rising Sign (Ascendant)?

Yes	3 (5.9%)
-----	----------

No 47 (92.2%)
 No reply 1 (2%)

15. Do you think that your sun sign description accurately reflects your personality?

Yes 23 (45.1%)
 No 19 (37.3%)
 Partly n/a
 No reply 9 (17.6%)

16. Would you consult an astrologer before getting married or settling down with a partner?

Yes 0
 No 51 (100%)
 No reply 0

17. Have you ever read a teach yourself astrology book?

Yes 6 (11.8%)
 No 45 (88.2%)
 No reply 0

18. Have you ever taken an astrology course?

Yes 1 (2%)
 No 50 (98%)
 No reply 0

19. Do you think that the stars influence life on earth?

Yes 10 (19.6%)
 No 37 (72.5%)
 Don't know 4 (9.1%)
 No reply

20. Do you think astrology is just superstition?

Yes 29 (56.9%)
 No 19 (37.1%)
 Don't know n/a
 No reply 0

21. Do you think that astrology can make accurate forecasts about the future?

Yes 13 (25.5%)
 No 33 (64.7%)
 Don't know n/a
 No reply 1 (2%)

22. Would you alter your behaviour due to material that you read in your horoscope?

Yes 1 (2%)
 No 49 (96.1%)
 Don't know n/a
 No reply 1 (2%)

23. Do you find out the sun signs of people that you're having relationships with?

Yes 23 (45.1%)
 No 28 (54.9%)
 No reply 0

24. Have you ever read a book concerning your star sign in love or the year ahead for your sun sign?

Yes	16 (31.4%)
No	35 (68.6%)
No reply	1 (2%)

25. Would you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?

Yes	17 (33.3%)
No	33 (64.7%)
No reply	1 (2%)

26. Do you use astrology as a spiritual tool?

Yes	3 (5.9%)
No	45 (88.2%)
No reply	3 (5.9%)

27. According to what you have read or heard, which sign of the zodiac is supposed to be

(a) theatrical: Leo	2 (3.9%)
(b) fastidious: Virgo	4 (7.8%).
(c) secretive: Scorpio	1 (2%)

28. How much do you believe in astrology? Please tick one of the boxes below

(a) Strong belief	1 (2%)
(b) Moderate belief	11 (21.6%)
(c) No opinion	12 (25.5%)
(d) Moderate disbelief	14 (27.5%)
(e) Strong disbelief	12 (23.5%)
No reply	

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ASTROLOGY QUESTIONNAIRE**1. Long Ashton Gold Club March 2003****Summary of responses****(SnBathSpa 5)**

Number of replies 29

1. Time of birth known

Yes n/a

No n/a

No reply n/a

2. Gender

Male 5 (17.2%)

Female 22 (75.9%)

No reply 2 (6.9%)

3. Age

Under 21 0

21-29 0

30-39 0

40-49 0

50 and over 29 (100%)

4. Would you describe yourself now as

(a) Protestant 23 (79.3%)

(b) Roman Catholic 2 (6.9%)

(c) Orthodox 0

(d) non-denominational Christian 3 (10.3%)

(e) Jew 0

(f) Muslim 0

(g) Buddhist 0

(h) Hindu 0

(i) Pagan 0

(j) Agnostic 0

(k) Atheist 1 (3.4%)

(l) Spiritual but non-aligned 0

(m) Other 0

No reply

5. Do you attend a church or religious service regularly?

Yes 8 (27.5%)

No 20 (69%)

No reply 1 (3.5%)

6. Do you agree with the following statements?

(a) Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God

Yes 19 (65.5%)

No 4 (13.8%)

Don't know n/a

No reply 6 (20.7%)

(b) The Bible is the word of God

Yes 13 (44.8%)

No	9 (31%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	7 (24.1%)

(c) God really does answer prayer

Yes	12 (41.4%)
No	8 (27.6%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	9 (31%)

7. Do you read horoscope columns

(a) every day	1 (3.4%)
(b) once a week	7 (24.1%)
(c) once a month	10 (34.5%)
(d) never	11 (37.9%)
No reply	0

