ASTROLOGY IN EDUCATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHY

ALISON GWENDY BIRD

DPhil

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

September 2006

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

ALISON GWENDY BIRD

DPhil

ASTROLOGY IN EDUCATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHY

SUMMARY

This is a study of Western astrology in contemporary British education; it encompasses both the teaching of practical horoscopy and the theoretical consideration of astrology undertaken in the recently established university postgraduate programmes designed for the purpose. It is informed by classroom ethnography undertaken in a variety of learning forums ranging from recreational classes in basic chart interpretation, through courses offering formal qualifications to would-be professional consultant astrologers, to seminars studying the phenomenon historically, philosophically and sociologically from an academic perspective. The research subject is defined as *real* astrology to differentiate the craft as it is taught and learned from the media manifestations of the phenomenon that constitute its popular image. *Real* astrology is described in some detail before being positioned, for analytical purposes, in relation to divination, to science and to New Age religion. It is noteworthy that astrologers themselves seldom concur with outsiders' judgements of the epistemological nature of their practice and its products: this discrepancy invites a consideration of knowledge and belief, both in general and in specifically astrological usage; the appropriateness of the customary opposition of these terms to each other, and of their respective association with science and religion, are assessed. Whether conceived as knowledge or belief, the astrological enterprise of discerning meanings in the glyphs and symbols of a geocentric sky-map and translating these into everyday words is unarguably linguistically oriented; can astrology, then, be usefully described as a Wittgensteinian language-game? The thesis concludes with fieldwork recollections of recurrent themes in the teaching and learning of practical horoscopy followed by an ethnographic overview of astrology's recent bid to attain academic credibility. It is by means of this range of pedagogies that the astrological community functions to reproduce itself and to develop and share its knowledge at all levels from elementary practice to postgraduate theory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the inspirational support of my supervisors, Jon Mitchell and William Outhwaite, which has contributed in large measure to the enjoyable education that this project has been for me. The kindness and generosity of the astrologers – tutors, teachers and fellow students - among whom I did my fieldwork has been a major contributory factor to my satisfying experience of ethnographic research. I wish to record my gratitude and respect to them all, too many in number to be named individually here, I fear. The project was funded by an ESRC studentship that I was fortunate enough to be awarded, thanks in no small part to my supervisors, my referees and my tutors in the School of African and Asian Studies, the Social Anthropology Department, and the Social and Political Thought Programme at the University of Sussex to whom I owe, as well, the gift of my academic enlightenment. It goes without saying that what follows is entirely my own work: its shortcomings in no way reflect the quality of the advice of my supervisors or the input of my astrological advisors; the responsibility for any unwitting misrepresentation of my research community is naturally mine, for the perspective from which I have viewed it has necessarily been my own.

ASTROLOGY IN EDUCATION: AN ETHNOGRAPHY

CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	5.
2.	FOCUS AND METHOD	15.
3.	RESEARCH LOCALES	28.
4.	WHAT IS ASTROLOGY?	55.
5.	ASTROLOGY AS A DIVINATION SYSTEM	80.
6.	ASTROLOGY, SCIENCE AND NEW AGE RELIGION	109.
7.	ASTROLOGY, KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF	136.
8.	ASTROLOGY AS A LANGUAGE-GAME	156.
9.	LEARNING PRACTICAL ASTROLOGY	177.
10.	ASTROLOGY GOES TO UNIVERSITY	208.
11.	CONCLUSION	244.
12.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	269.
13.	APPENDIX A: ASTROLOGERS' CURRICULA VITAE	279.
14.	APPENDIX B: CHART DETAILS	292.
15.	APPENDIX C: ASTROLOGICAL ORGANISATIONS	295.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In September 2003, I was a member of a working party of astrologers who had given up a day to sort and catalogue the astrology books which were being assembled to form a library for the newly opened Sophia Centre at (what was then) Bath Spa University College (BSUC).[1] Most of the party were students who had enrolled on its inaugural *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* MA course in October 2002; one was its first PhD student who was embarking on a consideration of the epistemological status of astrological knowledge. I was present in my capacity, so described by the group from the outset of my research among them, as the Sophia Centre's 'official' ethnographer and, in more humorous terms, the 'spy'.[2] Leading the party was Nicholas Campion,[3] one of the Sophia Centre's initial three lecturers in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology who, as a research student within the Study of Religions Department at BSUC, was writing up his PhD thesis.[4] Not surprisingly, the conversation among us turned upon the challenges of writing for a PhD; the relative merits of different styles of ethnography were considered, particularly those employed by the authors whose studies most resembled our projects in that they, too, addressed current manifestations of pre- or non-modern beliefs and practices within supposedly modern communities.[5]

---

[1] One of six institutions to attain full university status in the Spring of 2005 as part of the government's initiative to create new teaching-led universities, Bath Spa University subsequently dropped 'College' from its title.

[2] Conducting ethnographic research in a community many of whose members are well versed in the theory and methodology of the social sciences can be a nerve-wracking experience. In these circumstances, informants ask pertinent questions about one's notes, one's opinions and judgements, one's intended writing-up strategies, and so on. They make jokes of the 'watch it, the ethnographer's written that down' variety, and describe themselves, tongue-in-cheek, as 'your natives', 'your people'. They are eager to educate one in the history of their community (from their individual perspectives, naturally enough!) and to recommend potential informants. And they are well aware of the potential that exists for their words to be misreported, their opinions misrepresented.

[3] See appendix A.

[4] He was subsequently to be awarded his doctorate, validated by the University of the West of England, in July 2004 during the same BSUC graduation ceremony at which six of his Sophia Centre students received the first Master of Arts degrees in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology*. He went on to be appointed Head of the Centre, but he was not destined to stay in post for long. What none of us had then foreseen, with or without the benefit of astrological prognostication, was that the university would serve notice on the Sophia Centre in 2006.

[5] A useful nested set of ethnographies, in this regard, comprises the very different studies of witchcraft practices which, starting with E.E. Evans Pritchard's classic study of the *Azande* (1976), continues with Jeanne Favret-Saada's account of 'deadly words' in the *Bocage*, France (1980) and moves on, via Tania Luhrmann's record of witchcraft practices in modern England (1989), to Susan Greenwood's more recent consideration of the 'otherworld' (2000). These studies are interestingly summed up, and criticised, in the chapter of Ronald Hutton's consideration of the history and origins of British Paganism (2003) entitled *Living with Witchcraft*. In the next chapter I will consider in more detail his observations on the

What he *really* disliked and distrusted about ethnographies of this type, complained Nick, were the seemingly obligatory preambles by means of which their authors invariably attempted – in somewhat sheepish fashion – to explain to their examiners and others of their rational, academic readers the supposedly life-long and deeply-held attractions which their subjects of study held for them, despite the latter's incontrovertibly irrational natures. This was simply a tactic, he objected, and as such it never rang true; how many of these researchers had *really* been involved in their fields before taking up their studies, and how many maintained their research contacts after completing their projects? Very few, if any. No, from start to finish they remained outsiders, as far as he was concerned, no matter how hard they tried to pass themselves off as natives.[6] *Real* insiders had no need to justify themselves as such; ethnographers who protested their involvement too much were not to be trusted, and that was that.

And so it is with apologies to Nick Campion that I will now embark upon the obligatory preamble which he so dislikes. But first I would like to say that I hope he will allow that my involvement with astrology (albeit that it was at a comparatively elementary level and on a part-time basis) does, in truth, predate my membership of the academy by some years. Indeed, the initiation of my present project was predicated on my having that degree of familiarity with the astrological language, and experience of expressing myself in its terms to others of its speakers, which is the essential prerequisite for any researcher planning to embark upon an anthropological study of astrology and astrologers. It is in part the fact that its vocabulary is not available to be learned by means of a crash course in a language laboratory that Western astrology has hitherto been largely – if not completely – ignored as a serious subject for ethnographic research. My knowledge of the language of astrology was central to the design, development and execution of this research. That is not to say that my relationship with

---

long-term changes effected in a research field by the presence of a participant observer which make interesting, if daunting, reading for a neophyte ethnographer.

[6] 'Was I planning to adopt an 'emic' or an 'etic' position in regard to astrology?', Nick Campion asked me; he preferred to use the terms 'observer near/far'. (Cf. Headland et al. (eds.) 1990 for an interesting overview of the insider/outsider debate and the origins and development of the terms 'emic' and 'etic'.) Answering that I considered my viewpoint to be largely 'emic', he said he was not happy to describe his own research approach in that terminology. His relationship with astrology was complicated, and critically judgemental too, by his own admission. Which was, on the face of it, a surprising thing for a professional astrologer to say, especially one whom I have frequently heard described as 'Mr Astrology' on account of his tireless efforts on behalf of the community. However, I was subsequently to come almost to expect to be surprised by the things that astrologers say.

astrology has not changed out of all recognition now that I have had the hugely enjoyable experience of spending four years with the learned and gifted astrologers whom I used to know only as the authors of the works on my astrology bookshelf, but am now privileged to number among my friends. My full-time fieldwork interaction with these 'cutting edge' astrological practitioners has enriched my realisation of their subject's potential just as it has extended my knowledge of its craft; it has left me hungry for more. This being the case, I have to tell you, Nick, that, regardless of any future – and different – research trajectories which I may be lucky enough to follow, you haven't seen the last of me yet! Following that 'aside', I will resume my preamble.

All my life, I have enjoyed learning: learning *how* as much as *what*: in other words, I have relished the acquisition of practical skills every bit as much as I have enjoyed the challenge of coming to grips with theoretical knowledge: I have approached the theoretical by way of the practical; the general by means of the specific. (This tendency probably goes some way to explain my identification of Social Anthropology as an appealing subject for undergraduate study when, in 1998, I was fortunate enough to be able to take time out from the workplace and become a full time undergraduate student at the University of Sussex.) Back in the 1960s, my first training after leaving school had been a diploma course at the Cordon Bleu School of Cookery in London; in choosing to learn to cook for a living, I had deliberately turned my back on the university degree which my teachers expected me to embark upon. Almost twenty years later, preparing to go back to work following a short break at home with my two sons, I felt I had outgrown cookery and accordingly took myself to college to update my secretarial skills with a view to exploring the world of 'respectable' desk jobs. Having brought my shorthand and typing, quite literally, up to speed, I was intrigued by the Association of Accounting Technicians' courses in book-keeping and accountancy which were being taught within the same college premises, and decided to give them a try. Somewhat to my surprise, I found I had a facility for converting puzzling groups of figures into tidy sets of accounts. I had unwittingly taken my first steps down the new career path that was to absorb me for more than ten years, leading me from my first position as accounts department junior, (in all senses but age!), to the roles of manager and director within a group of private limited companies operating in the English Language Training sector.

I worked harder at these jobs than was good for me and, as a remedial measure, I tried always to have things to do, and skills to learn, that took me into worlds far removed from my business environment. I broadened my knowledge of music, practised various styles of dancing, took courses in counselling skills and acquired a rudimentary awareness of aromatherapy, yoga, and assorted arts and crafts. Then one day, for reasons I have never been able rationally to explain even to myself, I signed up for a beginners' level astrology course which I had seen advertised in the prospectus of my local Adult Education Centre. Why did I do this? I can only summarise the contextual background to my decision and hope thus to illuminate my actions of the time.

I had just survived a period of my life which it would be fair to describe as extremely emotionally taxing. My fraught experiences of the recent past had been initiated when my husband, with whom I both lived and worked, left home quite suddenly. As a result, I was forced to sell up and embark upon a new life – at a time when I had least expected to – with a house and a mortgage all of my own. The latter was financed by my continued employment in the group of companies of which my husband remained a managing director and his new bride was a senior employee. Fortunately, I have always relished a challenge; and so I came to terms with my new life quite quickly, juggling the demands and responsibilities of my day job with the challenges of converting the near-derelict property I had purchased into a home for myself and a safe haven for my two grown-up sons. And just then, when I had thought my emotional, physical and intellectual capabilities were being stretched to their full capacities, my mother was diagnosed as suffering from terminal cancer. As an only child of an only child, the sole responsibility for her care and well-being devolved upon me; I took the full force of the emotional assaults which are the inevitable accompaniment of such circumstances. A few months later, following her tragically early death, it fell to me alone to clear my mother's house, (home in its time also to my maternal grandmother and before that to my maternal great-grandmother and great-great aunt), of the detritus deposited there by members of my family dating back through five generations of its history.

This briefest of seemingly obligatory preambles has in part set the scene for my finding myself sitting in a shabby classroom of a local school, on one evening of each week, being taught astrology. At the very least, it reminds me that I had just survived a

difficult few years; but it falls short of explaining why I chose astrology as opposed to some other New Age, individually supportive or personally empowering subject, or – in more esoteric terminology – of understanding why astrology chose me. For, in truth, I am unable satisfactorily to tell why I took up astrology. With the benefit of hindsight, the best I can do is recognise a few pointers which might in part explain my choice of evening class subject. Discerning symbolic linkages between two given factors, in preference to focusing on contra-indications to their being in any way related, or discovering connections with a range of other possible phenomena, is – after all – the quintessential astrological way of doing things; I will adopt it here, the better to explain why I embarked upon the study of astrology.

My mother had been a life-long enthusiastic sky watcher. She had encouraged me, from an early age, to identify and recognise the constellations and to watch the movements of the planets against their backdrop. Living as we did for some years in Kenya, she took advantage of the clear skies, temperate climate and lack of light pollution to wake me at various hours of the night before bundling me out of doors to stand in the garden and watch the ever-moving pageant of stars shining brightly above our heads. Years later, back in England, she remained an avid reader of monthly star-watching guides and loved nothing more than to drive between favourite countryside vantage points at all hours of the night and study the skies. She and my grandmother had known the rudiments of Sun sign astrology, at least in so far as they served to explain the basic character traits of family members, but neither had ever apparently thought to investigate the subject further and discover the details of these relatives' birthcharts. It wasn't that they were rationalists who disapproved of such matters – very far from it – it was just that their lives were informed and actively shaped by different forms of divination.

But, astrology hovered in the background of my growing years, for I had been brought up listening to tales of the allegedly amazingly accurate astrological prognostications of my colourful distant relative, John Varley, the nineteenth century watercolour artist who was also one of the most renowned astrologers of his era. As a result of his close friendship with William Blake, and of his relationship with the artist John Linnell,

Varley had published *A Treatise on Zodiacal Physiognomy* in 1828.[7] A number of his talented contemporaries, such as Mary Shelley, were reputedly not averse to taking his predictions into consideration (Bury 1946: 58-59), and he was apparently known as *Vates* (prophet or seer) by his pupils (Kauffmann 1984: 45). Not surprisingly, a number of his contemporaries – artistic and otherwise – took a more cynical view: John Constable, for example, dismissed Varley as a 'conjurer' (Curry 1992: 22). Constable's observation is recorded by Patrick Curry[8] in the chapter of his book *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology* devoted to the artist astrologer, entitled *John Varley: Magus*, during the course of his research for which he contacted a Varley cousin of mine.

The majority of them having been born and brought up in princely states in India for three generations from the late 1800s, members of my family were familiar with the pivotal role played by Vedic astrologers in deciding matters of importance for individuals, families and political states alike; I frequently heard my great-grandmother and her sisters assert that marriages elected astrologically had, in their opinions, far greater chances for success than those decided by personal whims in accordance with frivolous Western notions of sentimental love and mutual attraction! My mother had two school friends with whom she kept close contact until her death as I continue still to do. One of these studied astrology herself and remains today an enthusiastic practitioner; the other one's son, Simon Best,[9] was once a professional astrologer and sometime husband of Penny Thornton[10] who, Sun-sign columnist of Eddie Shah's *Today* tabloid newspaper from 1992 to 1994, publicised herself as Princess Diana's astrologer.

As I was newly and unexpectedly embarking on a single life, my mother supplied Simon with the date, time and place of my birth and persuaded him to draw up and read my natal chart. I remember asking his opinion of a recent purchase of mine – a how-to-

---

[7] Entitled *A Treatise on Zodiacal Physiognomy, illustrated with engravings of heads and features, accompanied by tables of the time of the rising of the Twelve Signs of the Zodiac, and containing also new and astrological explanations of some remarkable portions of ancient mythological history,* the book was published by Messrs. Longman & Co and priced at five shillings. Varley conceived it as the first of a series of four titles; the subsequent books were, however, never written (Bury 1946: 49 ff).
[8] See appendix A.
[9] See appendix A.
[10] See appendix A.

do astrology compendium that had caught my eye in the Astrology Shop in Covent Garden which I was just then in the process of digesting.[11] Looking back, I am now not at all surprised that he did not wholly approve of the authors' approach; if there is one universally valid statement which can be made about astrologers, it is that they seldom, if ever, wholly approve of each other's approach to their supposedly common subject. But, Simon did point out that, since my chart revealed that I had been born with a planetary configuration frequently found in the nativities of astrologers, I should think about studying the subject seriously.[12] If this was a tactic to recruit a new student for astrology, it certainly worked!

Before concluding my introduction, I will relate one last factor which ties me, sentimentally, to astrology. I had been engaged with my studies of the subject for about one year when, in the process of sorting and clearing family possessions, I discovered among my maternal great-grandfather's books a volume entitled *Astrology: How to Make and Read your own Horoscope* by an author who called himself *Sepharial*. This had been a popular textbook for astrological enthusiasts around the turn of the twentieth century and the fact that my great-grandfather had owned a copy would not necessarily, in itself, have been remarkable. Astrology had, after all, enjoyed something of a revival around that time as an offshoot of the popular interest in Theosophy with which it was, in its early twentieth century manifestation, inextricably linked.[13] I was unaware, however, of any particular reason for my great-grandfather to have had anything other than a passing general interest in the subject of Western astrology. (It was not until the

---

[11] This was Julia and Derek Parker's *Parkers' Astrology: the Definitive Guide to Using Astrology in Every Aspect of your Life* (1991).

[12] The aspect to which Simon Best referred was the Moon in trine aspect with Uranus. As described in a popular beginners' guide to astrology, trines of the Moon in a horoscope indicate natives who 'are able to make use of their creative imaginations and the automatic responses that stem from the unconscious' (Sakoian & Acker 1989: 264). More specifically, trines between the Moon and Uranus indicate that 'psychic abilities are often present, accompanied by an interest in astrology or other occult sciences' (Sakoian & Acker 1989: 391). This interpretation would not be approved by those more traditional astrologers who do not take account of the 'new' trans-Saturnian planets of which Uranus, obviously, is one.

