

**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 *Complete 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. She 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 on 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 nonexistent 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.