8. Do you value the advice given by the astrologer

(a) always	0
(b) often	2 (6.9%)
(c) sometimes	7 (24.1%)
(d) never	19 (65.5%)
No reply	1 (3.4%)

9. If offered the opportunity, would you like to have your personal horoscope drawn up?

Yes	n/a
No	n/a
Don't know	n/a
No reply	n/a

10. Have you ever purchased a computerised horoscope reading?

Yes	1 (3.4%)
No	28 (96.6%)
No reply	0

11. Have you ever visited an astrologer for a private consultation?

Yes	5 (17.2%)
No	24 (82.8%)
No reply	0

12. Do you know your sun sign (i.e. star sign or birth sign)?

Yes	29 (100%)
No	0
No reply	0

13. Do you know your moon sign?

Yes	0
No	28 (96.6%)
No reply	1 (3.4%)

14. Do you know your Rising Sign (Ascendant)?

Yes	1 (3.4%)
No	28 (96.6%)
No reply	0

15. Do you think that your sun sign description accurately reflects your personality?

Yes	13 (44.8%)
No	9 (31%)
Partly	n/a
No reply	7 (24.1%)

16. Would you consult an astrologer before getting married or settling down with a partner?

Yes	1 (3.4%)
No	27 (93.1%)
No reply	1 (3.4%)

17. Have you ever read a teach yourself astrology book?

Yes	2 (69%)
No	26 (89.7%)
No reply	1 (3.4%)

18. Have you ever taken an astrology course?

Yes	0
No	29 (100%)
No reply	0

19. Do you think that the stars influence life on earth?

Yes	5 (17.2%)
No	13 (44.8%)
Don't know	11 (37.9%)
No reply	0

20. Do you think astrology is just superstition?

Yes	8 (27.6%)
No	9 (31.9%)
Don't know	10 (34.5%)
No reply	0

21. Do you think that astrology can make accurate forecasts about the future?

Yes	2 (6.9%)
No	10 (34.5%)
Don't know	15 (51.7%)
No reply	2 (6.9%)

22. Would you alter your behaviour due to material that you read in your horoscope?

Yes	3 (10.3%)
No	20 (69%)
Don't know	5 (17.2%)
No reply	1 (3.4%)

23. Do you find out the sun signs of people that you're having relationships with?

Yes	5 (17.2%)
No	24 (82.8%)
No reply	0

24. Have you ever read a book concerning your star sign in love or the year ahead for your sun sign?

Yes	5 (17.2%)
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No	24 (82.8%)
No reply	0

25. Would you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?

Yes	12 (41.4%)
No	14 (48.3%)
No reply	3 (10.3%)

26. Do you use astrology as a spiritual tool?

Yes	2 (6.9%)
No	26 (89.7%)
No reply	1 (3.4%)

27. According to what you have read or heard, which sign of the zodiac is supposed to be

(a) theatrical: Leo	0
(b) fastidious: Virgo	2 (6.9%)
(c) secretive: Scorpio	0

28. How much do you believe in astrology? Please tick one of the boxes below

(a) Strong belief	1 (3.4%)
(b) Moderate belief	8 (27.6%)
(c) No opinion	5 (17.2%)
(d) Moderate disbelief	9 (31%)
(e) Strong disbelief	5 (17.2%)
No reply	1 (3.4%)

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ASTROLOGY QUESTIONNAIRE**1. Bath Spa MAJMA, Glastonbury, April 4-6 2003****Summary of responses****(SnBathSpa 6)**

Number of replies 46

1. Time of birth known

Yes	24 (52.5%)
No	22 (47.8%)
No reply	0

2. Gender

Male	2 (4.3%)
Female	44 (95.7%)
No reply	0

3. Age

Under 21	0
21-29	0
30-39	15 (32.6%)
40-49	11 (23.9%)
50 and over	13 (28.3%)