[13] *Sepharial* was the fanciful alias of Walter Gorn Old. Born in 1864, Old had been instrumental in the late nineteenth century magical and occult revival, writing books entitled *A Manual of Occultism, Cosmic Symbolism* and *The Kabala of Numbers* as well as a range of astrological titles. He was a founding member of the Theosophical Society of Britain and a close companion of Madame Blavatsky, who allegedly tagged him 'the astral tramp' because of his purported habit of roaming about in his astral body at night (Curry 1999a). He died in 1929. Sepharial's work has recently been rescued from obscurity with the publication of a biography entitled *The Astral Tramp* written by Kim Farnell (1998), one of the first of The Sophia Centre's MA students at Bath Spa University College.

following generation that my family had acquired, with my grandmother's marriage to a Varley, its prestigious astrological connection in the person of the artist and magus – in Curry's (1992) terminology – John Varley.) Admittedly my great-grandfather, who had lived for very many years in what was then the Indian princely state of Kutch in which he was eventually to die, would have gained first hand experience of the authority afforded to the prognostications of local astrologers during the many years he worked for its royal family.

But, all that time later as I sat on the floor surrounded by dusty and dog-eared volumes – not in Kutch but in Sussex – I was delighted to discover, as I idly rifled the pages of his copy of *Sepharial's* astrology book, pencilled marginalia in my great-grandfather's hand which indicated that he had calculated and judged the horoscopes of the eldest of his two daughters, born in 1902, and his only son, born in 1909. Subsequently, I unearthed among my great-grandfather's papers a tattered document which, also dated 1909, recorded the infant boy's horoscope in the Vedic style together with the detailed prognostications of the Indian astrologer from whom my great-grandfather had evidently commissioned it in part, it seems from his accompanying notes, to study the effective differences between the tropical zodiacal positions of the Western style astrology outlined by authors such as Sepharial and the sidereal system employed by Indian practitioners. Having stumbled by accident upon my great-grandfather's enthusiasm for astrology, I now understood the significance of the telegrams and letters I had found among his papers which recorded the precise birth times of babies born to the family. Sadly, I have no means of learning more about my great-grandfather's astrological interests or practices although the data he left are a rare and precious research resource for me; his one son – my great uncle – was as surprised as I had been to find that his father had seen fit to calculate and/or consult, not one, but two horoscopes for him, and no one else whom I could question on the subject now survives.

Having speculated about my great-grandfather's early twentieth century involvement with astrology, it is time to turn to my own experiences as a student of the subject in the closing years of that same century. Signing up for my first astrology class felt a somewhat clandestine affair. I told only a selection of my friends and family, and was

particularly careful to withhold the information for some time from a dear old female friend who was a devout Roman Catholic for fear of seriously upsetting her.[14] Worrying about the rationally insupportable nature of my chosen subject, I reassured myself that the course was run, after all, by the Hastings Adult Education Authority and not by some weird outfit of moneymaking mindbenders. My first years of study offered a welcome diversion from the pressures of office life; and when, in 1998, I seized an unexpected opportunity to reinvent myself as a full-time undergraduate student of Social Anthropology studying in Sussex University's School of African and Asian studies (AFRAS), I found I was already too embedded in the small but close knit local community of astrological students – and for that matter too attached to my astrological studies – readily to abandon the subject in favour of studying something less academically contentious. Astrology afforded me with a practical 'hands on' and 'grass roots' perspective on the theoretical material I was tackling at university, much of which focussed upon systems of knowledge, religion, ritual and the like. Finding myself standing quite comfortably with one foot in each of two camps which could be said to house diametrically opposed forces, it was not long before it occurred to me that this was an ideal position from which to conduct an anthropological survey of astrology. Such a study appealed directly to my preference for approaching the theoretical by way of the practical, the general by means of the specific, while capitalising upon my grasp of the language of Western astrology, in itself a rare attribute among social anthropologists.

What follows is a record of my ethnographic experiences, from Autumn 2002 until the present, as a student of Western astrology in Britain. Having introduced myself above as an astrological enthusiast and described something of my own relationship with the subject dating back ten years or more, I will outline the focus of my research project in the next chapter before describing the method I used to pursue it and commenting briefly upon both. Following that, I will list my main research sites with relevant reference data before setting out to describe what Western astrology actually *is.* Thus

[14] When I did admit to Eileen that I was learning astrology, she was not the slightest bit upset. Talking to her about it was my first experience of the ubiquity of 'doublethink', to borrow George Orwell's (1989) term. Despite being a loyal and devoted member of her church who sat for some time each day praying with her rosary beads, and knowing full well the dictum of her church that astrology was sinful, she did not attempt to discourage me from my studies. In fact, she had no hesitation in giving me her birth data and discussing her horoscope with me.

defined, I will, in subsequent chapters, consider its position in relation to divination, to science and to New Age religion; this will call for an assessment of the terms knowledge and belief, and the accuracy of their customary respective association with science and religion, both in general and in specific astrological usage. Having considered whether astrologers relate to their art in terms of belief and/or of knowledge, I will move on to judge whether their linguistically centred task of translating horoscopic symbolism into everyday words can usefully be described in terms of a Wittgensteinian language-game. Thereafter, I will record ethnographically the ways in which astrology is taught to serious students and would-be professional practitioners: for it is thus that the astrological community functions to reproduce itself and to develop and share its knowledge at all levels from elementary practice to postgraduate theory; the new university programmes dedicated to an application of the latter to astrology will then be reviewed.

CHAPTER TWO

FOCUS AND METHOD

Having introduced myself in the previous chapter and given some consideration to my personal relationship with astrology, I will now delineate the focus of my project and outline my research method. I will address certain issues specific to both of these, commenting briefly on particular experiences before pondering the possible long-term effects upon a field that has been the subject of participant observation. In the next chapter, I will list my main research sites and include reference data related to them before hastening, in what follows, to give my readers some idea of what, precisely, Western astrology actually *is* in order that I may proceed to analyse the phenomenon, as described, in further detail.

STUDYING AT HOME

Suffice it to say at this point that, for the purposes of a doctoral research project, the subject of Western astrology covers too wide a ground to be considered in its entirety. Indeed, it is debatable whether it can accurately be conceived in terms of a single subject at all. To do astrology justice in these circumstances, only certain of its aspects can be addressed. When planning the project, my lifelong enthusiasm for the condition of being a student and my experience of being taught a range of subjects – both theoretical and practical, serious and frivolous – combined with the practical necessity that I narrow the focus of my study to bring it within manageable proportions and resulted in my concentrating my attention on the ways in which astrology is taught and learned in Britain today. There seems currently to be general agreement among non-astrologers that astrology is on the up-and-up in contemporary metropolitan communities; if this is indeed the case, it is to be assumed that the astrological community must be actively propagating its services and encouraging new recruits to learn its methods and traditions. Astrological education would seem then to be doubly important: as a marketable commodity in its own right; and as the means to maintain an adequate supply of trained practitioners to meet future consumer demand for astrological services.

Justified thus, my research took the form of classroom ethnography, (cf. Catherine

Pelissier's (1991) overview of *The Anthropology of Teaching and Learning*),[15] conducted in a range of astrological learning forums from local interest clubs and adult education classes, through the more serious diploma courses designed to train future professionals, to the astrology-related postgraduate university programmes which were enrolling their first students just as I embarked upon my fieldwork. But, as I explained in my introductory chapter, my familiarity with the astrological classroom predates my period as its ethnographer in the formal sense of that title and the anthropologist in me cannot help but identify threads of continuity running through the years of my astrological involvement, interweaving recollections from my earliest days of learning astrology with my more recent fieldwork experiences. This has been a two-way process, for my latest sojourn in the astrological field – while undoubtedly informed by my previous knowledge of its terrain - has resulted in my reconsidering my first memories of it with the benefit of a more informed hindsight.[16] I have been seriously committed to learning the language of astrology for some ten years now, and I cannot help but use that accumulated knowledge to substantiate my recent observations as a full-time ethnographer of the field. And, it should be acknowledged that my fieldwork interactions have been shaped in large part by my informants' perception of my personal relationship with the subject albeit that I have tried as a rule not to make much of this beyond the fact that I am conversant with its language.

Given this last fact, I have been disappointed and surprised to encounter a number of negative responses to my research project, not from members of the astrological community who would have been justified – after all - in objecting to being studied and reported ethnographically, but from numbers of faculty members and research students of mainstream British universities who have not hesitated to tell me that they thought it

---

[15] When conducting classroom ethnography, Catherine Pelissier (1991: 90-91) recommends an increased recognition of what she calls 'legitimate peripheral participation', which focuses upon practice, activity and agency in the context of teaching and learning situations, as a way of moving beyond inherited anthropological structures of theory that are predicated on a distinction between concrete 'primitive' and abstract 'civilised' ways of thinking.

[16] Cf. Anthony Cohen's musings on what he calls 'post-fieldwork fieldwork', a term with which he describes the *post-hoc* interpretations to which he submitted his protracted ethnographic experiences, re-examining old conclusions when 'the people in respect of whom I came to them are no longer there' (Cohen 1992: 350). In circumstances such as these, he suggests, we should not proceed from the axiomatic assumption that 'we', the researchers, are different from 'them', the researched. Rather, 'we must circumvent the "self-other" distinction to see what guidance our *self*-experience may offer us' (Cohen 1992: 339 ff. original emphasis).

ridiculous. Studying 'at home' in two senses of that term, remaining geographically close to my own university while conducting research in a native community of which I was already a part-time member, I have moved between worlds for the duration of my project. I have been scarcely unusual in this regard, and many of my near contemporaries have recorded their experiences of conducting research in similar circumstances. Among them, Kirin Narayan has sought to problematise the taken for granted binaries of home/away, insider/outsider, native/non-native by demonstrating how supposedly 'native' researchers are – in reality - affiliated variously both in and out of their so-called fields and 'belong to several communities simultaneously (not least of all the community we were born into and the community of professional academics)' (Narayan 1993: 24).

Narayan describes fieldwork as an experience of identity re-negotiation and hybridisation at perceived edges and borders, the fluid nature of which leads James Clifford, mindful that some fieldworkers find a stable base neither in their fields nor in their universities, to propose that *home* and *away* are more accurately positioned, as far as these scholars are concerned, not in opposition to each other but on an experiential continuum (Clifford 1997: 206-207). This is a useful conceptual model and one onto which I can readily map my more or less comfortable fieldwork encounters although I must report that, as an anthropologist of Western astrology, my sojourn in the astrological sphere was generally a whole lot more commodious than my time spent in academia. I have astrologers' kindness and generosity to thank for making my time with them so informative and enjoyable. But then, dedicated astrologers themselves travel on a daily basis between more-or-less-contradictory worlds in which they are by turn admired and ridiculed, and it is probably the case that academics don't. So, I consider my own brief experience of doing so as being apposite to my research and I will review this phenomenon and consider its implications in a later chapter dealing with astrology's current relationship with the academy.

As regards doing fieldwork, I suspect that – as a research method – it remains as intrinsically uncomfortable and unsettling as one of its pioneering practitioners, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, suggested some years ago. Speaking from considerable experience, he warned that the researcher of this type lives:

> In two different worlds of thought at the same time, in categories and concepts and values which often cannot easily be reconciled. One becomes, at least temporarily, a sort of double marginal man, alienated from both worlds. (Evans-Pritchard 1976: 243)

Conceived as an unobtrusive way of collecting 'real' and accurate data, I would suggest that participant observation is in fact frequently experienced as a challenging rite of passage for all concerned: simultaneously confronting the ethnographer herself, members of her home community and her academic fellows, as well as her research subjects and their social groupings, with all of their 'others'; with ways of thinking and being which have irreversible effects on all parties to the exercise.[17]

Those individuals who have been fortunate enough to practise participant observation and acquire what Clifford Geertz (2000: 94) calls 'the fieldwork cast of mind' ponder, almost as a rule, the novel outlooks it affords them both upon themselves as individuals and upon their taken-for-granted, home institutions; but, as professional social anthropologists who are chiefly concerned, at the end of their projects, judiciously to meld empirical experience, systematic activity and appropriate theory into academically acceptable products, I suspect that they are often less aware of the long-term changes made to the terrain of their research fields by the impressions left behind by their eco/ethnological footprints. Partial enculturation is, after all, the tried-and-tested way in which these products are produced by ethnographers who leave their fields in order to tell other people what went on in them.[18] Rarely, even today, do they need or intend to stay around to any great extent afterwards; this is certainly true of those who do their research in educational establishments. What, asks Alexander Massey (1998), would ethnographers do differently if they expected to become or remain members of their research groups? What investigative methods would they use, what questions would they ask, what story or stories would they tell, and how would their findings be disseminated?

---

[17] Cf. Akhil Gupta's and James Ferguson's (1997: 16 ff.) recommendation that fieldwork be acknowledged and taken seriously as a 'rite of passage'.

[18] As Kathleen Wilcox describes the goal of ethnography, particularly as it is applied to the study of schooling, it combines:

> The view of an insider with that of an outsider to describe a social setting. The resulting description is expected to be deeper and fuller than that of the ordinary outsider, and broader and less culture-bound than that of the ordinary insider. (Wilcox 1982: 462)

ECOLOGICAL ETHNOGRAPHY: PROTECTING THE FIELD

Being aware of the responsibilities – not to mention the personal inclination - of the participant observer to honour and keep alive the relationships that she has formed, and from which her research has profited, during her temporary immersion in the field, I pondered these and similar questions when, in the final stages of my project, I executed a partial retreat from my research community in order to consolidate my findings and write them up. Can an ethnographer be certain that she has always presented herself to her informants in terms which she can honestly maintain long after her project's completion? Has she misrepresented short-term interactions as ongoing friendships? How are her informants likely to react in future, both to her and – importantly – to subsequent generations of researchers who turn up on their doorsteps? Has she behaved responsibly both to her informants and to those future researchers who might follow her into the same field? Or has she 'queered the pitch' with predominantly self-serving behaviour? While thinking these issues through in relation to my own conduct, I was disturbed to read historian Ronald Hutton's report of conversations he has had lately with modern-day British Pagans who have some experience of being ethnographic research subjects.

In a chapter of his recent book, entitled *Living with Witchcraft* (2003), Hutton explains that it was his intention, from the outset of his project, to study historical Paganism holistically with reference to living practitioners and their practices. His purposes were not strictly anthropological in that he was setting out to write the history of modern witchcraft and not to discover and record contemporary practices and beliefs; but he is one of a number of historians who have adopted and adapted anthropological methodology for their own purposes. What interest me particularly are the reactions Hutton reports encountering when, at the start of his project, he explained his intended methodology to potential research informants in his field, many of whom had – as practising witches - been informants of Tanya Luhrmann's some years earlier (Hutton 2003: 260 ff.). No ethnographer of current metropolitan communities of adherents to supposedly non-, or pre-modern beliefs can have failed to study Luhrmann's 1980s report of witchcraft practices in London, which was – and remains - groundbreaking in paying serious attention to a phenomenon which members of the traditional academy have tended to regard as an anomaly best ignored.

In her published ethnography, Luhrmann (1989) reserves judgement upon the veracity of contemporary magicians' ideas, falling back upon what might be termed the standard anthropological get-out: she sits on the fence between truth and falsehood and makes it plain that she does not 'consider the question of … whether the strange forces and abilities spoken of in magic might actually exist' to fall within the remit of her project (Luhrmann 1989: 16). She is more interested, she tells us, to examine the processes that lead 'apparently rational people to accept outlandish, apparently irrational beliefs' (Luhrmann 1989: 7ff.). Her subjects are *not,* she insists, to be regarded as 'an enclave of the *Azande* on the Hornsey Rise': for, while the *Azande* had supposedly lived exclusively according to the tenets of one set of knowledge values, her informants are guided, at the very least, by two such systems which would appear at first sight to be mutually exclusive (Luhrmann 1989: 344). In an attempt to understand what she calls the 'multifarious minds' of her research informants, Luhrmann describes as 'interpretive drift' the gradual conceptual movement with which their modes of explanation or rationalisation slide in accommodation of the seemingly contradictory belief systems with which they operate (Luhrmann 1989: 283).

Ironically, Luhrmann was censured from both sides of the fence, so to speak: rationalists criticised her for withholding truth-judgements in favour of relativistic sociological analyses; relativists accused her of judging one set of beliefs in the terms of another. Now, Hutton reports having uncovered disapproval of Luhrmann from a different quarter: from within her erstwhile research community. He discusses with candour what he calls the 'impact' of Tanya Luhrmann on the communities of British witches and magicians whose friendship and confidence she solicited during her period of participant observation (Hutton 2003: 261 ff.). He records the considerable efforts he and a colleague, Joanne Pearson, have had to make, as prospective ethnographers of the Pagan community, to overcome the suspicion which Luhrmann has left in her wake. 'You're not going to do another Tanya on us, are you?' Pearson was typically asked (Pearson, cited by Hutton 2003: 261). For, a number of Luhrmann's informants have come, on Hutton's account, to feel that she abused their confidence and used the information they had given her in good faith to deride them in print before discarding them, and magic too, to pursue the academic career they had unwittingly facilitated. Hutton is careful also to point up the innovative aspects of Luhrmann's analysis and to

explain the rationalist parameters within which her project was conducted. He tells us that a number of her informants, (a minority it must be said), are of the opinion that she actually did nothing other than that which she had signalled from the outset; but most of them are apparently not disposed to extend a welcome to any more social anthropologists who come calling (Hutton 2003: 261).

Indubitably charmed, by her own account, with the world of magic and acknowledging the welcome and support of magicians whom she met during her fieldwork and came to know as friends, Luhrmann describes herself as having been saved from submitting altogether to its temptations by her 'strong disincentive against asserting that rituals had an effect upon the material world' coupled with the fact that:

> The very purpose of my involvement – to write an observer's text – would have been undermined by my assent to the truth of magical ideas. (Luhrmann 1989: 320)

Hutton records recent comments of Luhrmann's which indicate that she has distanced herself still further from witchcraft, and is downplaying its overall influence in contemporary British society (Luhrmann, cited by Hutton 2003: 284). Apparently, then, we must conclude that she had only a professional and short-lived interest in witchcraft; if she had been compelled by a deep, personal impulse to continue its practices (albeit covertly to avoid academic derision) then I feel sure someone would have reported conducting some ritual or another with her by now. And they haven't. So, it appears that Luhrmann held true to the inherited modernist anthropological instruction given to the first British participant observers: you should/could *act* like natives, but you were on no account to *think* like them.[19] Arguably, by doing this, she *had* betrayed those who had inducted her in their magical practices, by performing their initiation rituals in bad faith. Indeed, she declares early in her monograph that she never has 'believed' (her quotation marks) in magic, continuing: 'I am no witch, no wizard, though I have been initiated as though I were' (Luhrmann 1989: 18). A statement, this, which any serious witch or wizard would reject as a self-contradiction. Jeanne Favret-Saada (1980) discovered that 'there is no room for uninvolved observers' in this particular research

[19] Cf. some interesting anthropological thoughts on secularism in a debate initiated by Charles Stewart, who discusses the accepted ethnographic practice of attempting to share religious experiences, to get initiated as a shaman or a witch for instance, without permanently engaging belief (Stewart et al. 2001: 325-344).

field during her investigation of witchcraft beliefs in Normandy's *Bocage*: she did not fully comprehend the phenomenon until, by talking of it and about it, by speaking its language, she necessarily become personally entangled in its practices (Favret-Saada 1980: 10-12).

