

**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, I concluded that 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, for example, as to whether twice a year may imply 'frequently' or 'regularly', while once a year is equivalent to '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 frequent 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				
	AA		UAC	
Religion	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

Table 3. Astrologers' Religious Behaviour (Questions 20-24)

	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 necessarily indicate the coming of the New Age as a time of spiritual evolution; that is, that the New Age and the Age of Aquarius

are not identical. 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 (63%)	73 (52%)
No	36 (23%)	34 (24%)
Don't know	21 (14%)	33 (24%)
Age of Aquarius beginning		
Agree	88 (76.5%)	78 (56%)
Disagree	15 (13%)	16 (11.5%)
No opinion	12 (10.5%)	45 (32.5%)

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%)
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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.