4. Would you describe yourself now as

(a) Protestant	5 (10.9%)
(b) Roman Catholic	3 (6.5%)
(c) Orthodox	0
(d) non-denominational Christian	8 (17.4%)
(e) Jew	0
(f) Muslim	1 (2.2%)
(g) Buddhist	2 (4.3%)
(h) Hindu	2 (4.3%)
(i) Pagan	7 (15.2%)
(j) Agnostic	2 (4.3%)
(k) Atheist	4 (8.7%)
(l) Spiritual but non-aligned	17 (37%)
(m) Other	1 (2.2%)
No reply	0

5. Do you attend a church or religious service regularly?

Yes	7 (15.2%)
No	37 (80.4%)
No reply	2 (4.3%)

6. Do you agree with the following statements?**(a) Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God**

Yes	18 (39.1%)
No	20 (43.5%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	8 (17.4%)

(b) The Bible is the word of God

Yes	11 (23.9%)
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No	23 (50%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	12 (26.17%)

(c) God really does answer prayer

Yes	15 (32.6%)
No	22 (47.8%)
Don't know	n/a
No reply	9 (19.6%)

7. Do you read horoscope columns

(a) every day	3 (6.5%)
(b) once a week	12 (26.1%)
(c) once a month	25 (54.3%)
(d) never	6 (13%)
No reply	0

8. Do you value the advice given by the astrologer

(a) always	2 (4.3%)
(b) often	8 (17.4%)
(c) sometimes	24 (52.2%)
(d) never	8 (17.4%)
No reply	0

9. If offered the opportunity, would you like to have your personal horoscope drawn up?

Yes	32 (69.6%)
No	5 (10.9%)
Don't know	7 (15.2%)
No reply	2 (4.3%)

10. Have you ever purchased a computerised horoscope reading?

Yes	9 (19.6%)
No	36 (78.3%)
No reply	1 (2.2%)

11. Have you ever visited an astrologer for a private consultation?

Yes	12 (26.1%)
No	33 (71.7%)
No reply	1 (2.2%)

12. Do you know your sun sign (i.e. star sign or birth sign)?

Yes	38 (83.6%)
No	4 (8.7%)
No reply	5 (10.9%)

13. Do you know your moon sign?

Yes	12 (26.1%)
No	28 (60.9%)
No reply	6 (13%)

14. Do you know your Rising Sign (Ascendant)?

Yes	11 (23.9%)
No	28 (60.9%)
No reply	7 (15.2%)

15. Do you think that your sun sign description accurately reflects your personality?

Yes	29 (63%)
No	5 (10.9%)
Partly	n/a
No reply	12 (26.1%)

16. Would you consult an astrologer before getting married or settling down with a partner?

Yes	6 (13%)
No	34 (73.9%)
No reply	6 (13%)

17. Have you ever read a teach yourself astrology book?

Yes	17 (37%)
No	24 (52.2%)
No reply	5 (10.9%)

18. Have you ever taken an astrology course?

Yes	8 (17.4%)
No	34 (73.9%)
No reply	4 (8.7%)

19. Do you think that the stars influence life on earth?

Yes	23 (50%)
No	4 (8.1%)
Don't know	14 (30.4%)
No reply	5 (10.9%)

20. Do you think astrology is just superstition?

Yes	1 (2.2%)
No	26 (56.5%)
Don't know	13 (28.3%)
No reply	6 (13%)

21. Do you think that astrology can make accurate forecasts about the future?

Yes	13 (28.3%)
No	4 (8.7%)
Don't know	23 (50%)
No reply	6 (13%)

22. Would you alter your behaviour due to material that you read in your horoscope?

Yes	8 (17.4%)
No	17 (37%)
Don't know	12 (26.1%)
No reply	9 (19.6%)

23. Do you find out the sun signs of people that you're having relationships with?

Yes	31 (67.4%)
No	10 (21.7%)
No reply	5 (10.9%)

24. Have you ever read a book concerning your star sign in love or the year ahead for your sun sign?

Yes	27 (58.7%)
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No	15 (32.6%)
No reply	4 (8.7%)

25. Would you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?

Yes	32 (69.6%)
No	9 (10.67%)
No reply	5 (10.9%)

26. Do you use astrology as a spiritual tool?

Yes	14 (30.4%)
No	26 (56.5%)
No reply	6 (13%)