Transposing Luhrmann's assertion from the world of witchcraft to that of astrology, I know of no astrologer who would not argue that the only way to learn how to practise the art is to *do* it, to commit oneself to judging the meaning of a chart; there is no halfway house of initiation which precedes dedicated and serious engagement. These few words of Luhrmann's identify her as the type of researcher whom I have heard astrologers criticise. In my introductory chapter, I reported astrologer academic Nicholas Campion's[20] ridicule of what he took to be the feigned long-term interest and exaggerated personal involvement that ethnographers are wont to claim as justification for their choices of a particular research field. These assertions of foreknowledge and familiarity were, he told me, invariably to be taken with a large pinch of salt. Their projects completed and their doctorates done, the informants upon whom these researchers had relied for the period of their fieldwork never saw them again, he quipped.

Hutton's report makes salutary reading for an ethnographer such as myself, coming to the end of a research period in a home field populated entirely by literate and articulate informants, many of whom have always been as aware as I of my strategies and motivations. Possibly there is some comfort to be found in absorbing his style of participant observation which, very different from Luhrmann's, has the potential for being less ecologically threatening to his field than that of the researchers whose protested personal attachments have been lampooned by Campion. Paganism is, Hutton tells us, the home ground in which he grew up as a native. Although he denies any strong personal religiosity, he nevertheless acknowledges the power and potential for transformation inherent within the experience of magical ritual practices while, on the other hand, surprisingly defining his personal relationship with the academy as being quasi-religious, rather than exclusively intellectual, in nature (Hutton 2003: 269-270). Hutton's research orientation is therefore doubly reflexive. Moving between his two

[20] See appendix A.

worlds, he is uniquely positioned to understand what is going on in both of them, and to make two-way authoritative analyses. He notes that his research ended by revealing at least as much to him about the attitudes of the non-Pagan world and the academy towards magic than it had illuminated Paganism, his supposed research focus.

His analysis bears witness to the potential for success which attaches to that involved style of practice described and recommended for those with genuinely dual citizenships of field and academy, by Edith Turner, and termed 'radical participation' (Turner 1992a: 28 & 1992b). With roots in both communities, it is to be presumed that ethnographers practising 'radical participation' will have an inbuilt ecological awareness of their fields and an innate desire to protect and conserve their environments: for themselves, their informants and for future generations of sociological researchers. Their twin perspectives will qualify them to identify – and theorise – the social structures and structuring structures embodied and encoded in what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as the habitus of the citizens of both their worlds. Bourdieu recommends that such commentaries should speak from the middle ground and take the form of 'a critical and reflexive realism which breaks at once with epistemic absolutism and with irrationalist relativism' (Bourdieu 1997: 133). This seems an ideal attitude for a researcher such as myself to aspire to when reviewing the formal learning situations in which I practised participant observation for most of my fieldwork, as I will outline below.

'MULTILOCALE' CLASSROOM ETHNOGRAPHY

I may not have travelled overseas to an exotic island location to do my fieldwork in the tradition of my ethnographic forebears, but my 'multilocale ethnography' (Marcus and Fischer 1986) of astrology classrooms and seminars in contemporary Britain required my spending considerable amounts of time sitting on trains and driving, especially between the universities hosting the new astrology-related programmes; (from Bath to Canterbury along what astrologer academic Geoffrey Cornelius[21] reminded me was once the well-trodden 'Pilgrims' Way'). So, James Clifford unsettled me when, examining the increasing fluidity of the anthropological 'where' which Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997: 2) describe as that 'mysterious space' in which 'an "Other"

[21] See appendix A.

culture or society lies waiting to be observed and written', he contends that 'multilocale *fieldwork* is an oxymoron' (Clifford 1997: 190, original emphasis). Clifford (1997: 185-222) considers the current conditions in which ethnographers practise fieldwork, their distinctive research method referred to by George Stocking as 'the basic constituting experience both of anthropologists and of anthropological knowledge' (Stocking 1992: 282), and assesses how its changing relations with travel have altered the discipline's distinctive research method. He acknowledges that, as the numbers of discrete and spatially distant fields of study dwindle, ethnographers increasingly practise – in Renato Rosaldo's neat phraseology - 'deep hanging out'; this is an exercise associated by Clifford, not so much with the topographical mapping of a geographical field, as with an interaction with a habitus, (a cluster of embodied dispositions and practices), demonstrated by mobile individual research subjects (Clifford 1997: 188 & 199). Being someone already accustomed to 'hanging out' in astrology classrooms in my spare time, my period of fieldwork afforded me the opportunity of doing this on a full-time basis: my personal relationships with my tutors and fellow students were correspondingly extended and my 'hanging out' concomitantly 'deepened' in line with George Marcus's observations of the extent, given anthropologists' increasingly cosmopolitan demography, to which today's researchers can employ their own identities reflexively to facilitate the formation of gestalt field encounters (Marcus 1998: 246-247).

So much for the 'how' of my fieldwork; the interrelated 'where' or – more correctly - 'wheres' of my 'deep hanging out' with the habitus of my mobile, individual research subjects are straightforwardly identifiable as the locations in which self-styled astrologers teach students, who have invested their resources to learn, the practical skill of horoscopy. What follows will establish that, while individual practitioners and schools demonstrate very different approaches to their subject, they nonetheless describe themselves as astrologers and define what they teach their students as (not simply) astrology but customarily as the best of all possible astrologies. Some years ago, my initial encounter with the subject was facilitated by my local Adult Education Authority, which at that time offered practical astrology lessons in its evening classes prospectus. My choice of courses on which to enrol for the purposes of this research project was informed by my prior knowledge of the field and dictated by the availability

of real – as opposed to virtual – learning forums within logistic reach. My personal contacts snowballed as a result of my participation (as a fee-paying learner and self-declared anthropological observer) in weekly classes and one-day workshops, and of my attendance (in the same capacity) at a variety of conferences organised both by the Astrological Association of Great Britain and by the newly instituted astrology-related university programmes; being generously invited to audit the latter extended my contacts beyond (and in some senses above) my fellow students of practical astrology to the many community elders, educationalists and authors who - some as teachers but more as students – formed the vanguard of this new astrological endeavour.

As a neophyte classroom ethnographer, I was confronted with the tensions that attend a researcher's attempt to play two, mutually contradictory, roles simultaneously when I enrolled on a recreational course run by the Brighton and Hove Adult Education Authority and taught by an astrologer named Jed. I was by this time well accustomed to the social world of the astrology classroom, having been a student of the subject – and of Jed's – for some years. But I had now to declare myself to be *as well* something altogether 'other' than a participant in the group: for I was also its academic observer. From this period onwards, for such short periods of time that tutors and students considered my dual roles, my presence had the potential to threaten the internal coherence of the knowledge system which we were engaged in acquiring. But it has been my experience that neither tutors, fellow students, nor for that matter I myself, have paid my contradictory positions much heed in environments informed entirely in terms of astrology. Upon first hearing what I was doing, Jed urged me to enrol on one of his private courses if I wanted to learn 'some quality astrology'; 'don't waste your time on practitioners who don't know their craft', he advised me. He did not refer again to my study.

Naturally, the reactions of tutors and fellow students to my project varied in relation to their experience of such matters: on the one hand, I would be asked naïve questions such as 'what are you hoping to find out?' and 'are you aiming to discover whether astrology is true or not?'; at the other extreme, astrologers as knowledgeable as I about what it is that social anthropologists actually do generously included me in their frequently intellectually challenging discussions, while retaining the humorous attitude

of cognisant social research subjects referred to in my first chapter. I suspect that the reactions I experienced in the field mirrored individuals' attitudes towards the new astrology-related university programmes with which it was often presumed I was related: the very occasional negativity I encountered, (one tutor tetchily supposed that I was wired for sound), was more a symptom, I believe, of a larger animosity towards the extension of the existent community hierarchy as a result of the academicisation of astrology than it was a personal reaction against me.

Education having been the central focus of my research, I have been privileged to learn from and with articulate and literate astrologers; as already noted, I have been party to any number of high level debates about the practices and theories of astrology and its current manifestations in Western society. My project having been planned to give an ethnographic account of the community at the time of its recent offensive to re-establish astrology's long-lost academic credibility, my fieldwork was in part conducted in the seminar rooms of the new university programmes which had rallied many of Britain's academically inclined astrologers to their support, as mentioned above. Numbers of them enrolled as students upon the first of the university degree courses; a few were appointed to teach them. Those championing astrology's academic cause seemed generally to think it only right and proper that they should have an ethnographic research student present among them at this momentous time who, after all, shared their task of bringing astrology to the attention of the university establishment. So, it turned out that numbers of my informants were the elders of the community of British astrological practitioners. As an apprentice ethnographer and evening-class enthusiast for astrology, I found myself mingling with the Magi: these are published authors, professional lecturers and regular contributors to astrological journals; they are frequently invited by the latter to share their views in interview format with other accomplished practitioners. Numbers of them post commentaries on their websites and contribute articles to the few serious Internet forums which exist for the purpose.

As a consequence of these perhaps unusual ethnographic circumstances, I have often deemed it more accurate to cite published words rather than risk misrepresentation by copying snippets of involved debates from my notebooks. I have done this only when satisfied that the printed copy coincides in all regards with the tenor of the spoken word;

if the latter differed significantly from the former, then that would in itself be noteworthy. But it has been my observation of my informants that, when they have thought through a theory to their satisfaction, promulgated a philosophical notion with which they are happy, or delineated a practical horoscopic technique that seems to work, then they will propagate this steadfastly whether it be in public or private debate, from the lecture platform or in actual or virtual print. So, subsequent chapters will include many more textual citations than would find their way into ethnographies of less literary-oriented communities. The pedagogical focus of my project additionally lends itself to an academic and referential style of reporting which numbers of astrological authors are themselves increasingly adopting.

In this chapter I identified my main research interest to be the teaching and learning of Western astrology, (at all levels from first steps in chart calculation and interpretation to theoretical and academic considerations of the subject's history, sociology and philosophy), and outlined – practically and theoretically - the method with which I studied my chosen field. I will continue, in my next chapter, by listing the main sites at which I conducted classroom ethnography; I will include reference data relevant to each institution as background information to my subsequent reports of observations and interactions at each of them. Thereafter, I will describe and define Western astrology before exploring it in theoretical and ethnographic detail.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH LOCALES

Having introduced myself in the first chapter as something of an enthusiast for Western astrology, I went on in the next to outline the focus of my research and to describe the ways in which I conducted my project; I explained my reasons for choosing the first, and briefly discussed the second from both theoretical and personal perspectives. In what follows, I will record my main research sites, commenting upon each and listing sufficient reference data to acquaint my reader slightly with the structure of astrological educative bodies.

LEARNING PRACTICAL ASTROLOGY

Some ten years ago, my first astrology classes were run by the Adult Education Department of my hometown of Hastings. When my first tutor, Sarah, moved away from the area the classes were taken over and taught by a primary school teacher classmate of ours but, consistently failing to attract sufficient numbers of students to be considered viable by the Authority, no further courses actually ran within its remit. Reluctant to abandon our astrological education, a group of Sarah's students, including myself, searched for our next nearest classes and began travelling each week to a similar course at Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology which was taught by an astrologer called Jed. But it was not long before this programme also came to an end. As a small local community of students, we set up an association called Southeast Astrology which ran regular meetings and lectures as well as weekly classes at times when there were none being offered by Adult Education Authorities within our locality.

WITH THE ADULT EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Following their 1960s and 1970s heyday when any course enrolling more than ten students attracted subsidies, evening class programmes had been steadily contracting in line with a directive from the Thatcher government that withdrew funding from any subject that was not regarded as vocational or beneficial to the needs of the country. In the late 1990s, New Labour partially restored the subsidies and student numbers accordingly increased but, like its predecessor, this government remained chiefly interested in ensuring the future of courses that led to career-enhancing qualifications (Pidd 2005: 3). My first two astrology tutors were innovative educators who managed

to get their programmes validated to offer Open College Network credits. This enhanced their standing with the Education Authorities but it did not appeal to prospective astrology students who were as unenthusiastic to do the homework assignments and pay the seemingly ever-increasing fees as they were to obtain the qualifications that attached to them. Astrology classes are now rarely offered by Adult Education Authorities. And this situation is most unlikely to change, as the Government has just announced further cuts in its subsidies for evening classes; some seventy colleges are destined to close as a result of what has been hailed 'the end of night school' (Talbot 2006). The year-on-year reduction in the overall funding of recreational evening classes has destroyed what was once a thriving concern, both for astrological educators who learned their trade by teaching adult students in the public sector, and for future generations of serious astrological practitioners who now have little option but to pay one of the astrological teaching bodies and study privately and predominantly by correspondence. The recent decline in numbers of astrology students is in large part attributable to the reduction in subsidies for non-academic courses run by Adult Education Authorities throughout the country.

In September 2002, newly embarked upon my fieldwork research as a classroom ethnographer, I signed up - while I still had the chance - for another of Jed's courses which was being offered by Brighton and Hove Adult Education Department. For this was to be the last of many such public programmes which Jed had taught in Hove, Eastbourne and London: he had decided henceforth to concentrate on developing the private courses which he ran from home. It was also the final chance to learn astrology in the public sector within a wide area of South East England and beyond: the Education Authority was not planning to run any further courses of this kind. Entitled *The New Astrology*, this was a one-year programme; lessons ran each week in term-time at the Connaught Centre in Hove. Payable termly in advance, they cost around £6 each and, in common with my earlier Adult Education courses, were open to anyone who rang up to enrol irrespective of their level of knowledge.

WITH THE FACULTY OF ASTROLOGICAL STUDIES

To pursue my research in the astrology classroom I enrolled, towards the end of 2002, on a Faculty of Astrological Studies (FAS) course. This was to be my first experience

of attending a regular weekly programme run independently of an Adult Education Authority by a private astrological educational institution. Arguably the most mainstream of such bodies, the FAS describes itself as being founded on 7th June 1948 at 19.50 BST as:

> An offshoot of the Astrological Lodge of London, from which it became independent in 1954. Charles Carter and Margaret Hone were instrumental in the foundation and development of the Faculty, as a project to raise the standard of astrological education. … Over the years more than ten thousand students from over ninety countries have enrolled on the Faculty's courses and many of the world's leading astrologers, such as Liz Greene, Charles Harvey, Julia Parker, Melanie Reinhart and Howard Sasportas, began their studies with the Faculty. All of its tutors are holders of the Faculty's Diploma and teach courses leading to Certificate and Diploma qualification levels in classes and by distance learning. (03/2005: http://www.astrology.org.uk/about_fas.htm)

As it turned out, signing myself up for a FAS course proved to be no easy matter. I had been introduced, in the capacity of ethnographer, by my former evening class tutor Sarah who, having eventually obtained her Diploma after some years' of work, was at the time registered as a Faculty tutor. Having obtained no answers from the administrative office to a number of e-mails, I had no better luck on the telephone. After some perseverance, I eventually managed to talk to the Faculty's President, Clare Martin,[22] who was professional but also charming and enthusiastic about my project. She checked out my astrological knowledge by asking me about my current transits. I told her that I had, earlier that morning, been talking to Sarah about the fact that transiting Uranus was currently conjoining my natal Midheaven; she laughed and told me that she had 'gone into astrology' under the influence of the selfsame planetary configuration.

It was suggested that I sign up for Module Four of the FAS Diploma programme, which was planned to run in central London from January to March 2003. Module Five was to be taught to the same group of students over two weekends during May and June; Module Six would be run at the annual FAS summer school at Brasenose College in Oxford. (In the event, Module Five did not run as a taught programme because insufficient of the Module Four students signed up for it; I do not know how many of these elected to follow the course by correspondence.) Before enrolling on any

[22] See appendix A.

modules, course participants were required to register as student members of the FAS at a cost of £25. Module Four was, in fact, the introductory course of the Faculty's newly remodelled Diploma programme, those numbered from One to Three being Certificate-level courses. It was to be taught predominantly by Liz over ten weeks; each lesson lasted two and a half hours, and the total cost was £220. The course was advertised (somewhat ambitiously) as covering:

- The theory of time and life cycles in relation to the horoscope. The interpretation of the cycles of the individual planets and the nodes, including planetary returns, the transits of the planets and nodes through signs and houses and by aspect to other planets;
- An introduction to the Graphic Ephemeris;
- The calculation and interpretation of Solar and Lunar Returns;
- Understanding human nature and the human condition, and an analysis of astrology's relationship to science, physics, medicine, religion, politics, literature, psychology and philosophy through the centuries. (FAS Prospectus 2003)

Lessons were supplemented by a CD-Rom of course material which, designed primarily for the majority of Faculty students who study by correspondence, was distributed to all those following its programmes.[23] Having this learning resource on their home computers and being expected to use it for lesson preparation encouraged a number of my classmates to continue their studies by correspondence and save themselves the bother of travelling into central London once a week.

WITH THE COMPANY OF ASTROLOGERS

Despite an early – and magical - encounter with the Company of Astrologers (CoA) at one of their summer symposia in Brighton, (which I describe in my chapter entitled *Learning Practical Astrology*), I had neither attended any of their regular Hampstead

[23] The CD-Rom supplied to all students, and entitled *FAS Diploma Course Module Four Student Manual*, provided an overview of the topics covered within Module Four, together with articles and outlines of practical exercises. Its contents were headed as follows:

> ABOUT TIME I: 1) an introduction to forecasting.
> INTRODUCTION TO TRANSITS: 2) an introduction to transits and to the theory and practice of cycles.
> WORKING WITH TRANSITS: 3) working with transits; 4) eclipses and the Saros cycles; 5) the nodal cycle; 6) the Chiron cycle; 7) the graphic ephemeris; 8) solar and lunar returns; 9) putting the transits together – a case study.
> SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT: 10) the philosophy and practise (sic) of astrology.
> CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT COMPONENT: formal tutor-marked assignment – the calculation and interpretation of your own solar return chart for the next year.
> (06/2002: Faculty of Astrological Studies Student Manual)

lectures nor had the chance to enrol on one of their courses. In Spring 2004, I signed up for a Module of their Foundation Course which was scheduled to run fortnightly in London, knowing that their approach would be very different from that of the FAS, whose Diploma Module Four I had just completed.

The Company came into being in 1983 following a doctrinal and political dispute among the membership of the Astrological Lodge of London. The heterodox breakaway movement was led by the Company's sometime President Geoffrey Cornelius[24] who, with his partner Maggie Hyde,[25] remains its guiding force to this day. The CoA advertises itself as a non-profit organisation whose members and friends receive no dividends and whose surplus funds are used to further its educational work. It describes itself as offering a full teaching programme and a forum for promoting and sharing the practice of astrology as a way of insight and self-knowledge. Its publicity material describes its activities and splits them between two levels as follows:

- The first level covers the symbolic, astronomical and technical framework required in the interpretation of the birthchart. Our tutors are skilled astrologers with many years of experience, and the Company is recognised as one of Britain's leading teaching bodies in practical astrology. The Foundation Programme provides a sound basis in both traditional theory and the best of modern practice of horoscope interpretation.