27. According to what you have read or heard, which sign of the zodiac is supposed to be

(a) theatrical: Leo	12 (26.1%)
(b) fastidious: Virgo	17 (37%)
(c) secretive: Scorpio	9 (19.6%)

28. How much do you believe in astrology? Please tick one of the boxes below

(a) Strong belief	5 (10.9%)
(b) Moderate belief	27 (58.7%)
(c) No opinion	2 (4.3%)
(d) Moderate disbelief	6 (13%)
(e) Strong disbelief	0
No reply	0

PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ASTROLOGY QUESTIONNAIRE**1. Arabic Dance students, Manchester, November 2003****Summary of responses****(SnBathSpa 7)**

Number of replies 19

1. Time of birth known

Yes 9 (47.4%)
 No 10 (52.6%)
 No reply 0

2. Gender

Male 0
 Female 19 (100%)
 No reply 0

3. Age

Under 21 0
 21-29 3 (15.8%)
 30-39 3 (15.8%)
 40-49 3 (15.8%)
 50 and over 5 (26.3%)

4. Would you describe yourself now as

(a) Protestant 4 (21.1%)
 (b) Roman Catholic 2 (10.5%)
 (c) Orthodox 0
 (d) non-denominational Christian 1 (5.3%)
 (e) Jew 0
 (f) Muslim 0
 (g) Buddhist 0
 (h) Hindu 0
 (i) Pagan 2 (10.5%)
 (j) Agnostic 3 (15.8%)
 (k) Atheist 0
 (l) Spiritual but non-aligned 4 (21.17%)
 (m) Other 2 (10.5%)
 No reply 1 (5.3%)

5. Do you attend a church or religious service regularly?

Yes 1 (5.3%)
 No 18 (94.7%)
 No reply 0

6. Do you agree with the following statements?**(a) Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God**

Yes 6 (31.6%)
 No 7 (36.8%)
 Don't know 5 (26.3%)
 No reply 1 (5.3%)

(b) The Bible is the word of God

Yes 4 (21.1%)

No	10 (52.6%)
Don't know	4 (21.1%)
No reply	1 (5.3%)

(c) God really does answer prayer

Yes	5 (26.3%)
No	5 (26.3%)
Don't know	7 (36.8%)
No reply	2 (10.5%)

7. Do you read horoscope columns

(a) every day	0
(b) once a week	5 (26.3%)
(c) once a month	11 (57.9%)
(d) never	3 (15.8%)
No reply	0

8. Do you value the advice given by the astrologer

(a) always	0
(b) often	5 (26.3%)
(c) sometimes	8 (42.1%)
(d) never	5 (26.3%)
No reply	0

9. If offered the opportunity, would you like to have your personal horoscope drawn up?

Yes	13 (68.4%)
No	2 (10.5%)
Don't know	4 (21.1%)
No reply	0

10. Have you ever purchased a computerised horoscope reading?

Yes	1 (5.3%)
No	18 (94.7%)
No reply	0

11. Have you ever visited an astrologer for a private consultation?

Yes	1 (5.3%)
No	18 (94.7%)
No reply	0

12. Do you know your sun sign (i.e. star sign or birth sign)?

Yes	16 (84.2%)
No	2 (84.2%)
No reply	1 (5.3%)

13. Do you know your moon sign?

Yes	2 (10.5%)
No	16 (84.2%)
No reply	1 (5.3%)

14. Do you know your Rising Sign (Ascendant)?

Yes	2 (10.5%)
No	15 (78.9%)
No reply	2 (10.5%)

15. Do you think that your sun sign description accurately reflects your personality?

Yes	9 (47.4%)
No	0
Partly	6 (31.6%)
No reply	4 (21.1%)

16. Would you consult an astrologer before getting married or settling down with a partner?

Yes	1 (5.3%)
No	16 (84.2%)
No reply	2 (10.5%)

17. Have you ever read a teach yourself astrology book?

Yes	3 (15.8%)
No	14 (73.7%)
No reply	0

18. Have you ever taken an astrology course?

Yes	0
No	17 (89.9%)
No reply	2 (10.1%)