- The second level is related to the Company's distinctive approach, which interprets astrology as Divination. We are also interested in those aspects of philosophy and psychotherapy which illuminate astrology as a symbolic language. Working within traditional craft horoscopy, we wish to understand the limits as well as the possibilities of practice, and to open up the questions of how and why astrology works. Our higher level work is represented in courses such as *Craft & Creativity*.[26] We provide an environment of training and supervision for the professional consultant astrologer, as well as for those seeking self-knowledge. We also offer other studies in divination, especially Tarot and the *I Ching*. (06/2005: http://coa.hubcom.net)

I attended classes of the F3 Foundation Course Module from May 2004. Entitled *Locating Significance,* this course was designed for students with a basic knowledge of the horoscope and those who had, ideally, completed the previous two Foundation Course modules, which were: F1, *Planets, Signs and Houses*; and F2, *The Language of*

[24] See appendix A.
[25] See appendix A.
[26] To my knowledge, it is some time since this course has been taught.

the Horoscope. This third module of the one-year Foundation programme was taught by Kate over six fortnightly sessions of one-and-a-half hours at the Hampstead premises of the Philadelphia Association used by the CoA; the course cost £68 with an £8 reduction for advance payment. It aimed to teach its unique *Locating Significance* approach to horoscopic interpretation which is:

> Based on significance, rather than synthesis, making use of traditional theory and the best of modern practice. Important themes are the symbolic attitude, finding key signatures and letting the chart speak. (Company of Astrologers Handout re Foundation and Diploma Programmes: 2005)

In addition, it was stated that the course would introduce methods of progressing the natal chart in time to include cycles, planetary returns and transits. Collectively, the three Foundation Level programmes, together with an Astronomy and Horoscope Computation workshop, were designed to raise neophyte students to an Intermediate Level at which point they would, it was hoped, be 'confident in finding [their] way around a horoscope and be able to make an effective interpretation of the birthchart' (Company of Astrologers handout re Foundation Programme: 2004).

The F3 Foundation Course that I attended ran concurrently with a second six-week programme which demonstrated the close relationship between the Company and the *Study of Mysticism and Religious Experience* postgraduate programme at the University of Kent at Canterbury (UKC). Entitled *Providence*, *Time and Destiny*, this second course was taught by Dr Joseph Milne in another room within the same building. Honorary lecturer on the UKC programme, and *not* an astrologer, Dr Milne's lectures were billed as follows:

> The ancients understood nature as revealing a divine harmony and destiny. In these seminars we will explore how this insight offers a key to art, drama, architecture and alchemy before the dawn of the modern age in which it was lost. (Company of Astrologers handout re course: 2004)

In January of 2005, I enrolled on a second course with the CoA. This was the first of its Diploma Course Modules; it followed the same format as the previous one in comprising six fortnightly sessions of one-and-a-half hours, to take place before the regular public lectures held by the Company in Hampstead, and one four-hour seminar to run on a Saturday afternoon. In addition to augmenting students' knowledge of the

Company's *Locating Significance* approach to chart interpretation introduced in the F3 Foundation Course Module, the course was advertised as reviewing 'specialised factors' to include Fixed Stars, Arabic Parts and Chart Signatures. Taught by Kate, the Module cost £105, with a £10 reduction for advance payment. It was the first in a series which makes up the Company of Astrologers' Diploma and was followed in the programme by: D2, *Timing*; D3, *Horary*; D4, *Special Techniques*; D5, *Astrology and Psychoanalytic Thought*; and D6, *Cosmology and Divination*.

In addition to timetabling the lessons, Maggie Hyde and Pat Blackett[27] compile and organise the regular Hampstead lecture programmes, inviting speakers from a range of astrologers who could be construed as being broadly sympathetic to the Company's 'line'. Lecturers are reimbursed with notional travelling expenses. Admission in 2005 was charged at £4 for CoA Friends who subscribed to the fortnightly bulletin, £5 for non-subscribers. (According to the CoA website, the bulletin is scheduled for publication around the dates of the New and Full Moons at an annual cost of £25 for e-mail distribution and £45 for a posted copy. During 2003, only fourteen bulletins were issued; by 2004, this had decreased to a mere three; to May of 2006, none have been produced.) Attendees at the lectures range from ten to thirty in number; most are more than competent amateur practitioners, some are semi, or fully, professional astrologers.

The programme for the Autumn Term of 2004 advertised the following lecturers and titles:

- Pat Blackett and Geoffrey Cornelius *Jupiter in Libra*
- Jane Amanda[28] *Trouble with the Law*
- John Wadsworth[29] *Astrology as a Ritual Act: Symbolism as a Key to Transformation*
- Patrick Curry[30] and Maggie Hyde *The Cock and the Chameleon*
- Adam Smith[31] *Continuous Correspondence and the Consultation Chart*

The programme for the Spring Term of 2005 included:

- Maggie Hyde *The Year Ahead 2005*

[27] See appendix A.
[28] See appendix A.
[29] See appendix A.
[30] See appendix A.
[31] See appendix A.

- Elisabeth Brooke[32] *Medical Astrology*
- Vernon Wells[33] *Oriental Symbolism*
- James Brockbank[34] *Meaningful Responses*
- Dr Angela Voss[35] *The Mundus Imaginalis*

(05/2005: http://coa.hubcom.net/index.htm)

In May 2005, an addendum in red type on the CoA website announced that there would be no evening seminars that Summer Term, as the organisers need to take a break. Nonetheless, they promised that they were planning some stimulating sessions for the upcoming Autumn Term (05/2005: http://coa.hubcom.net/index.htm). This indicated, not so much a loss of interest in astrology on the part of the Company faithful, as a shift of focus by its leading personnel from their own programmes of lectures and teaching to the astrology-related postgraduate university courses initiated with funding from the Sophia Project, of which more below. Already a doctoral student at UKC, Geoffrey Cornelius was involved from the outset with the new *Cosmology and Divination* programme at that institution as both student and tutor. Maggie Hyde, Pat Blackett and Vernon Wells all subsequently enrolled on the UKC programme.

WITH THE ASTROLOGICAL LODGE OF LONDON

Another venue where the enthusiast can attend affordable astrological lectures and lessons throughout the year, as well as occasional full-day or weekend workshops, is the Gloucester Place, London headquarters of the Theosophical Society which doubles as meeting place for the Astrological Lodge of London (ALL). This oldest of the English astrological societies is – aside from being the body from which first the FAS and later the CoA broke away – probably the only one still offering weekly (during term times) tuition and instruction in astrology to the public in Southern England, and very likely beyond. Their website starts a cursory outline of the Lodge's history with the following quote from the late Charles Carter, one of British astrology's most respected father-figures:

> Astrology is no mere system of fortune telling, but a Universal Philosophy. The object of the Lodge is to form a strong body of earnest students, able to promulgate ASTROLOGICAL TRUTH. In this work we bespeak the help of

[32] See appendix A.
[33] See appendix A.
[34] See appendix A.
[35] See appendix A.

> every serious student, each according to his or her capacity. (Carter, cited on ALL website. Original Emphasis. 06/2005: http://www.astrolodge.co.uk)

It continues:

> The Astrological Lodge of London was born when the astrologer Alan Leo, with the agreement of his wife Bessie, proposed that a London branch of the Theosophical Society should be set up to amalgamate the study of astrology and theosophy. This was on 13th July, 1915. The first meeting took place on 13th September, 1915 with Bessie Leo as President. Now, The Astrological Lodge of London rents rooms for their Monday meetings from the Theosophical Society, … but the ALL is an independent body. Its work is the study of astrology in all its branches and 'from the highest point of view', as its constitution says, with attention to the spiritual, historical and philosophical aspects of the subject. After the First World War Charles Carter, author of many books on astrology still in print, returned from service in the army and was elected President on 23rd January 1922. Thereafter the ALL became more distinctly astrological, rather than theosophical, in emphasis. In 1926 *Astrology* began publication. … With contributions from members and others, it is a forum for discussion in the astrological community. It later changed its name to *Astrology Quarterly*. The Quarterly is free to members. … The Faculty of Astrological Studies was founded on 7th June 1948 as an offshoot of our society, becoming independent in 1954. … The Astrological Association of Great Britain (AA) was yet another offspring; it started its independent life from 21st June, 1958. It is often said that the ALL has the status of parent or grandparent in the astrological community. It also has members in many parts of the world and speakers come from far and wide. (06/2005: http://www.astrolodge.co.uk)

In 2005, members of the ALL were charged £4 admission for an evening session; non-members paid £6. The annual subscription was £24, (£18 concessionary rate for OAPs and those with UB40s). Lessons run for an hour from 6pm and are followed by a lecture. Before the evening meetings close, students are offered the chance to practise their chart interpretation skills in discussion sessions led by one of the resident astrologers. The programme for the Summer Term of 2005 advertised, among others, the following lectures:

- Neil Spencer[36] '*Hi, I'm Alan, I'm a Leo', The Irresistible Rise of the Sun Sign Republic*
  Are Sun-sign columns just dumbing down astrology, or are they the perfect fit for the modern era? Neil traces their history and implications for our craft.
- Mariella Cassar[37] *The Hyleg (Parts 1 & II)*
  The Hyleg is the strongest planet or point in the chart and means 'the giver of life'. Mariella will explain what the *Hyleg* is, how it is found and what it is used for before showing charts and putting into practice what has been discussed.

[36] See appendix A.
[37] See appendix A.

- Nick Kollerstrom[38] *Einstein's Eureka Moment - 100 Years On*
  It all came to him somewhere around 20th May 1905, and Time and Space were never the same again. That year was the most brilliant of his career. How did Einstein respond to the 1905 Uranus/Neptune opposition?
- Wanda Sellar[39] and Santiago Mantas[40] *Mozart, Sick Genius*
  Looking at the great composer's chart from a creative and medical perspective with live illustration of his work.
- Hedley England[41] *Degrees of Flight*
  Exploring Airbus and their aircraft and the prospects for the new A380, including some predictions.
- Clare Martin *Touching the Voids*
  Every birth chart is, to some extent, out of balance. Each imbalance provides important clues for interpretation, revealing the source of drives which can push an individual into extraordinary achievements operating outside the control of the ego. This psychologically orientated talk will explore the difficulties, struggles and immense potential of element, mode and polarity voids and singletons.
- Alex Trenoweth[42] *Gone With the Wind - the Zodiacal Parade (Parts 1 & II)*
  Gone With the Wind, by Margaret Mitchell, is one of the best selling books of all times and the film is the most viewed movie. But does Mitchell owe a debt to astrology? The first part will focus on the author; the second will study the synastry of the characters.

(06/2005: http://www.astrolodge.co.uk)

The executive committee of the ALL has taken steps to update their association over the course of the last couple of years. This process which was, in my experience of interfacing with the old regime, well overdue has resulted in improved accessibility of information via a website and the compilation of imaginative programmes of lectures and workshops; a recent lottery grant of £4,500 has provided for the purchase of equipment (04/2006: letter to members). Lodge attendance varies from week to week, but probably averages around twenty. Most of the attendees turn up fairly regularly and know each other sufficiently well to chat during the tea break with some semblance of social cohesion. But it would be surprising if the individuals comprising any disparate assembly of astrological enthusiasts such as this were to see eye to eye on virtually any related issue; a number repair to the local pub after the meetings and it is here that the long-standing mutual hostilities which Lodge members nurture are evidenced in the

[38] See appendix A.
[39] See appendix A.
[40] See appendix A.
[41] See appendix A.
[42] See appendix A.

ways in which the group divides itself around the tables in the bar. The cliques were demonstrated to me by an old hand when I inadvertently traversed their boundaries: 'I don't speak to her', he explained without demur, 'so I won't be sitting with you at that table'. I have heard members blaming astrology for the ubiquity of these internal disagreements: the Lodge's inception chart has Pluto opposing its Ascendant.[43] The ALL's clientele comprises a number of experienced astrologers from very different schools of practice, many of whom are involved with other teaching programmes. Mixing with them are students of varying degrees of ability and different schools of thought. Professional astrologers and Sun-sign press columnists occasionally drop by the pub for a bit of shop-talk with fellow practitioners. This combination makes for a more socially explosive mix than would be encountered in the more generally occurring teaching or lecturing situations where any one of these teachers would hold an incontrovertible position of authority over the students who were being educated in his/her way of astrological thinking.

In October 2004 I enrolled on a full-day workshop organised by the ALL. Members paid £20 in advance to attend the *Prediction Day* at the London Theosophical Society headquarters (including a buffet lunch); members with concessions £15; non-members £25; non-members with concessions £20. An additional £5 was added to all charges for payment on the door. The day's programme was advertised as follows:

- Sue Ward[44] *The Western Predictive Tradition in a Modern Context*
  Looking at ancient techniques in today's world, Sue comes to the conclusion that the more things change, the more they stay the same.
- Steve Judd[45] *Prediction and Prediction Techniques*
  Looking at his hits and his misses, Steve will reverse engineer the process which led to his predictions around Zimbabwe, 9/11 and Piper Alpha.
- Helena Avelar[46] and Luis Ribeiro[47] *Traditional Prediction in Natal and Mundane Astrology*
  This two-part lecture will present predictive studies of historical and contemporary personalities linking the individual life and the mundane context of their time. Several traditional predictive methods will be correlated and applied to charts in order to best demonstrate the interaction of different techniques.
- Kim Farnell[48] *Predicting your Sex Life*

[43] See appendix B.
[44] See appendix A.
[45] See appendix A.
[46] See appendix A.
[47] See appendix A.
[48] See appendix A.

Looking at ancient techniques backed up by evidence to reveal how to fine tune your romantic timing.

- Claire Chandler[49] *Foundations of Prediction*

Looking at the things you need to consider before you can predict accurately. Using natal and mundane examples, Claire will look at the groundwork which lets you see clearly. (06/2005: http://www.astrolodge.co.uk)

WITH A LOCAL INTEREST GROUP

Community groups of astrological enthusiasts naturally vary in numbers and levels of activity from year to year; their membership levels tend to fluctuate in line with the presence in a town of a professional astrologer or a keen amateur willing to dedicate her time and recourses to getting – and keeping – an association running in return for a little local publicity for astrology itself and for her commercial services in its regard. The Astrological Association's website lists regional groups which have submitted their contact details for publication, although it stipulates that it has no responsibility for the activities of the groups it lists (06/2005: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/). Some of the AA's group listings in fact advertise the presence in a locality of an astrological tutor and/or counsellor rather than an association of enthusiasts; neither do private groups, such as my own Hastings/Eastbourne based association, which are reluctant to open their membership to strangers appear on their website. The AA recently categorised seventy-four groups between the following regional subdivisions:

- North East 5
- North West 11
- The Midlands 4
- London 6
  (which includes two major teaching bodies, the Faculty of Astrological Studies and the Centre for Psychological Astrology)
- East Anglia 3
- South East 19
- South West 17
- Scotland 3
- Ireland 4
- Wales 2

(06/2005: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/)

[49] See appendix A.

During her time as Regional Groups Representative, AA Council member and convenor of the Suffolk Astrology Society, Glenda Cole,[50] submitted 'Local Astrology Group News' to *Transit*, a bi-monthly online newsletter produced by the AA (which has recently reverted to paper copy). In January 2005, she published a diary of events submitted by just seven associations, one of which – the London based national teaching body known as The Centre for Psychological Astrology – hardly qualifies as a regional astrology club. In the May 2005 edition of *Transit*, Glenda wrote that that she was now in the process of compiling a list of speakers for local groups and planned next to create an information/advice pack for anyone thinking about starting up an astrology association. She supplied readers with an updated list of groups which she had so far confirmed to be currently active, noting that the directory was not yet complete. It is interesting to note that this amended list, totalling thirty-one, represents a considerable reduction on the seventy-four which still appear on the main AA website:

- North East 1
- North West 5
- The Midlands 1
- London 3
- East Anglia 4
- South East 9
- South West 6
- Scotland 2

(*Transit* 2005: Volume 7, Number 2, May/June & 06/2005: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet//pub/transit/january2005/local.html)

Another national organisation listing local astrology groups throughout the UK is the Urania Trust, which currently details a total of seventy-two, although these include astrological teaching and counselling services as well as regional associations.
(06/2005: http://www.uraniatrust.org/group_uk.htm)

My own local interest group comprises astrology enthusiasts whose founder members, (of whom I am one), met as fellow students of Sarah's evening classes in Hastings. Properly constituted with elected officers, a building society account and an inception chart, Southeast Astrology's membership has never exceeded fifteen – women with the exception of one man - but, despite the restriction which this has placed on its programming potential, its committee has always been unwilling to advertise for

[50] See appendix A.

strangers 'off the street' to join the club. This small group has held regular meetings since its incorporation in September 1998 until very recently when, in 2006, its membership was unavoidably depleted by old age and infirmity. But, in its heyday, Southeast Astrology organised programmes of weekly lessons for its members and occasional Saturday workshops as well as regular social events. Subscriptions and donations met teaching costs and the hire of a classroom or meeting venue; less formal gatherings tended to be held in members' homes.

STUDYING ASTROLOGY ACADEMICALLY

My own doctoral studies coincided with an initiative, known as the Sophia Project, conducted from within the astrological community with the sole aim of re-establishing the theoretical study of astrology in today's universities. As mentioned above, my project was conceived and designed to take advantage of this happy coincidence. By the time I started my fieldwork, the Project had been successful in persuading four academic institutions to host sponsored postgraduate programmes undertaking different styles of theoretical study of astrology; details of these are listed below. The Sophia initiative is described fully at the beginning of my chapter entitled *Astrology goes to University*. As far as my fieldwork was concerned, I was lucky enough to be extended invitations to audit the first courses of the Sophia Project's two main programmes, at Bath Spa University and the University of Kent at Canterbury. I contrasted this dual experience with a far smaller involvement with a postgraduate course which includes astrology in its curriculum but is run independently of the Sophia Project. But, as the latter's flagship enterprise, I will start by listing some information about the Sophia Centre, dedicated to the scholarly consideration of astrology-related topics, at Bath Spa University.