19. Do you think that the stars influence life on earth?

Yes	7 (36.8%)
No	4 (21.1%)
Don't know	6 (31.6%)
No reply	2 (10.5%)

20. Do you think astrology is just superstition?

Yes	3 (15.8%)
No	11 (57.9%)
Don't know	4 (21.1%)
No reply	1 (5.3%)

21. Do you think that astrology can make accurate forecasts about the future?

Yes	4 (21.1%)
No	4 (21.1%)
Don't know	9 (47.4%)
No reply	2 (10.5%)

22. Would you alter your behaviour due to material that you read in your horoscope?

Yes	1 (5.3%)
No	10 (52.6%)
Don't know	5 (26.3%)
No reply	3 (15.8%)

23. Do you find out the sun signs of people that you're having relationships with?

Yes	11 (57.9%)
No	7 (36.8%)
No reply	1 (5.3%)

24. Have you ever read a book concerning your star sign in love or the year ahead for your sun sign?

Yes	12 (63.2%)
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No 6 (31.6%)
 No reply 1 (5.3%)

25. Would you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?

Yes 12 (63.2%)
 No 3 (15.8%)
 No reply 4 (21.1%)

26. Do you use astrology as a spiritual tool?

Yes 3 (15.8%)
 No 15 (78.9%)
 No reply 1 (5.3%)

27. According to what you have read or heard, which sign of the zodiac is supposed to be

(a) theatrical: Leo 5 (26.3%)
 (b) fastidious: Virgo 5 (26.3%)
 (c) secretive: Scorpio 1 (5.3%)

28. How much do you believe in astrology? Please tick one of the boxes below

(a) Strong belief 1 (5.3%)
 (b) Moderate belief 11 (57.9%)
 (c) No opinion 1 (5.3%)
 (d) Moderate disbelief 3 (15.8%)
 (e) Strong disbelief 2 (10.5%)
 No reply 1 (10.5%)

Appendix 3

Survey of Astrologers' Opinions Questionnaire

BATH SPA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

with the support of the Astrological Association

SURVEY OF ASTROLOGERS' OPINIONS

Astrological Association conference 6th-12th August 1999

Nick Campion

Dear Delegate,

I am conducting a pilot survey of astrologers' beliefs and opinions for my doctoral research at Bath Spa University College. The purpose is to allow astrologers to speak for themselves in their own words, in order to expand our knowledge of how astrologers work and what they believe. As a delegate at the AA conference your opinions are important and I'd be very grateful if you could take a little time to answer this questionnaire and return it to me before the end of the conference.

You'll find a box on the AA registration desk where you can leave your completed questionnaire, or you can hand it to me personally. Or you can mail copies to me, Nick Campion c/o the Study of Religions Department, Bath Spa University College, Newton Park, Newton St. Loe, Bath BA2 9BN, UK.

I hope that you will enjoy answering the questions and, as this is a pilot study, I would be grateful for any feedback you might have concerning the phrasing of the questions or for improvements which might be made in later versions. **Also, all information will be treated in absolute confidence so please feel free to express your opinions.** Please do not answer any question if you do not wish.

WHAT TO DO: Please answer each question by placing an X in the selected box or by writing your comments in the space provided. In some cases you can mark more than one box.

Name (not for public use) _____

Address _____ Zip/Postcode _____

Birth data (optional) time am/pm _____ : day _____ : month _____ : year _____ : place _____

1. Female ☐: Male ☐ 2. Years studying astrology _____3. What is your level of interest in astrology (a) casual ☐ (b) hobby ☐ (c) student ☐
(d) professional ☐ Other _____4. How did you become interested in astrology, or what was your original inspiration? (a) friends ☐
(b) books ☐ (c) sunsign columns ☐ (d) Other _____6. Would you say that your interested interest developed (a) gradually ☐ or (b) suddenly ☐?6. If you are professional are you (a) full time ☐ (b) part time ☐(c) how many years have you been professional ? _____ (d) how many clients would you see in an average week? _____ (e) do you do consultations by phone _____ (f) do you teach astrology? _____
(g) how many hours a week on average do you spend working on astrology? _____