AT THE SOPHIA CENTRE, BATH SPA UNIVERSITY

The Sophia Centre for the Study of Cultural Astronomy and Astrology is housed in a onetime cowshed on the Newton Park campus of Bath Spa University. Converted for the purpose with Sophia Trust funds, the Centre operates within the School of Historical and Cultural Studies and enrolled its first twelve students in October 2002. Marketed aggressively from the start of its operations in the astrological literature, at conferences and by all the mainstream schools to ensure widespread awareness of its operations in

the community and attract students for its courses, it originally described its purposes in the following terms:

> The Centre studies the impact of astrological and astronomical beliefs on cultures, religions, politics and the arts. Beliefs about the influence of the stars upon human affairs have affected the political, cultural and religious development of different societies, from the past to the present day. Whilst the scientific study of astronomy is well established in universities, the academic study of astronomy and astrology from a cultural perspective has not been the specific focus of research of a university department in the West for over three hundred years. Thus the Study of Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at Bath Spa University is a new and exciting advance for the academic world.
> (06/2005: http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/historical-and-cultural-studies/sophia/)

The Centre's literature defined its twin academic goals:

1. To undertake the academic and critical examination of astrology and its practice; and
2. To pursue research, scholarship and teaching in the relationship between astrological, astronomical and cosmological beliefs and theories, and society, politics, religion and the arts, past and present.
   (06/2005: http://www.sophia-project.org.uk/)

Four miles to the west of Bath, the university's main campus occupies the beautiful and rural grade II registered Newton Park estate, whose lake, gardens and woods were landscaped in the 1760s by Capability Brown, and which is leased by the university from the Duchy of Cornwall. Tracing its origins in teacher training back to 1898, the college only became Bath Spa University College in 1999. One of six institutions to attain full university status in the spring of 2005 as part of the government's plans to create new teaching-led universities, Bath Spa University has now dropped the 'College' from its title. This, the largest expansion of higher education colleges since 1992, was welcomed by the astrological world for fittingly upgrading the associated status of the Sophia Centre to coincide with a Jupiter/Neptune trine (Jupiter in Libra and Neptune in Aquarius were forming a trine aspect) and the Vernal Equinox (Dean Harte 2005: 10). Applications for BSU's undergraduate courses have increased by one hundred percent in the past five years, and it currently has some four and a half thousand students enrolled. The School of Historical and Cultural Studies in which the Sophia Centre operates brings together the History, Media, Cultural Studies and Study of Religions departments; it is most closely associated with the last of these, which advertises itself as having:

> A particularly strong tradition of innovative undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and research (including aspects such as New Age religions and contemporary paganism). (06/2005: http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/news/http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about/history/ & http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/historical-and-cultural-studies/sophia/)

The Sophia Centre was first headed by senior lecturer Dr Michael York,[51] (ironically for someone with a minimal involvement with astrology - he learned it in California in the 1960s and taught it in Amsterdam in 1970 - Michael was designated the world's first Professor of Cultural Astronomy and Astrology just prior to his retirement in Summer 2004). He was assisted by astrologer academics Dr Patrick Curry and by Nicholas Campion MA,[52] who was then completing his doctoral research within the same academic institution and teaching BA modules for the degree in astrological studies initiated by Kepler College, Seattle in July 2000.[53] The Centre's administrator was, and is, Alice Ekrek MA,[54] an astrologer who wrote her Masters dissertation at King Alfred's College, Winchester, in the late 1990s on the subject of spirituality in contemporary astrology (Gunzburg & Campion 2003: 19). Having received his PhD and following Professor York's retirement, Dr Nicholas Campion was appointed Director of Centre; he was assisted by Dr Patrick Curry. Dr Liz Greene[55] is singled out for mention in the publicity material as a specialist guest lecturer, having joined the staff to teach the Psychological Perspectives module with Dr Patrick Curry.
(06/2005: http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/historical-and-cultural-studies/sophia/news-sophia/)

There is ongoing astrological gossip concerning Liz Greene's doctorate, the awarding institute of which she has never divulged, despite discussing the experience of writing her thesis on the subjects of *Hysteria, Self-Hypnosis, and Religious Miracle Cures*. Already well into astrology all those years ago, she has admitted that her choice to take

---

[51] See appendix A.
[52] See appendix A.
[53] Kepler College, Seattle, is an independent 'virtual' institution which began its astrology BA in 2000. According to its publicity material, it is not a vocational school of horoscopy. But, as well as learning the history of astrology, its students study a wide range of practical astrological techniques within what Nicholas Campion describes as 'an academic context'; apparently, they gain a 'technical education' but they do this within 'a critical academic framework' (Gunzburg & Campion 2003: 22 & cf. 06/2005: http://www.kepler.edu).
[54] See appendix A.
[55] See appendix A.

a doctorate was a calculated, cynical attempt to get people to take her more seriously; describing it as an unpleasant experience, she has said that she would love to do another PhD now, and she probably will, at Bath Spa University (Gunzberg & Greene 2005: 42). We now know, however, that she won't. Because, in April 2006, the administrators of Bath Spa University served notice on the Sophia Centre: they did not intend to honour its identity or existence beyond the end of the current academic year. Students enrolled on its programmes have been informed that they can complete their studies, but Nick Campion and Patrick Curry have been instructed to cease interviewing prospective students forthwith. With some twelve candidates already signed up for 2006/7 courses, the Centre had apparently paid its own way since its initial charitable funding came to an end; accordingly, the astrological community had assumed that it was an ongoing and lively concern and that relations with the university system had taken a notable turn for the better. Writing so soon after the news broke, it is too early to come to any sensible judgement of this apparent about-turn on the part of Bath Spa University's administration. Speculation is – naturally – rife. Applications to move the Centre to another university are being made but, for the meantime, the second of the Sophia Project's initiatives – at the University of Kent at Canterbury – takes over as the primary locus of the experiment to remarry astrology to academia.

MA IN CULTURAL ASTRONOMY AND ASTROLOGY

When I audited the first courses to be offered in what now appears to have been its brief life at Bath Spa University, the study programme was advertised confidently as follows:

> This degree is the only one of its kind in the world and Bath, the home of William Herschel (the discoverer of Uranus), provides a fitting home for it. The MA can be studied either full-time or part-time. For Part One of their degree studies, students are required to complete four modules taught by means of lectures, seminars, workshops and student seminar presentations. Assessment takes the form of written work of about seven and a half thousand words, or equivalent, submitted for each of the four taught modules; the standard model is one short essay of one thousand words, one long essay of five thousand words and one oral seminar presentation per module. For Part Two of their courses, students are expected to write a dissertation of approximately twenty thousand words which may be on any topic in the broad area of astro-culture for which supervision can be provided by the department.

Modules have been designed to broaden and deepen students' understanding of the religious and cultural impact of astronomy and astrology, as well as to incorporate elements of practical fieldwork, and include:

- *Introduction to Cultural and Astronomy and Astrology* (compulsory)

This introductory module presents the parameters of the field as a historical and cultural *lingua franca* along with its context *vis-à-vis* science, religion, myth and art.

- *Research Methods: Ethnography and Fieldwork* (compulsory)

This module on researching astro-culture includes critical examination of theories, methodologies, models and research methods, together with a practical fieldwork project.

- *History of Astrology*
- *Science and Scepticism*
- *Stellar Religion*
- *Psychological and Psychoanalytic Perspectives*
- *New Age*
- *Sacred Geography*

(06/2005: http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/prospectus/postgraduate/postgraduate-courses-2005-2006/cultural-astronomy/)

The Centre's first six MA degrees in the critical study of *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* were awarded in July 2004 to members of its initial student body; all were astrologers. In addition to its MA, the Sophia Centre invited applications from prospective research students to read for the degrees of Master and Doctor of Philosophy (MPhil or PhD) and currently has three students registered for the latter. Students could also study for the qualifications of Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) or Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert); associate students could register for single modules. BA degrees were not offered, although the History and Study of Religions departments at BSU advertised themselves as teaching undergraduate modules in what were described as 'related areas'; the original Sophia Project literature stated that the Centre planned to develop BA modules within other disciplines at the University (06/2005: http://www.sophia-project.org.uk/). The Centre also maintains the Bath Archive for Contemporary Religious Affairs (BACRA).

Reviewing the Sophia Centre's first literature in the light of the very recent news of its imminent demise, I am somewhat saddened by its optimistic and proselytising tones. Always determined to market itself as the spearhead of astrology's return to the academy, its attitude was more strident than that of its sister programme at Canterbury.

The two centres mirror the very different philosophical stances of its major players and reflect political divisions in the astrological community. As I write, the UKC faction has unexpectedly acquired the ascendancy, and it is to the details of this programme that I turn next.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT AT CANTERBURY

Operating a full-time BA in Religious Studies and a part-time BA in Christian Theology, as well as Certificates and Diplomas in Christian Theology, the Department of Religious Studies – operating within the School of European Culture and Languages - is home to postgraduate Masters programmes in *Applied Theology* and *The Study of Mysticism and Religious Experience*. The Sophia Project initiated its relationship with UKC by funding astrology-related modules, taught by academic astrologers, as options in the latter programme. An expansion of their interest will result in a new and dedicated MA in *Cosmology and Divination* being offered from September 2006. Additionally, students have been enrolled to read for research degrees at Masters and Doctoral levels in astrology-related areas of scholarship.

Established in 1965, the University of Kent was one of a number of institutions created during a period of expansion of UK higher education. Surprisingly – for a new and consciously radical organisation of the 1960s – the university was divided from the start between colleges named for four distinguished figures of the modern era: Darwin, Eliot, Keynes and Rutherford. The campus occupies three hundred acres of parkland on the outskirts of Canterbury. The university's three faculties, (Humanities, Social Sciences and Science, Technology and Medical Studies), are subdivided into eighteen departments offering over five hundred undergraduate and one hundred and twenty postgraduate degrees. UKC currently has about ten thousand full-time and part-time students registered.

(06/2005: http://www.sovereign-publications.com/ukcac.htm+university+of+kent+at+canterbury&hl=en & http://www.kent.ac.uk/secl/thrs/)

MA IN THE STUDY OF MYSTICISM AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The Sophia Project first funded an optional stream in this extant Masters programme entitled *Cosmology and Divination.* Convened by long established UKC faculty

members Dr Peter Moore and Dr Leon Schlamm, the MA was reputedly the second most popular postgraduate course offered by UKC in 2003/4. The degree is advertised as follows:

> This taught MA programme is distinctive both in subject-matter and in approach, offering an experience of study intermediate between that of a conventional coursework MA and the completely independent mode of study characteristic of a research degree. It gives students the freedom to work on essays and dissertations tailored to their particular interests, and to develop and exchange ideas within a community of like-minded individuals. The study of mysticism and religious experience, centred in the broad field of religious studies, involves disciplines as diverse as philosophy, theology, psychology, parapsychology, anthropology, sociology, classics, history, literature, linguistics, art history, medicine and psychiatry. Applicants for this programme come from a wide variety of academic backgrounds and benefit greatly from meeting others with different interests and approaches.
> (06/2005: http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~alfar2/doc/mre.htm)

The programme comprises six modules:

1. Methods and Theories in the Study of Religious Experience (Compulsory 24 week course plus one essay);
2. Mystical Traditions: Texts and Hermeneutics (Compulsory 24 week course plus one textual commentary);
3. One selected special option (12 week course plus one essay). Recent examples include:
   - Analytical Psychology and Eastern Mysticism;
   - Women and Mysticism;
   - The Medieval Christian Cosmos;
   - Perspectives on the Near-Death Experience.
4. Research and Computing Skills (one annotated bibliography, literature review or set of web pages);
5. History of Mystical Traditions (one supervised essay);
6. Dissertation of 12-15,000 words (research on an approved topic).

> The completion of each of these modules is defined by the submission of an appropriate item of written work. The degree of MA is awarded when all six pieces of work have been completed to a satisfactory standard.
> (06/2005: http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~alfar2/doc/mre.htm)

MA IN COSMOLOGY AND DIVINATION

This new Masters Degree signals the expansion of the Sophia Trust's involvement with UKC from its sponsorship of modules within the pre-existent *Study of Mysticism and Religious Experience* curriculum to a dedicated stand-alone programme which will be offered for the first time in September 2006. To be convened by astrologer, musician

and academic Dr Angela Voss, directed by Dr Jeremy Carrette and taught in part by astrologer and doctoral research student Geoffrey Cornelius, the syllabus undertakes to examine:

> The relationship between human beings and the cosmos they inhabit, focusing on the modes of knowledge implicit in divinatory practices. Interpretations of the cosmos characteristically manifest through the forms of divination, thus divination presents both an expression and interpretation of the cosmos. In European traditions, the principle vehicle for cosmological interpretation has historically been astrology, and the study of hermeneutical approaches to this subject will become the basis for the exploration of the epistemology of divination. The programme will consider both historical and modern theories of interpretation through various methods, including the study of primary texts and images, comparative and analytical studies of divinatory practices in the context of historical and cultural cosmologies and the phenomenology of symbolic perception. Divinatory and astrological practices and beliefs will be reviewed in the light of traditional metaphysics, religious, magical, artistic and imaginative forms, contemporary psychological theories and sceptical critiques.
> (06/2005: http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~alfar2/doc/ma-cosdiv.htm)

More specifically, the course modules will consider:

- The epistemology of divination and its historical relationship with cosmological systems, including the role of symbolism and the function of the imaginal in European culture;
- The relationship of astrology as the primary divinatory tradition to religious and artistic forms in archaic, classical, medieval, Renaissance and modern culture;
- The hermeneutics of divination, undertaken with special reference to the study of astrology;
- Relevant cross-cultural comparisons in cosmology and divination;
- The relationship of modern psychological theory to cosmological speculation and divinatory practice;
- The study of primary texts in metaphysics and cosmology.

There are two compulsory core modules:

1. *Interpreting the Heavens: Theories and Methods in the Study of Cosmology and Divination*;
2. *The Hermeneutics of Astrological, Cosmological and Symbolic Texts and Images*.

There are three research modules:

1. *Cosmology and the Arts* (convenor: Angela Voss).

Key areas will include: Dante's world, Chaucer's universe, Shakespearian cosmology, the musical cosmos, Renaissance thought and the arts, the power of symbols, sacred theatre, alchemical studies.

2. *The Intelligible Cosmos* (convenor: Geoffrey Cornelius).

> Key areas will include: the hermeneutics of divination, studies in modern occultism, contemporary astrological perspectives, studies in symbology, Jung and western esotericism, the *I Ching* and Chinese cosmology.
> 3. *Critical Perspectives on Religious Experience* (convenor: Jeremy Carrette).
> Key areas will include: William James and the construction of religious experience; the social construction of mysticism; capitalism and New Age spirituality; astrology and consumerism; the politics of experience; surrealism, politics and the cosmos.
> Five pieces of work are required: four essays on the course material, and one dissertation.

UKC invites applications for both MAs – *The Study of Mysticism and Religious Experience* and *Cosmology and Divination* – from:

> Interested graduates with good academic qualifications (not necessarily in the more obviously relevant subjects) and an open, critical outlook. Enquiries are also welcome from those interested in pursuing independent research, for the degrees of MPhil or PhD: (for *The Study of Mysticism and Religious Experience* programme) in the areas of mysticism, parapsychology, psychology and religion, phenomenology of religion, religion and literature, sacred art and symbolism; and (for the newly formed *Cosmology and Divination* specialisation) in the areas of cosmology, divination, astrology, symbolism, magic, parapsychology and hermetic philosophy.
> (06/2005: http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~alfar2/doc/mre.htm &
> http://www.kent.ac.uk/secl/thrs/postgrad/MACosDiv/ma-cosdiv.htm)

Staff and students of the programmes – past and present – keep in regular touch with one another by means of its electronic discussion forum, entitled *Virtual Mystics*. This resource has facilitated a number of interesting and protracted exchanges developing ideas originating in the seminar discussions, and ensured that course participants are appraised of schedules with occasionally amusing results: a recent communication announced that 'Dr Peter Moore's *Near Death Experience* would run on Fridays of weeks twenty-five to thirty' (08/2005: e-mail from Joseph Milne).

Having spent some time with the staff and students of the astrology related programmes at BSU and UKC, it seemed sensible to investigate a course taught in part by a highly esteemed professional astrologer who had some previous, though largely unpublicised, experience of campus teaching – at the University of Sussex – some twenty years ago.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER

The MA in *Transpersonal Arts & Practice* operates independently of the Sophia Trust, despite the fact that it is the brainchild of two of the educationalists with astrological interests who were present at the 1998 Latimer House conference which planned the strategy of the nascent project. The college which hosts the programme was founded in 1976 as West Sussex Institute of Higher Education although its history stretches back to the foundation, in 1839, of Bishop Otter's School for Training Masters. It was licensed to award its own taught degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in 1999, as University College, Chichester. Accredited by the University of Southampton to admit approved students to read for research degrees, the Privy Council approved a change of name for the college in October 2005, and it is now known as the University of Chichester.

(06/2005: http://www.ucc.ac.uk/cfm/about/statusofucc.html &
http://www.ucc.ac.uk/cfm/about/history.html)
(05/2006: http://www.chiuni.ac.uk/)

MA IN TRANSPERSONAL ARTS & PRACTICE

The programme is coordinated and taught by Dr Marie Angelo[56] with Michael Edwards[57] and visiting specialists as required. A professional practising astrologer for the last thirty-three years, Mike Edwards is no stranger to the university seminar room: as he describes it, he was the first lecturer in four centuries to teach horoscopic astrology at degree level in a British university (Edwards 2006: 48). He taught what he terms *Astrologia* at the University of Sussex for some seven years from 1986, when the Sophia initiative had not yet been dreamed of. His students were second year undergraduates following the Arts/Science interdisciplinary programme which was run at that time; Mike remembers that his classes comprised predominantly science undergraduates eager to escape the straitjackets of their 'hard' disciplines and explore 'softer' subjects such as novel writing and astrology; the arts students tended to be insufficiently technically equipped or interested to make the crossover to the sciences. Mike's classes proved popular, despite – maybe because of - the warning he issued, that the students who attended them should be prepared to make 'alien mental manoeuvres'; the astrology books he suggested that they read, including some 'how to do horoscopy' volumes, remain to this day on the shelves of the University of Sussex library. This

[56] See appendix A.
[57] See appendix A.

time around, Mike is anxious that astrology, shorn of its (on his view) essential practical element, will be paralysed by its re-introduction – as an exclusively theoretical subject – to the academy.

The Chichester course advertises itself as an 'innovative and imaginative' programme which:

> Takes a uniquely Arts-based approach to transpersonal study, inviting image and metaphor to guide a deeper understanding of culture, history and tradition from ancient mystery teachings to modern myths – as these shape and inform contemporary practice.
> (06/2005: http://www.ucc/ac/uk/research/html/ma_trans.html)

The MA comprises a part-time programme of six taught modules plus a research Dissertation of 20,000 words, of which up to twenty-five percent may be presented in other media of expression. Each taught module runs for one term and the course takes two years and two terms to complete. Students receive readings and discussion material between classes and, when attending college, are involved in experiential or participative studies involving art-practice, demonstrations, discussion and appreciation. Imaginative journal making is taught and supported throughout. In recognition of differing transpersonal perspectives and practices, two pathways are offered, each of which celebrates the Arts as both method and content:

1. One that concentrates on creative arts as applied in therapeutic process and professional development by means of experiential, expressive arts including dance-movement, voice production, clay and other plastic arts.

2. One that concentrates on the transformative possibilities of education as an initiation, through a study of the worldview and practices of alchemy and related transformative or hermetic arts, by focussing on traditional and liberal arts, such as visionary mysticism, musical contemplation, literature and poetic expression.