7. What is you approximate annual income?

UNDER £5000 ☐ £15,000 - £19,000 ☐£5,000 - £9,000 ☐ £20,000 - £29,999 ☐£10,000 - £14,999 ☐ £ OVER 30,000 ☐

If you are a professional astrologer, approximately what percentage of your income comes from astrology? _____%

If you are not professional, or have another occupation, what is it? _____

8. Do you read Sunsign columns? ☐
9. Would you say that Sunsign columns (a) are not 'real' astrology? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
or (b) are damaging to the image of astrology Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
10. Have you ever had a professional astrological or psychic reading? Yes ☐ No ☐
If YES, please tick any type of reading that you have had:
Astrology ☐ how many times? ____
Tarot ☐ how many times? ____
Hand reading ☐ how many times? ____
Clairvoyant ☐ how many times? ____
Other (please state) _____
- What was your reason for having the reading _____
11. Would you say you use astrology to manage your own affairs (a) always ☐ (b) sometimes ☐ (c) never ☐
12. Do you have an astrological qualification Yes ☐ No ☐ Please state _____
13. Have you signed an astrological code of ethics? Yes ☐ No ☐ Please state _____
14. Do you have any other academic (degree or above) or professional qualifications. Yes ☐ No ☐
Please state _____
15. Are you a member of an astrological organisation (apart from the AA)? Yes ☐ No ☐
Please state _____
16. UK citizens only: If there was a general election tomorrow would you vote (a) Conservative ☐
(b) Labour ☐ (c) Liberal Democrat ☐ (d) Green ☐ (e) Other _____
17. Are you a member of, or do you contribute to, any pressure group or alternative political organisation (e.g. Amnesty International. Greenpeace, Vegan Society etc.)? Yes ☐ No ☐
If YES please list organisations _____
18. How would you describe your religious upbringing? (a) Protestant ☐ (b) Roman Catholic ☐
(c) non-denominational Christian ☐ (d) Jew ☐ (e) Muslim ☐ (d) Buddhist ☐ (e) Hindu ☐
(f) Pagan ☐ (g) Agnostic ☐ (h) Atheist ☐ (i) Other _____
19. Would you describe yourself now as (a) Protestant ☐ (b) Roman Catholic ☐
(c) non-denominational Christian ☐ (d) Jew ☐ (e) Muslim ☐ (d) Buddhist ☐ (e) Hindu ☐
(f) Pagan ☐ (g) Agnostic ☐ (h) Atheist ☐ (i) Other _____
20. Do you attend a church or religious service regularly Yes ☐ No ☐.
If YES, which denomination? _____
21. Would you describe yourself as believing in (a) God ☐ (b) The Goddess ☐ (c) a Supreme Consciousness ☐ (d) Other (please define) _____
22. If you believe in God, is he a personal God who answers prayers? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
23. Is your view of astrology influenced by your religion? Yes ☐ No ☐
If YES, would you like to say how? _____
24. Do you believe in (a) reincarnation/past lives ☐ (b) the law of karma ☐
25. Would you say that astrology is (a) a science ☐ (b) a divine science ☐ (c) a psychological tool ☐
(d) a form of divination ☐ (e) a religion ☐ (f) a path to spiritual growth ☐ (g) a form of counselling ☐
(h) a healing art ☐ (j) a means of predicting the future ☐

26. In a few words, how would you define astrology? _____

27. What would you say is most important to an accurate astrological reading:

- (a) accurate data: very important ☐ not so important ☐ not important at all ☐
 (b) faith in astrology very important ☐ not so important ☐ not important at all ☐

28. What do you think are the main goals of an astrological reading

- (a) accurate predictions very important ☐ not so important ☐ not important at all ☐
 (b) client satisfaction very important ☐ not so important ☐ not important at all ☐
 (c) helping the client to understand themselves/make their own choices very important ☐
 not so important ☐ not important at all ☐
 (d) other (please state) _____

29. From your experience, why do you think people visit astrologers? (tick more than one box if required).

- (a) to find out more about themselves ☐
 (b) to find out what the future holds ☐
 (c) to get more control over their lives ☐
 (d) because they have no control over their lives ☐
 (e) other _____

30. In your own life has your knowledge and/or use of astrology positively changed your state of being (tick more than one box if required).