Example modules are listed as follows:

Creative Arts Therapies pathway, year one:
- Embodying Myth
- Researching Myth
- Myth in Practice

Transformative Arts pathway, year one:
- Waking Dreams: Orpheus & the Art of Seeing
- Anima Mundi: Hermes & the Soul of the World
- Secret Fire: Mithras & 'the Golden Game'

Joint second year studies:

- Music and the Psyche
- Entertaining Ideas: Apollo & the Muses have their Say
- Spirit of Enquiry: Befriending Research and Publication

The programme offers Continuing Professional Development for graduates who are imaginative, thoughtful, and interested both in understanding transpersonal ideas and in their application as a practice, whether this is in fields such as Education, Literature and the Arts, or Therapy, Health and Holistic practice of all kinds. A good first degree is expected, in a relevant subject, although some portfolio assessments are available for mature students with considerable appropriate experience. Each module is separately assessed via an assignment designed by the student in consultation with the module tutor. The basic format of a four thousand word essay varies according to the module and may include, for example, presentations in different media, journal work, performance, creative writing, imaginative projects and seminar papers. The MA Dissertation follows on, and is a double module of student-led study, supported by tutorials. Students taking only three modules will receive a Postgraduate Certificate; those taking six modules will qualify for a Postgraduate Diploma.
(06/2005: http://www.ucc/ac/uk/reserch/html/ma_trans.html)

As I write, the future of the programme at Chichester is far from certain. But the project detailed below appears still to be in business despite its no longer being funded by the Sophia Project. If I had imagined that the above three programmes had covered all angles of the subject between them, then I would have reckoned without the proto-scientific take on astrology which is the preserve of the Research Group for the Critical Study of Astrology at the University of Southampton. I have heard its students deliver their findings at a number of research conferences and have read their papers in the journal dedicated to astrological research although, not being a statistician, their findings are as befuddling to me as is their mission to reduce astrology to sets of formal statistical correlates.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Initiated in 2001 and funded originally by an annual grant from the Sophia Trust, the RGCSA operates within the Social Statistics Division of the School of Social Sciences.

It now declares itself to be supported by private donations other than the Sophia Trust (06/2005: http://www.astrology-reseach.net/), advertising a 'new source of funding for students undertaking a Masters or Doctorate degree in a UK university' in the May/June 2005 edition of *Transit,* newsletter of the Astrological Association. The group is currently convened by non-astrologer Susan High, MSc, BSc, who is a Principal Experimental Officer in the Social Statistics Division of the School of Social Sciences at the University of Southampton. The Group's deputy convenor is astrologer Pat Harris, MSc, DFAstrolS,[58] who is also one of its two current PhD students, and the moving force behind this initiative. She has for some years been conducting statistical research into possible psychological and astrological factors associated with the success and failure of fertility treatments, specifically the correlates of Jupiter and Saturn with fertility and barrenness, respectively. A second research student is considering the nature of the emphasis of Jupiter in the natal charts of alcoholics.
(06/2005: http://www.astrology-research.net/current_research.htm)

The RGCSA describes itself as an independent body that has been set up:

> To encourage good standards of academic research into astrology. Research projects do not need to look solely at the phenomenon of astrology but would need to have astrology as part of the research question in order to qualify for consideration for a grant by the Group. The Group is funded by private donations and is able to make grants of up to £1000 per year towards registration fees to UK university students undertaking a Master's or Doctorate degree. It has been set up to monitor standards of research into astrology and to promote the use of sound scientific methods in empirical studies by offering advice and guidance in the development of research projects and design to students wishing to investigate astrology in relation to other special fields of interests. Some example areas of disciplines include: social statistics, sociology, psychology and cultural studies. The position of the RGCSA is agnostic, objective and critical and is concerned to ensure that research undertaken into astrology is carried out to the highest possible standards. The RGCSA website provides an abstract database, free on line, of more than 200 papers on academic research into astrology and which provides a valuable resource for research in this field. (09/2006: http://www.astrology-research.net/rgcsa.htm)

The group's website gives the following instructions to applicants regarding the presentation of the astrological component of prospective research projects:

[58] See appendix A.

> Your research must have an astrological component to it. However, in most UK universities, you will also be required to address existing research within the area in which you wish to take your degree. For example, if you wish to research in social science at the University of Southampton, your research proposal will have to have two threads that are independent of each other: one addressing an astrological perspective and the other purely from the perspective of social science. You may seek to show how the two may be interdependent through your research results but the proposal, itself, should present them as independent lines of inquiry, at the beginning of the research process.
> (06/2005: http://www.astrology-research.net/grants.htm)

This concludes the list of the main sites at which I conducted my classroom ethnography, ranging from recreational courses teaching practical horoscopy to university seminars of the new postgraduate degree programmes which study theoretical aspects of astrology. Having introduced my research project, (outlining its focus and discussing the method with which I explored it), and listed my main research sites, I will hasten in the next chapter to attempt a description and working definition of Western astrology in order to demarcate my specific area of interest in this broad topic. For, as will be seen, the subject as studied and practised by serious astrologers differs somewhat from its popular media-driven image.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT IS ASTROLOGY?

So far, I have described my relationship with astrology, discussed the focus of my project and outlined the method I used to pursue my research. In the previous chapter, I listed some detailed reference data relating to my main fieldwork sites. Before proceeding any further with a consideration of astrology informed by the ethnography I practised in the classes, lectures, workshops and seminars dedicated to the propagation of its practices and theories, I should attempt to describe what Western astrology actually *is* and what its practitioners actually *do*.

POPULAR ASTROLOGY: THE VIEW FROM OUTSIDE

If asked what astrology is, most people in Britain today will be able, albeit ironically, to describe its twelve-fold division of humankind between the signs of the zodiac, determined by the day and month of each of their births. Decided as it is simply in terms of a birthday, one seldom now encounters anyone who does not know his or her own Sun, or Star, sign; many will, if pressed, describe themselves in terms of this, 'their' sign of the zodiac and might even go on to cite some of the character traits commonly associated with those born under its putative sphere of influence. A considerable number of individuals across a range of social milieus will admit, if pushed and usually somewhat sheepishly, to having occasionally read their so-called horoscopes in the Sun-sign forecast columns which are regularly featured in the majority of popular newspapers and magazines.[59] And yet, very few of these individuals will be able to describe what, for instance, to 'be a Gemini' or to 'be born under the Star-sign of Leo' *actually* means, in technical quasi-astronomical terms.

It follows that most of the people who scan the horoscope columns in their newspapers have little apparent regard for physical – still less for metaphysical – explanations or justifications for the words they read. Seemingly, it is enough for them simply to know

[59] *Observer* horoscope writer and journalist, Neil Spencer, says that Sun-signs function today as badges denoting membership of the cosmos. It has been suggested by astrologers Geoffrey Cornelius and Maggie Hyde that Sun-signs are totems, in Lévi-Strauss's (1973) sense of the term. Astrology, they tell us, is a remnant of totemism. Its zodiac, in its original Greek meaning, represents a 'circle of animals'; thus, if you are a Leo, your totem is the Lion (Cornelius, Hyde & Webster 1995: 162-163). Marshall Sahlins has suggested that some modern Western symbolism, especially that exhibited by clothing behaviours, is totemic in nature (Sahlins 1976).

that astrology is still out there in the world, today, in much the same way as they imagine it has been, in one form or another, since the dawn of human civilisation; the popular assumption that it is an ancient art embodying an otherworldly wisdom of sorts appears sufficient, on the generally accepted view, to authorise *bona fide* members of its knowledge community to spread a little of their esoteric understanding about for the benefit of the astrologically unenlightened. In much the same way, it is seldom seriously suggested that the *Thought for the Day* slot in the mornings should not continue, in a largely secular society, to deliver regular, bite-sized chunks of religion and ethics to members of the Radio Four audience, religious and (for the most part) otherwise. Admittedly, a minority of vociferous rationalists are sometimes heard to object to the privileged media access extended to people with religious or similar messages to propagate; from time to time, enthusiasts for one creed will campaign to restrict the airtime or column inches allocated to its rivals. But the religiously and rationally non-aligned majority seem content to accept that there remain in the world sufficient specialists to keep the cycles of the old faiths reassuringly turning away in the background, from whence they can be summoned to officiate at rituals of comfort and counsel in the event of life and death crises.

Of relevance here is Steve Bruce's detailed consideration of the cumulative process of secularisation that is an ongoing feature of all Western industrialising communities. Even the churches themselves have evidently not been immune to this ubiquitous trend, having gradually reduced the role of the supernatural in their teachings in line with the secularisation of the larger social units in which they operate (Bruce 1996: 36-37). Accordingly, Christian doctrines of faith once vaunted as objective, universal truths have, he notes, been psychologised and diminished to the levels of the relative and the subjective. As a result, the ecumenical movement has gained some ground. But Bruce is at pains to eliminate what he refers to as the persistent but misleading explanation that religion has declined in popularity because people have become better educated and less credulous: sounding not one jot relativist, still less ecumenical, he rejects this notion on the evidence that 'there are too many examples of modern people believing the most dreadful nonsense' (Bruce 1996: 38 ff.).[60] Instead, he looks to certain innate features of

[60] Charles Stewart objects that any anthropologist will tell you that the strong form of the secularisation thesis has not come to pass; far from rejecting it, people all over the world, including those in Western

metropolitan societies to explain the phenomenon of secularisation which has changed religion's nature: among these, he cites fragmentation; the eclipse of community; increasing rationalisation, bureaucracy and technological consciousness.

Which is not to say that we do not still turn to God, or gods, when the gaps in our rational control and intellectual understanding of the world threaten to overwhelm us, only that our notion of the scope of the divine is much smaller these days than was that of pre-industrial man:

> In modern worlds, religion is most used for the dark recessive areas of human life over which control has not been established by technology: unhappiness, extreme stress, and the like. When we have tried every cure for cancer, we pray. When we have revised for our examinations, we pray. We do not pray instead of studying, and even committed believers suppose that a research programme is more likely than a mass prayer meeting to produce a cure for AIDS. (Bruce 1996: 51)

And, at the stage when the inhabitants of secularised communities turn to prayer, they may also elect to consult religious specialists, or - for that matter - astrologers. This exercise will as likely as not be an individual one, centred upon personal agency and choice, the execution of which will probably serve of itself as a prophylactic. For, free from the ties which bound earlier generations to a community of believers by regular, socially circumscribed systems of public worship, today's individuals interact with the demoted and downgraded divine on a largely privatised, one-to-one basis; they can – and do - select the religious service most suited to their particular problems from the range advertised in the marketplace (cf. Heelas 1996). And, in between crises, though apathetic in matters of metaphysical belief, a number of people will not be averse to cherry picking appealing, relevant or entertaining nuggets of otherworldly lore from the selection of such messages which they happen upon in the course of their daily business: of necessity these will be readily accessible and additionally largely undemanding of their time, effort or money.

---

societies, are seemingly espousing religion in ever greater numbers and with frightening intensity (Stewart 2001: 327). David Gellner counters that, judged over the *longue durée*, secularisation has happened and is happening; the overall role, power, scope and influence of religious institutions continuing generally to decline (Gellner 2001: 337). Judged by the standards Gellner recommends, surely the new fundamentalisms can be seen as a backlash against generalised secularisation and thus a confirmation, rather than a denial, of the phenomenon's existence? Bruce's model would seem to accommodate this proposition in retaining a place for religions albeit that they have been altered in line with general social secularising trends.

Being there, in the public eye and ear, in itself bequeaths authority to religious and similar creeds. Good press, radio and Google coverage weaves their practitioners' words into the social fabric without addressing the truth values of their tenets. Kanitscheider (1991: 259-260) attributes popular belief in astrology to its wide media coverage, but the latter actually only ensures a general familiarity with astrology's products which does not demand a commitment of belief. Even confirmed atheists have occasionally been beguiled by the message of a religious broadcaster on the *Today* programme which they have inadvertently caught on their car radios while stuck in traffic on their way to work. Similarly, individuals who consider themselves to be predominantly rational in their approach to life will allow themselves a covert glance at the astrologers' columns in their daily newspapers, or maybe while away a little office time checking out their astrological fortunes on one of the numerous Internet sites now freely available for the purpose. As an activity, this provides a moment of 'me' time to people who can safely experience the slight frisson of dabbling with an otherworldly magic which, provided it is wrapped up and presented as entertainment, does not compromise their rationalist value systems.[61] If it so happens that, from time to time, they read something sensible or pertinent to their daily lives in one or other of these places, then why should this be such a surprise? Surely, they will tell you, astrology – like religion – must have *something* to it or why would it have survived for so long?

---

[61] Arguing that the experience of reading a Sun-sign column is potentially re-enchanting – in the Weberian sense of that term – for the citizen of the contemporary rationalised metropolis, Patrick Curry discusses a recent study of 'serious believers' of astrology (Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 66). Defined as 'those who reported that they read horoscopes often or fairly often and that they took them seriously or fairly seriously', the authors determined that these were:

> Female rather than male; single rather than living with partners; younger rather than older; religiously motivated rather than indifferent; and inclined to attribute scientific status to astrology. (Durant and Bauer 1997: 59, 68)

Curry notes that Bauer's and Durant's findings do not accord with Theodor Adorno's (1994) 'heavyhanded attempt to pin on astrological believers an "authoritarian personality"'. Rather than being semi-erudite '*ipso facto* fascists' as the latter would have them, or the lonely and impressionable young women conjoured by the former, Curry characterises astrological believers as those who have acquired sufficient intellectual tools to supplement their natural wit and inclination to enquire, but not so much of the former as to accept in full the dominant ideology which, largely responsible for supplying them, is overwhelmingly hostile to astrology (Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 66). I wonder what Durant and Bauer, and Adorno too for that matter, would have made of the left-wing activist I met at an academic conference I was attending dedicated to the philosophy of Marxism: catching sight of the latest copy of a popular magazine lying on the counter, she held up the coffee queue while she studied her horoscope for the month ahead. When I enquired whether she set much store by such things, she assumed that I was another devotee. 'Oh shit, that's about right', she sighed as she handed me the magazine, 'it's going to be a bad time for relationships! Do you want to look at yours?'. A postgraduate student of politics at a mainstream university who described herself as politically militant, she was unabashed at admitting her enthusiasm for Sun-sign columns to me.

This vague, general awareness of astrology's old age lends it authority in the public imagination. It also predetermines the ranges of subjects upon which its comments are likely to be given credence by non-astrologers. The predominantly rationalist, occasional consumers of popular astrology products in the press or on the Internet would be most unlikely to use them for information or advice on technological or intellectual matters, which would generally be accepted as falling outside the remit of so ancient and esoteric a subject as astrology; the latter would be assumed to deal more naturally with psychological and emotional problems which, manifesting themselves today in much the same way as they did in the historical, pre-technological days in which astrological lore was developed, would seem its more fitting subject matter. This application of a horses-for-courses knowledge compartmentalisation by intellectually enlightened persons who dabble with supposedly pre-modern discourses has the effect of disguising those of their activities which, in bald terms, could only be described as unequivocal, albeit temporary, retreats from reason. In reality, people in today's metropolitan societies exhibit a far higher tolerance of contradiction in their everyday lives than logicians would have us believe possible. Additionally, they demonstrate an instinctive use of strategies which hedge and separate mutually contradictory knowledge systems in order that no potentially useful advice or pleasurable discourse need be rejected out of hand by virtue of the fact that its source threatens to exceed that contradiction-tolerance. These strategies are developed cumulatively so that, hardly employed by individuals who have only frivolous and passing contacts with apparently irrationally-founded systems of knowledge, they will be fully exercised by serious practitioners of the latter who nonetheless operate as successfully as their rationalist neighbours in the metropolitan world and maintain their full capacities for common-sense.

As Pierre Bourdieu has so ably demonstrated, social practice has its own (practical) sense or logic; the latter develops in tandem with the former, and the former is driven by the interests of the practitioners (Bourdieu 1990: 52ff. & 2000: 16 ff. also Fowler 2001: 316). He reminds us that reason is always embedded in material conditions. People engage in practices because it suits them to do so; this is their primary and pragmatic motivation. The unconscious mental structures and dispositions which inform their individual subjective modes of interpretation of these practices are cumulatively

developed in relation to self-perpetuating cycles of energy expended, by way of specific sets of practices, towards the anticipated outcomes which are associated with them. Bourdieu's innovative social theorisation was informed by his own practical experience as an ethnographer. Commenting after the fact about his own ethnographic encounter with the *Azande* and their witchcraft practices, the pioneer British anthropologist E.E. Evans-Pritchard's words seem to corroborate Bourdieu's acknowledgement of the primacy of practice when he remembers that acting *as if* he believed what his informants believed for the duration of his stay in their community precipitated his actually believing – or at least half-believing – what they believed (Evans-Pritchard 1976: 244).[62]

Obviously, it takes time for the rationales of non-normative forms of practice to be assimilated into the social establishment; for as long at any rate as they remain minority pursuits, complete assimilation will be out of the question. Most of us in Britain today who have not been brought up as Pagans would probably find it somewhat strange to have a practising witch as a neighbour; it could be counted on to raise a few laughs in the pub. Others might feel the same were a professional astrologer to move in next door. Fewer of us would give much thought to living beside a Church of England vicar who belongs, after all, to a home-grown institution sanctioned by the State and headed by the monarchy; one can imagine it being said confidently of this neighbour that at least here was someone who could be trusted with the spare keys to the front door. And yet, set side by side, the belief systems of the witch, the astrologer and the vicar are surely equally unsupportable in rationalist terms? The non-establishmentarian nature of witchcraft and astrology may by no means detract from their appeal to numbers of their serious adherents, nor to those who indulge in a little covert flirting with them: their 'otherness', mingled with their irrationality, being the sources of much of their charm whether as entertainments or as providers of serious solutions for life's problems. But, the logic of these non-normative practices is not generally culturally inherited by members of contemporary British society and therefore seems to require demarcation. Some years ago, Evans-Pritchard discussed the double standards by which normative and non-normative cultural beliefs are assessed, noting that because 'we do not think

[62] I will be writing later about the relevance of Hans Vaihinger's (1925) philosophy of '*As If*' to subjects such as my own.

that witchcraft exists, but we have been taught that God does' the former might well appear incomprehensible while the latter would not (Evans-Pritchard 1976: 244).