- No change ☐ More pleasurable ☐
 More spiritual ☐ More responsible ☐
 More self-empowered ☐ More playful ☐
 Happier ☐ More healed ☐
 More meaningful ☐ More fulfilled ☐

Have there been any negative consequences? Yes ☐ No ☐ Please state _____

31. Which of the following descriptions fits your astrological work? (a) psychological ☐
 (b) traditional ☐ (c) spiritual ☐ (d) scientific ☐ (e) other _____

32. Do you offer advice on (a) finance? Yes ☐ No ☐ (b) career Yes ☐ No ☐
 (c) relationships Yes ☐ No ☐

33. Do you think astrology can make exact predictions about an individual's future? Yes ☐ No ☐
 Don't know ☐

34. Do you think that astrological interpretations have an inbuilt morality? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
 OR does the astrologer bring their own morality to the reading? ? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

35. Do you think that spiritual practice is (a) very necessary ☐ (b) useful ☐ (c) not necessary ☐ for good astrological work.

36. Do you allow ethical considerations to influence what you tell a client? ? Yes ☐ No ☐
 OR do you tell the client everything you see in the chart? Yes ☐ No ☐

37. Do you think astrology can be objectively verified by (a) statistics ? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
 (b) other scientific tests ? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

38. Do you think science will have to change before it can test astrology? Yes ☐ No ☐
 Don't know ☐

39. Do you think that in science the presence of the experimenter affects the outcome of a scientific experiment? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

40. Do you think that astrology is bound to achieve mainstream recognition in the next century? Yes ☐
 No ☐ Don't know ☐

41. In your opinion, are spirituality and religion coming together? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

42. Do you see current political and social changes as evidence of a paradigm shift/move towards the New Age? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

43. What does the term 'New Age' signify to you? _____

44. Do you believe (a) that UFOs are of extra-terrestrial origin? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐
(b) in alien abductions? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐ (c) that the government is suppressing official information about UFOs and abductions? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

45. Which of the following statements would you agree with?

- i) each astrologer finds the techniques which suits them: agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- ii) the right house system is 'the one which works for you': agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- iii) the planets exert a physical influence events on earth: agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- iv) astrology is a language: agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- v) astrology can make accurate predictions: agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- vi) signs of the zodiac are archetypes: agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- vii) astrology should take other factors, e.g. environment and heredity, into account: agree ☐
disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- viii) astrology is a form of divination: agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- ix) the Age of Aquarius is beginning now/soon/very soon: agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- x) the birth chart contains our potential, and it's up to us how we use it: agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐
- xi) intuition is necessary for a good astrological reading: agree ☐ disagree ☐ no opinion ☐

46. How exact would you say that birth data have to be for a truly accurate reading?
within 5 minutes ☐ 15 mins. ☐ 30 mins. ☐ 1 hr. ☐

47. Which astrologers have most influenced you personally (name up to 5) _____

48. Which of the following do you think has exerted the most influence on contemporary astrology?
(a) Ptolemy ☐ (b) William Lilly ☐ (c) Alan Leo ☐ (d) C.G.Jung ☐ (e) Dane Rudhyar ☐
(f) Other _____

49. Is there any other philosopher or teacher, outside astrology, who has influenced you? _____

50. Which other forms of astrology/wisdom are you interested or have studied?
Celtic: interested in ☐ have studied ☐ Vedic: interested in ☐ have studied ☐
Chinese: interested in ☐ have studied ☐ Aztec/Maya: interested in ☐ have studied ☐
Native American: interested in ☐ have studied ☐ Tibetan: interested in ☐ have studied ☐