I remember being somewhat amused by a middle-aged professional woman's recounting the details of her Pagan nuptial ceremony held some years ago among the standing stones of Stanton Drew to an acquaintance of hers, a career academic with a personal – though private - involvement with such practices, who responded without surprise 'ah, it's no wonder, then, that your marriage has lasted'. Would I have remembered the interaction if the ceremony described had been conducted by a vicar in the local parish church? Or by a registrar of marriages in the Town Hall? I suspect not. For, whatever my personal opinions about the Church of England or its Christian creed, and however I feel about the institution of marriage, I have imbibed the practical logic of these phenomena from birth. Irrespective of my intellectual response to them, they do not have the power to surprise me in the way that astrology once did, and that Paganism and witchcraft still do. This raises a question as to the power of personal belief to intercept inherent cultural and/or intellectual responses. Evans-Pritchard qualified his initial judgement that God was more acceptable in England than witchcraft: he acknowledged that he was speaking as a Christian convert; he could imagine that a confirmed atheist would probably struggle equally with God and with witchcraft. He concluded that a commentator's own beliefs did make a difference: if they ran contrary to those of her informants, then she would have difficulty in discovering their sense of what was, on her view, largely nonsense (Evans-Pritchard 1976: 245).[63] Surely these remarks serve simply to remind us that each and every observer has, of necessity, what I once heard Pierre Bourdieu describe as a point from which to view and/or a view from which to point: this might encompass exclusively normative cultural attitudes; sometimes – particularly when the researcher is studying her home community - it will comprise as – or more - eclectic a mixture of emotional and intellectual attachments as is demonstrated by her informants.

In the previous chapter and in another context, I mentioned Tanya Luhrmann's (1989) study of witchcraft practices in modern Britain, activities which she declares herself not

[63] Cf. Charles Stewart's consideration of whether secularism is an impediment to anthropological research (Stewart 2001: 325-328).

to have related to in terms of belief. This is confirmed by her surprise at finding ordinary and well-educated middle-class English people who live and work with scientific explanations of the world while dedicating themselves to the practice of magical rituals which fly in the face of science and, according to observers, don't work anyway. Luhrmann's term 'interpretive drift' describes what she sees as the 'slow shift in someone's manner of interpreting events, making sense of experiences, and responding to the world' which moves the modern individual to believe in magic (Luhrmann 1989: 12). As far as involvement with astrology goes, I would not be happy to use Luhrmann's term, because it implies that individuals have a single basic set of rules of whatever measure for making sense of the world which they apply across the board, nipping and tucking them only where necessary. I would deny that this kind of cross-over actually happens, preferring to describe a process whereby the logic of a new practice is built up layer upon layer on its own foundations until it stands eventually as a separate structure in and for itself alongside the logic-structures of other, already assimilated practices. Between these separate notional constellations, each with their own sets of practices and rules for applying them, all with different views from their windows, individuals move back and forth. As Clifford Geertz notes, people chop and change. They have never lived in a world composed entirely of mystical encounters as Lévy-Bruhl seemed, at least at first, to imply; neither were their lives ever solely concerned with practical actions in the way that Malinowski would have had us believe. What they did, and do, is move:

> More or less easily, and very frequently, between radically contrasting ways of looking at the world, ways which are not continuous with one another but separated by cultural gaps across which Kierkegaardian leaps must by made in both directions. (Geertz 1993: 120)

And yet, this apparently natural attribute of individuals frequently receives bad write-ups in the modernist press. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, his dystopian account of contemporary society's probable trajectory, George Orwell coined the neologism 'doublethink' to describe what was for him the *un*thinkable 'power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them' (Orwell 1989: 223). But I would suggest that 'doublethink' is due for a makeover. No longer should it be considered by theoreticians to be a logical error of the wilfully irrational, still unearthed with some surprise and much alarm by anthropologists rooting in the

badlands at the margins of the territories supposedly conquered and colonised for all time by 'singlethought'. For is 'doublethink' not the natural state of mind/s of most of us who live in today's confusing and contradictory world? In the metropolis, we are exposed to an ever-increasing variety of systems of knowledge and belief brought to our doors, or more likely to our computers, by the forces of globalisation and capitalist marketing: we move between them, assimilating their appropriate ways of thinking and being in relation to our expectations of them; we behave according to the circumstances in which we find ourselves and these are pluralist ones; we know the rules of a number of games and can play some of them passably, a few of them well. Primarily observers, most of us, of worlds in which we have little or no influence, we might number ourselves with T.S. Eliot's *J. Alfred Prufrock* whose energies have all been spent in negotiating the treacherous business of everyday life and conclude with him that, were we ever to muster sufficient strength to force a moment to its crisis, it would seldom if ever be worthwhile to squeeze the universe into a ball and roll it towards some overwhelming question (Eliot 1996: 49). Better by far to remain in at least two minds, maximise our opportunities, hedge our bets.

To illustrate my notion that 'doublethink' is commonplace, I will turn my attention from the irate Orwell and the pragmatic *Prufrock* to the research student whom I encountered on my own university campus while conducting my fieldwork. She studied her natal astrological profile on the web and received regular e-mail reports on the condition of her transiting planets while writing up her doctoral thesis; but these seemingly contradictory activities did not prompt her to spend time wrestling with opposing sets of advice issued by the apparently incommensurable systems of knowledge propagated by astrological lore and academic rationality. No: she worked through her academic project in line with accepted logical processes and her supervisor's advice; then, come the end of the week, she consulted an astrological website before deciding which of her potential lovers to ask out for a few hours' fun on Saturday night. She experienced no conflict of knowledge standards and, provided that she maintained that her recourse to astrology was just a bit of light-hearted fun, she could even share a giggle about it with friends for whom astrology was probably more promising a subject for a conversation in the pub than her latest research findings. If she was wrongheaded in any way, then it was in her assumption that her cursory reading of popular astrological material qualified

her to speak knowledgably on the subject: this accomplished young woman chided me for my ignorance when I hesitated to agree instantly with her statement that 'you need a man with a lot of Scorpio if you want a good Saturday night'. (It was not my place to explain to her that she was speaking what is generally referred to, by reflective and knowledgeable astrologers, as 'astrobabble'.)

My informant was not alone in believing herself qualified to speak about astrology: most people have an opinion on the subject; what is more they do not, in my experience, hesitate to voice their views with authority, no matter how scant or desultory their interest in the subject. Actually, astrologers are a bit like that too, never hesitating to share their views on the practice or the philosophy of their art, and more often than not presenting them as being the only show in town. And, although they will take some credit for their development of novel horoscopic techniques, they will always reference these historically as recoveries of traditional astrological lore. Astrologers have no tradition of acknowledging, criticising or debating the relative merits of each other's techniques and methods, or ideas; but they differ from non-astrologers in that they can generally be relied upon to know their own stuff very well. Tamsyn Barton's study of ancient astrology would seem to suggest that these qualities are inherent within the subject. She talks about the tendency of early astrologers to create individual versions of the art, each one shaking the kaleidoscope of constituent elements to reveal a slightly new arrangement in the face of public expectation that they would innovate both as teachers of their apprentices and as public declaimers of their knowledge (Barton 1994: 209). Today's astrologers aren't all that different, although the more successfully innovative practitioners tend now to head up educational institutions which codify and propagate their philosophies and methods. But, in comparison with the educated – albeit egocentric – opinions of astrologers, the authoritative utterances of the uninformed are harder to bear.

For the majority of the latter group, astrology *is* the column of Sun-sign forecasts which they read in their newspapers; it is the diverting Internet site which lures the bored secretary's attention away from his mundane office work; it is Mystic Meg, Jonathan Cainer and other such colourful media personalities; it is superficial and entertaining; it is bonkers but harmless; it is *not* science; its columnists may occasionally seem to have

an uncannily accurate grasp of a single reader's chief concern of the moment, but theirs is *not* a reliable source of knowledge. It proceeds from the principle of dividing humankind between the twelve signs of the zodiac, dependent upon the days and months of their births, and its practitioners prognosticate on the fates of each of these twelve groups in line with the influence of the current positions of the planets in relation both to the earth and to each other. Most people in Britain today know these things about astrology. And they will have no hesitation in sharing their knowledge with anyone who asks. Any serious discussion of the subject which transpires will centre upon the unarguable fact that no system purporting to foretell the fate of the whole of humankind on the basis of a simple twelve-fold division of the latter could possibly be taken seriously, and that's before even starting to consider the mechanisms whereby the planets could possibly have any form of influence upon individual human's lives and endeavours. What is more, the majority of horoscope writers seem to collude with this critical attitude towards astrology; the tenor of their copy being predominantly entertaining and ironic.

There turns out to be a good reason for this since, surprising though it might be to the astrologically uninitiated, many people who call themselves astrologers would thoroughly agree with the cynics that Sun-sign columns are at best largely inaccurate and at worst a ridiculous betrayal of the ancient esoteric art. (Although, they might qualify this, as have two of our most creative, serious astrologers - Geoffrey Cornelius[64] and Maggie Hyde[65] – who also write horoscopes, by invoking the handyman logic of Lévi-Strauss's *bricoleur* which is more readily accommodating of such generalised, rough-and-ready phenomena than is modern rationality (Cornelius, Hyde & Webster 1995: 162-163).) For newspaper horoscopes are not *real* astrology. As two professional practitioners, major figures in twentieth century Western astrology, have put it:

> Behind the light-hearted horoscopes of the popular press lies a hidden wisdom that can transform our understanding of ourselves and the nature of our reality. For *real* astrology, from which this popular entertainment derives, is a language, science, art and craft that deals with the ever-changing qualities of time. (Harvey & Harvey 1999: 1, original emphasis)

[64] See appendix A.
[65] See appendix A.

And, about this, *real* astrology so tantalisingly described by the Harveys, the person in the street knows little or nothing, despite the fact that most popular astrology is produced by professional practitioners whose lives are informed by their *real* astrological worldviews and who may well rely for at least some of their income upon their practical application of its complex procedures to inform and counsel numbers of personal and corporate clients in mundane and practical matters.[66] For astrologers' worlds are shaped horoscopically; everyone they encounter and everything they experience has its own astrology to be discovered or speculated upon, and its own place in a multitude of interrelating wheels. And the more successful professionals among them will have clients to whom they offer a range of astrological services from psychotherapeutic counselling, through investment advice and the election of a propitious date and time to get married or publish a book, to answering straightforward and mundane questions the favourite of which always seems to be 'Where's the cat?'. So what, then, is *real* astrology, and how does it relate to its popular Sun-sign manifestation?

REAL ASTROLOGY: THE INSIDE PICTURE

Minimally, astrology is the attribution of correspondence between the superlunary sphere and the sublunary world. Patrick Curry[67] has defined it as:

> The practice of relating the heavenly bodies to lives and events on Earth, and the tradition that has thus been generated. (Note that this construal can include, but does not depend on, a causal relationship between the stars and humanity; the former can equally well be 'signs'.) (Curry 2004a: xii & Curry 1999b: 55)

Western astrology, which is my subject, differs in technical detail and judgemental style from its close relation, Indian or Vedic astrology, and is defined by Geoffrey Cornelius as:

---

[66] There was a time, Sun-sign superstar Jonathan Cainer explained to sceptical Guardian columnist Emma Brockes, when most of the horoscopes in the national press were made up. To her cynical question 'would it matter much if they were?', Cainer responded:

> Yeah, it really matters. Because. Well. All right, try this one. So you go to an art gallery, and there's one of those awful bloody paintings people pay so much money for, and you think, I could have knocked over a tin of Dulux and done that. And they say, 'Ah yes, but the point is, Mr Cainer, you didn't go to art school for twenty years to learn how to knock over this tin of Dulux. The point is, the person could have painted the Mona bloomin' Lisa if they'd wanted to'. So in my view, if you say that about art, you have to say the same about astrology. There are occasions, I will grant you, when the end result makes precious little bloody difference, heh-heh! (Brockes 2004: 5)

[67] See appendix A.

> The stream of practice and theory that has come down to us through the transformation of archaic celestial omen-watching into the purified cosmic conception of classical Graeco-Roman astrology. This tradition was transmitted and further transformed through the imagination of the Arabs, and passed on into late medieval and renaissance Europe. On this stream the little boats of modern European and American astrology still ply their busy trade. (Cornelius 2003: xxi)

In the astrological imagination, the Sun, our Moon and the planets double as multivalent symbolic representations, written large across the sky, of humankind's activities, foibles and concerns. The qualities, movements and interrelations of the heavenly bodies that seemingly wander through the stellar constellations, which themselves form a stately cyclical progress over our heads when we look up at the sky from the apparently motionless earth upon which we stand, reflect the attributes of the members of the classical pantheon for whom they were named and with whose mythological activities they are inseparably associated. But these gods and goddesses never did bear much resemblance to later idealistic manifestations of a monotheistic deity. They were always seemingly no more and no less than larger-than-life and fantastic versions of humankind and they were celebrated for being so. Taken together, the planets and the zodiacal constellations could be described astrologically as being, in much the same way as the old gods and goddesses who are their namesakes, archetypal representations of the gamut of benefic and malefic attributes, experiences and influences which human individuals can be expected to exhibit or encounter in the course of their sublunary lives.

The fact that planetary movements can first be pinpointed, and then charted backwards and forwards in relation to earthly time and place, is paired in astrological philosophy with the notion that there exists a correspondence between earth and heaven to support its unique system of description and divination. This proceeds from an acceptance that earth and heaven mirror each other in a generalised way to discover, read and evaluate specific instances of correspondence as they relate, for instance, to a person, an institution, a project or an endeavour, even to a mundane material enquiry. This exercise is achieved by means of freeze-framing the notional view of the heavens at the place and time of an event occurring in order to discover its unique astrological fingerprint. The exercise of narrowing down the generality of the heavens in order to

evaluate their condition in relation to the specifics of earthly endeavour is primarily achieved by means of a horoscope. Etymologically derived from the Greek *hora*, (hour), and *skopos*, (watcher), horoscope was originally used as an astrological term to describe the degree and sign of the zodiac which was rising over the Eastern horizon at a given moment and a specific place; this is now referred to as the Ascendant. As a descriptive word, horoscope evolved to denote the entire map of the sky as it would appear – notionally – to a watcher standing in a particular place at a significant moment (Brau, Weaver & Edmands 1980: 135). So, the horoscope is a schematic view of the heavens in relation to earthly space and time. It matches a particular 'below' with its very own 'above' and ties specific events in the former domain with those of the latter sphere which could be said, from a geocentric view, to correspond exactly with them. From this starting point, the horoscope pinpoints the positions of the planets and other celestial phenomena in relation to the notional horizon and midheaven, to the signs of the zodiac, and to each other.

On an astrologer's view, a horoscope fuses space and time with something of the individual or entity for which it is drawn to map that individual's or entity's own skyscape or heavenly place in the cosmos. Despite some alterations in style, (those used by contemporary Western astrologers are predominantly circular whereas traditionally they were square), these maps remain true today to their pre-modern designs of place rather than space; nowadays a conscious effort is needed to remember that maps were not always drawn, as they are now, with a view to recording modern, universal spaces. In distinguishing between the mapping of places and spaces I have stumbled unwittingly across the semantics of geography: Kent Ryden discusses the concept of *landscape* and the substitution of the word *place* for the term *space* by some (apparently 'humanistically oriented') geographers, among whom he cites Yi-Fu Tuan's observation that space 'has no trodden paths and signposts, … no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed'; whereas place, contained within space, is a multi-dimensional 'center of meaning constructed by experience' (Ryden 1993: 36-37 & Tuan 1977: 54 & 1975: 152).

Read as a representation of place rather than space, viewed as a depiction of a land- or more accurately a skyscape, by a practitioner with sufficient horoscopic expertise, an

astrological map can be as powerful a catalyst upon the imagination as essayist Conger Beasley suggests landscape to be when he describes the latter as 'a kind of cutting board upon which the identity is dissected and then fused back together into a new amalgam' (Beasley 1990: xi, cited by Ryden 1993: 259). Ryden's exposition of the power of a familiar landscape to fuse notions of space, time and self is, I think, one which can be appositely projected skywards, for he proposes landscape as a field upon which memories are located, a terrain to which experiences are affixed by contemplators who sift and replay these phenomena, arranging and rearranging them in novel patterns so that the identities to which those memories and experiences contribute are newly and revealingly displayed. Few astrologers of my acquaintance would quarrel with this as a good description of their own interactions with a horoscope; and those of them who are familiar with the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss would be unlikely to miss the fact that, on the latter's terms, Ryden is actually describing an exercise of *bricolage.* (Of which phenomenon's close relations with astrology I will have more to say.) For many charts are interrogated, not just once, but repeatedly over the course of many years by practitioners aiming to discern their contemporary meanings.

These will be horoscopes that incorporate more than a simple reflection of a single earthly event; they will have been drawn to coincide with the birth or inception of a person or project, to map that entity's lifelong sky signature. And this introduces, as another of astrology's key philosophical principles, the assumption that the full lifetime's potential of anything existent under the sky is mirrored in the quality of that sky at the moment of its birth. This extends the notion of first-order sub- and superlunary correspondences, directly matching events on earth with the skies above them, to what could be termed a second-order association which reads off the future potential of an individual or enterprise from the qualities of the heavens at the time and place of its earthly birth or inception. This second-order association of earth and heaven combines the notion of there being a mutual correspondence between the two realms with another concept: that of the 'seed moment', which holds that the lifelong potential of the nascent oak tree, for example, is encapsulated in the moment of its acorn's formation; this underwrites the practice of identifying in the birth-moment's sky the unique natal astrological fingerprint of an individual person or entity which will last for

their earthly lifetime and beyond.[68] The two orders of correspondence are regularly invoked together: a (first-order) map of the skies drawn for a key moment in an individual's life or an institution's development will be combined in various ways with the (second-order) natal or inception chart.

A further, third-order earth/sky association departs still further from the actual state of the heavens in relation to a significant time and place, and calls for a conceptual leap which, in my experience, is one a number of students balk at, at least initially. A horoscope faithfully representing the condition of the sky at a given moment will be progressed or regressed through time schematically; there is more than one way of doing this but students are usually taught the method known as Secondary Progression which takes one *day* in the ephemeris of planetary positions to represent one *year* in the life of the chart's native. Thus, a map of the skies above a person's birthplace when she is – say – thirty days old will double as a chart for her thirtieth year of life. By introducing a notional, rather than an actual, measurement of space-time, this third-order correspondence removes the resultant astrology beyond the realm of any possible empirical justification which might invoke the direct physical influences of planets upon earthly phenomena, albeit that the latter class is already widened considerably beyond actual events to include the future potential encapsulated within seed moments.

Despite the fact that the primary motivation of students of astrology is the acquisition of practical skills of horoscopy, irrespective of the latter's epistemological status, coming to terms with this third-order correspondence nevertheless stretches the acceptance levels of a number of neophytes when they are first introduced to it. For, if challenged by sceptics, they will until this stage of their studies have been able to fall back on a vague explanation of direct causal effects to defend maps of the heavens based upon first- and second-order correspondences with the earth below; but the introduction of third-order analogies severs that tenuous link with empirical respectability and maroons them with the pre-modern doctrine of correspondences. Sometime Chair of the

[68] The notion of a determining seed moment is an Aristotelian/Ptolemaic metaphor which, though it remains powerful among astrologers today, is rarely recognised as such. Written in the second century CE, Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos* (1998) rationalised astrology – possibly in response to a stinging attack on divination by Cicero – creating for it an abstract, theoretical structure that was philosophically mainly Aristotelian with some Stoic elements (Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 65, citing Long 1982).