51. Have you ever participated in or used one of the following? Acupuncture Yes ☐ No ☐;
Channelling/Clairvoyance Yes ☐ No ☐; Crystals Yes ☐ No ☐; Earth Mysteries Yes ☐ No ☐;
Ethical investing Yes ☐ No ☐; Green politics Yes ☐ No ☐; Healing workshops Yes ☐ No ☐;
Herbalism Yes ☐ No ☐; Homeopathy Yes ☐ No ☐; Hypnotherapy Yes ☐ No ☐;
Past Life Therapy Yes ☐ No ☐; Psychotherapy/counselling Yes ☐ No ☐;
Shaman/Pagan Rituals Yes ☐ No ☐; Veganism Yes ☐ No ☐; Vegetarianism Yes ☐ No ☐.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY
Nick Campion Bath Spa University College

Appendix 4

Survey of Astrologers Opinions Questionnaire # 2

BATH SPA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

with the support of the Astrological Association

SURVEY OF ASTROLOGERS' OPINIONS # 2

Astrological Association conference 1st – 3rd September 2000 Nick Campion

Dear Delegate,

I am conducting a pilot survey of astrologers' beliefs and opinions for my doctoral research at Bath Spa University College. Some of you filled in a detailed questionnaire for me at the 1999 conference, and I am very grateful to all who did. I haven't yet finished processing all the data, but when I have I'll make a full report available. The purpose of this part of my research is to allow astrologers to speak for themselves in their own words, in order to expand our knowledge of how astrologers work and what they believe. As a delegate at the AA conference your opinions are important and I'd be very grateful if you could take a little time to complete this sheet and return it to me before the end of the conference. Please take your time.

You'll find a box on the AA registration desk where you can leave your completed questionnaire, or you can hand it to me personally. Or you can mail copies to me, Nick Campion c/o the Study of Religions Department, Bath Spa University College, Newton Park, Newton St. Loe, Bath BA2 9BN, UK.

BELIEF IN ASTROLOGY

Astrology is commonly associated in the public mind with belief. Most astrologers are routinely asked the question 'Do you believe in it?' Journalists researching astrology frequently ask 'How many people believe in it?' Belief, though is a subjective concept. We might have degrees of belief, believe in some things sometimes but not others, or admit belief in some circumstances but not others. We may have different reasons for either believing or disbelieving. We may give a different answer depending on who is asking.

I'd be grateful if you would answer the following question as best you can, and explain your answer either as briefly as you like or as fully as you wish. There are no right or wrong answers so please be as honest as possible.

If you were asked whether you believe in astrology, would you answer

A: Yes ___ B: No ___ C: Don't know ___ D: Other ___

Please use the following space to explain your answer as briefly or as fully as you wish.

Appendix 5

Interview Release Form

INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM

Nick Campion,
School of Historical and Cultural Studies,
Bath Spa University College,
Newton Park,
Bath Spa,
BA2 9BN
n.campion@bathspa.ac.uk

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel.: _____ E Mail: _____

This form has been drawn up to respect in order to ensure that the material in your interview with Nick Campion is used only in accord with your wishes.

1. May we use your contribution:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a. for public reference. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. for research purposes. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. for academic presentations, e.g. in seminars and lectures. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. in research material which may be published at a future date | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. May we use your name? Yes ☐ No ☐

NB. Any material for which anonymity was requested in the interview will remain anonymous. If you would like any other material to be anonymous, please let us know which are the relevant sections.

Signature of interviewer _____ date _____

Signature of interviewee _____ date _____

**Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement
The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology**

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005 Aleksander Imsarigic 11 March 2001
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007 anonymous Baker 3 August 2001
008 Liz Greene 14 August 2001
009 Greg Bogart 7 September 2001
010 Bob Mulligan 7 September 2001
011 Arlan Wise 7 September 2001
012 Melanie Reinhart 8 September 2001
013 Komilla Sutton 8 September 2001
014 Ken Irving 8 September 2001
015 Jonathan Cainer 8 September 2001
017 anonymous 8 September 2001
018 Jessica Adams 8 September 2001
019 anonymous 11 September 2001

- 020 anonymous 12 September 2001
- 021 Mavis Klein 12 September 2001
- 022 anonymous 3 December 2001
- 023 anonymous 3 December 2001
- 024 Joanne Wickenburg 7 December 2001
- 025 Robert Zoller 19 July 2002
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