Astrological Association David Hamblin[69] has cited 'the more arcane techniques such as day-for-a-year progressions', the validity of which he never established evidentially, as contributing to his doubts about 'whether astrology was true'; these eventually compelled him to stop practising altogether and retreat from the authoritative position he had achieved within the astrological community (Hamblin, cited by Phillipson 2000: 119). I remember struggling with this departure from the (just possibly) physical to the (incontrovertibly) metaphysical when my teacher first introduced her class to the technicalities of secondary progression. I worried that the day-for-a-year rule was an arbitrary one. I had lost my bearings in real space-time and only then realised the extent of my intellectual reliance upon this slender bridge back to rationality. And yet, numbers of my serious classmates reported being too involved in learning the technique to have time to worry about its epistemological respectability.

Identifying three orders of astrological correspondence which distance themselves progressively from any direct and hypothetically explicable link between earth and heaven reminds me of Charles Stewart's interesting discussion of modernisation trends in contemporary Greek society, particularly as they affect life on the island of Naxos (Stewart 1991: 117 ff.). As an alternative to the dualism which commonly opposes rationality with irrationality in circumstances such as these, Stewart represents knowledge in terms of a continuum ranging from empirical, individual observation on the one hand to collectively inculcated opinion on the other. The former of these is otherwise described as 'first-order rationality' and is, on Stewart's Kuhnian view, a chimera; the latter includes the shading of knowledge into belief, custom and forms of thought that are socially assimilated and not necessarily subjected to critical examination. Stewart argues that all knowledge is coloured to some extent by communally shared conceptions, collective values and predispositions; accordingly, all rationality is at best 'second-order' and is to be found at the centre of the knowledge continuum. Stewart's model holds good for astrological knowledge in that the latter's orders of above/below correspondences move progressively away from the former in the direction of the latter extreme. Which explains why what I have called the third-order tends not to be accepted unthinkingly by students of astrology until they are sufficiently steeped in its beliefs, customs and forms of thought hardly to notice it. As

[69] See appendix A.

for myself, I am now so familiar with charts calculated in this way that I wonder that they ever unsettled me.

As far as his practice was concerned, a traditional astrologer of pre-electronic eras would have started out by computing a horoscope according to the conventions of one of these three orders and then drawing it; this used to be an involved and time consuming process, but it is now done-and-dusted in an instant with a computer and some dedicated software. It still takes the astrologer time, though, to read the chart and discover in it the qualities of the sentient or non-sentient being for which it is drawn. She may check and corroborate her interpretation of its symbols against the maps of relevant past events. If appropriate, she can progress it notionally into the future, as discussed above, in an attempt to peek around today's corner and get a glimpse of what might be the nature of that person's or entity's tomorrow. She will proceed to weigh the range of possible meanings encoded within the horoscope's unique interrelation of symbols before synthesising what she judges to be the map's main import for the benefit of its interested parties, bearing in mind the nature of their concerns in the matter. This process involves her in distilling specific plain-language information from the sets of generalised symbolic images and their metaphorical associations which her initial reading of the chart will have suggested to her.

A number of its practitioners, when asked 'what is astrology?', allude to this aspect of their practice when they reply that 'astrology is the interpretation of symbols'. This description supposes the interpreter to have a competency in the languages from and to which she is interpreting; she must be able both to understand others and express herself in both languages, and to know the equivalences and dislocations between the two. As a trainee astrological interpreter, she will first have come to know the zodiacal and planetary symbols in and for themselves before coming to grips with the gamut of real-life descriptions which can usefully be employed to illustrate their specific manifestations in any one chart for the edification of non-speakers of the astrological language. This process will involve her in learning sets of astrological rules, protocols and key words. If challenged to substantiate her synthesis and judgement of a chart's set of symbols, she should in all cases be able to trace her methodological justification and explain the factors which have informed her prognostications to the satisfaction of a

fellow astrologer. A widespread failure on the part of practitioners to apply a clearly defined method, and to know at least something of its provenance, would usher in a world of astrological solipsism and privilege the authoritative agency of the practitioner over and above the art, flying in the face of astrology's well recorded tradition and upsetting the historically underwritten relationship between art and artist; no wonder that anyone suspected of making it up as they go along is frowned upon by all serious astrologers who invariably have a considerable personal investment of time and material resources in their astrological research and education, irrespective of which particular sub-set of its long and varied traditions they adhere to.

For, as I can vouch, learning astrology is a serious and time-consuming business; doing it is difficult. The multivalent meanings of its symbols take a while for the student to assimilate; it takes still more time to acquire sufficient fluency in the astrological language to be able adequately to translate from it into everyday words which do justice to its inherent poetics. And, however well learned and applied, it remains at best an unreliable forecasting device. The nature of practising astrology keeps enthusiasts of the art – both neophyte and accomplished – perpetually on their toes, searching for techniques which will ease the perplexing but tantalising task of astrological prognostication. Horoscopes display an almost infinite range of variation. So do the purposes for which they are drawn: in Britain today these would most often concern matters of individual psychology and general life trends, but they are also used to elect propitious days and times for projects to be initiated, to describe or explain events, to answer mundane questions, even to find lost cats! What will be clear from all of this is that *real* astrology does not simply divide the world between the twelve signs of the zodiac in relation to the dates of their births or inceptions. True, it is possible to tell from this initial data alone the zodiacal position in which the Sun will fall within a given chart. And a horoscope with its Sun in – say – Virgo could be said to represent a Sun-sign Virgo person or situation. But, a group of charts drawn for the August/September period of the year in which the Sun falls within the tropical zodiacal sign of Virgo will incorporate innumerable variations in the astrological nature of those Suns, dependent upon their positions and qualitative conditions in relation to their horoscopic placements and to those of the other planets, and real and notional celestial phenomena, included in the maps.

The popular Sun- or Star-sign astrology of the horoscope columns is, at least in its current format, a fairly recent extension of an early twentieth century development within society in general and astrology in particular.[70] In proceeding only from the ubiquitous modern knowledge of birthdays – days and months only – it produces astrology-for-all in easily consumed nuggets without the need for individual calculations of exact times, dates, years and places of births. Done 'properly', it requires the expertise of a *real* astrologer to calculate and condense its potted meanings; when executed in this way, it will make sense to another *real* astrologer who, working backwards from the Sun-sign column, attempts to match it with the planetary state of affairs which informed it. Hence, it is an ideal form of paid employment for *real* astrologers. Opinions of popular Sun-sign work differ within the astrological community: some practitioners are messianic about its role in familiarising the public with astrology; others argue that it merely renders astrology ridiculous; most are pleased to earn a bit of money from it while gaining publicity for their more serious publications and practices.

Astrology – of whatever type - is alone in deriving divinatory knowledge regarding an individual or an entity from the positions of planetary and stellar bodies which can be determined and corroborated for the past, the present and – importantly – tracked into the future for any geographical location. Freed from the present concerns and confines of the one-to-one divinatory encounter, the astrologer can judge the qualities of anyone or anything, and make forecasts about his, her or its future development, just so long as she can discover the time and place of inception. So, although it can be seen to share with most religions a means of tying the individual into a wider cosmological system of cause and effect, and to share with other oracle-reading systems an attempt to know the unknowable, astrology differs from these in basing the origin of its inspiration, neither in one deity or a pantheon of equally non-material beings, nor in the chance fall of a pack of cards or a set of yarrow stalks, but rather on the measurable movements of objective entities whose existence is in no way disputed by astronomers and positivist

[70] Astrologer Kim Farnell, (see appendix A), has just completed a research project which, challenging the view that Sun-sign astrology is an entirely twentieth century phenomenon, proposes that it has a far deeper provenance (Farnell forthcoming).

scientists, and whose exact positions are both recorded retrospectively and plotted way ahead in time.

Given that it is generally assumed by social theorists to be a divination system which would, despite its scientifically oriented tradition, be sufficient to cast its activities in a religious light, how does astrology fare when it is mapped onto a broadly construed working description of what religion actually is? Somewhat surprisingly, a case could be made for astrology's fitting Clifford Geertz's classic definition of religion as:

> (1) A system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. (Geertz 1993: 90 ff.)

What is more, the fit is a relatively good one, because Geertz stops short of defining what underpins the system of symbols; although moods (which he describes as scalar) would have to be downplayed in favour of motivations (directional or vectorial by contrast), the largely intellectual and linguistic practices of astrologers having more of the latter about them than the former. But, to extrapolate from this match that astrology is a religion seems a worryingly top-down exercise, given that the majority of astrologers steadfastly deny that their practices are religious in nature and numbers even aspire to being scientists of a sort; and I have to say that Geertz's definition seems to me to be broad enough to fit a multitude of human activities ranging from attending Roman Catholic mass on a Sunday morning to playing bingo on the Pier every Wednesday afternoon.

However, astrology's acknowledgement of the interrelating cycles of both benefic and malefic planetary influences which are brought to bear on earthly existence does qualify it as fulfilling two key attributes of Geertz's cultural system of religion, namely that it combats the chaos which lurks threateningly at the edges of human social organisation and deals with the problem of suffering; not, as Geertz tells us, by instructing its adherents:

> How to avoid suffering but how to suffer, how to make of physical pain, personal loss, worldly defeat, or the helpless contemplation of others' agony something bearable, supportable – something, as we say, sufferable. (Geertz 1993: 104)

Which is just up astrology's street, so to speak. But it is as close as Geertz comes to the acknowledging the materialist elements of religion and its ideological components. His definition has been criticised, notably by Talal Asad, for ignoring these, the socio-economic elements of a religious system and the power relations it inevitably incorporates and propagates (Asad 1983: 237 ff. & Morris 1996: 312 ff.). And, if astrology is a religion, then it is an eminently practical one whose primary concerns are the functions of everyday material life; its practitioners have not been employed down the centuries to contemplate abstruse metaphysical conundrums or to describe otherworldly realms, but to give advice about present circumstances and their likely future outcomes.

Bearing this in mind, it might be more relevant to measure astrology against a more functionalist model of religion than Geertz's; but, it doesn't seem to fulfil the classical Durkheimian definition which assigns religion a purpose glossed by Bryan Turner (1991) as 'social cement'. For astrologers are by nature individualists whose uneasy communal relations were aptly described to me by a seasoned professional of some two or three decades when, borrowing a term from the jargon of the child development specialists, she explained: 'when astrologers look as though they are interrelating in a friendly and cooperative manner, they are actually only engaging in parallel play'. Astrologers practise no public rituals;[71] they have no communal rites; they affirm no metaphysically oriented creeds; they deal with material bodies, in all senses of that term. They conform in no way to Émile Durkheim's definition of religion as:

> A unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them. (Durkheim 1966: 62)

I would conclude, then, that astrology matches only a generalised conception of religion as a cultural system which accommodates a broad church in every sense of that term. It performs two of the actions expected of such a religion: discovering order in chaos; and acknowledging suffering. But, its services are sought, not by congregations of public worshippers, but by individual practitioners and the customers who purchase their products. When it connects people with what appears to them to be an animate and

[71] (With, to my knowledge, the sole exception of the Astrological Lodge of London's biannual performance described in a subsequent chapter.)

responsive cosmos, it does so on a private, one-to-one basis at the level of personal experience and certainly not by recourse to a collective effervescence from which most astrologers would run a mile.

If astrology is at base a matter for the individual, then maybe it should be considered in relation to Durkheim's conception – not of religion – but of magic (Durkheim 1966: 44)? He defines the latter as an essentially private service offered by magicians to their clients which, he contends in contradiction to Frazer's assertion that the age of magic preceded that of religion, can co-exist unproblematically with the latter. Certainly, there are numbers of astrologers who are also active religious adherents. But as Daniel Pals points out, in arguing this point Durkheim flew in the face of the evidence of Frazer and Tyler that magical rites were often decidedly social events aimed at publicly protecting entire communities (Pals 1996: 120). Following Durkheim, Marcel Mauss struggled to define the magic of which he attempted to construct a general theory, although he did suggest a link between magic and astrology to the extent that the latter developed within the discipline of the former (Mauss 2001: 57 & 176). He recognised magic, not by 'the structure of its rites, but by the circumstances in which these rites occur, which in turn determine the places they occupy in the totality of social customs' (Mauss 2001: 30).

If this is unsatisfactory for my purposes for reasons that astrological rites hardly exist and, in so far as they do, occur in no one particular set of circumstances, his assertion that 'nobody can become a magician at will', but only by means of revelation, consecration and tradition, is even more so (Mauss 2001: 33 & 50). What Mauss did do effectively, however, was to identify the practical orientation which has always been a concomitant of magical knowledge, in which category he included astrology which, along with alchemy, he reminds us was thought of as applied physics in historical Greece. Being less concerned with metaphysics than their more religious counterparts, Mauss's magicians worked to codify and systematise their knowledge by subjecting it to formal, rational procedures, discarding as many of its mystical elements as possible. These were early scientists by another name for, as Mauss argued:

> It is obvious that a certain section of science has been elaborated by magicians, particularly in primitive societies. Magicians, who were also alchemists, astrologers and doctors in Greece, India and elsewhere, were the founders and exponents of astronomy, physics and natural history. [The] treasury of ideas,

> amassed by magic, was a capital store which science for a long time exploited. (Mauss 2001: 177)

Certainly, we in Britain have had our quota of magi who were, amongst other things, accomplished astrologers and generally alchemists as well. Dr John Dee, court astrologer to Queen Elizabeth I was one such; Oxford scholar Elias Ashmole was another. Historically, astrology was closely linked with magic and both were subsumed by the practice of alchemy. It was Ashmole's view that:

> Iudiciall Astrologie is the Key of Naturall Magick, and Naturall magick the Doore that leads to this Blessed Stone. (Ashmole, cited by Cornelius 2003: 162)

But yesterday's magic, whose vestiges remain recognisable in today's astrology, was very different from that practised by the contemporary British magicians whose activities have been ethnographically described by Tanya Luhrmann (1989) and Susan Greenwood (2000). The latter in no way resemble the sedentary practices of today's astrologers, most of whom would infinitely prefer to spend a solitary evening at home with the computer poring over their charts and ephemeredes than to don strange clothing – or worse still doff it altogether - and dance naked around a fire in a social and sociable circle.

There does not seem to me to be much mileage in attempting to fit contemporary Western astrology – *real* astrology – into the terms of one of the numerous definitions of religion or magic to be found in the sociological literature. These are at any rate often so broad as to be of little analytical use. So, I will conclude my half-hearted attempt in this regard by assigning astrology to an inclusive category termed 'magico-religious' by Arnold Van Gennep which, though frighteningly sweeping in its scale in the manner of its time, actually takes some beating as a catch-all term for the theory and practice of astrology:

> *Dynamism* designates the impersonal theory of mana; *animism,* the personalistic theory, whether the power personified be a single or a multiple being, animal or plant (e.g., a totem), anthropomorphic or amorphous (e.g., God). These theories constitute *religion,* whose techniques (ceremonies, rites, services) I call *magic.* Since the practice and the theory are inseparable – the theory without the practice becoming metaphysics, and the practice on the basis of a different theory becoming science – the term I will at all times use is the adjective *magico-religious.* (Van Gennep 1960: 13 original emphasis)

So, it is by defining astrology as a 'magico-religious' practice that I will conclude this overview of my research subject. Having started the chapter by considering the popular Sun-sign horoscopes that form the basis of the public's ubiquitous but scanty knowledge of astrology, I went on to introduce *real* astrology, of which the former media products are lightweight, marketable offshoots. In the next four chapters I will review the ways in which its practitioners relate to *real* astrology and list the practical purposes served by these relations. Starting with an assessment of the validity of the popular assumption of social commentators that astrology is a system of divination, I will next outline its relationship with science and New Age religion; thereafter, I will consider whether astrologers' attachments to their practice and its theory can accurately be described in terms of belief, given its predominantly non-empirically justifiable nature which seemingly defies its being readily acceptable in terms of knowledge. Following a broad discussion of the belief/knowledge dichotomy, I will focus upon astrology's linguistic orientation and wonder whether this qualifies it to be usefully described as a Wittgensteinian language game.

CHAPTER FIVE

ASTROLOGY AS A DIVINATION SYSTEM

In the previous section, I introduced my research subject as *real* astrology, a term I use to differentiate it from its lightweight relative which, as a result of the widespread media exposure enjoyed by its Sun-sign horoscopes and entertainment forecasting, constitutes the public's idea of what astrology is. Arguing that *real* astrology (which describes what tutors teach and students learn) has affinities with divinatory and religious discourses, albeit that the ongoing trend towards secularisation has undermined the latter's inherited roles in contemporary Western societies, I attempted to measure it against some classical definitions of religion and magic. I concluded that Van Gennep's 'magico-religious' category encompasses the practice and the theory of astrology and acknowledges their interdependency. Thus defined, I will now consider astrology as a divination system; next, I will review astrology's peculiar relationship with science and assess the accuracy of the general theoretical assumption that it is a New Age religion. Given the negativity with which many astrologers react to this ascription I will continue, in the following chapter, to question whether it is accurate to say of astrologers that they relate to their practice in terms of knowledge or of belief.

DIFFICULTIES WITH DIVINATION

As I outlined in my last chapter, an astrologer selects one moment in space-time and maps the sky which matches it in the form of a horoscope. This can then be judged for any number of purposes. For instance:

- The moment might signal a beginning of one kind or other: the birth of a human baby or an animal; the inauguration of a business, an organisation or a nation; the start of a social institution, such as a marriage. In these instances, she will expect to gauge the lifetime's potential of the chart's subject.

- Or, the moment may mark an event of some type, global or personal: the onset of a natural disaster; a terrorist attack; a car accident; an unexpected meeting or phone call; a strange bird landing on the garden feeding table. For situations such as these, she will look to find in the map a symbolic distillation of the event and maybe also an explanation for it.

- Sometimes, the moment will coincide with a question asked her by a friend or a client which could range in importance from 'should I marry him?' or 'when should I start my IVF treatment?' to 'will I get the grant?' or (something of a favourite, this one, with horary astrologers) 'where's the cat?'. No matter what the type of query, she will read the chart for its moment in the hope of being able

> to answer it appropriately. (Recently, when I was discussing the unexpected news that the Sophia Centre at Bath Spa University is to close with an experienced professional astrologer on the phone, she stopped the conversation to time my question 'are there reasons for this decision over and above the financial factors given?' in order to draw its chart.)

For whatever purpose it is drawn, a chart freeze-frames a significant moment, stilling and distilling it, to enable the astrologer to read from it the present qualities and/or the future potential of the phenomenon – sentient and non-sentient, material and non-material, real and imaginary – to which it relates or, more properly, which relates to it.

The contemplation of a horoscope gives an astrological practitioner and to a lesser degree her client (when there is one) a different view of the subject for which it is drawn, challenging preconceptions and rearranging prior ideas. In this respect, the exercise shares a quality central to the wide range of divinatory practices encountered the world over which Philip Peek, following his extensive surveys of divination systems in Africa, has described as the 'new arrangements of old ideas' (Peek 2005). Barbara Tedlock, an anthropologist with both a practical competency and an analytical interest in divination, tells us that all peoples on earth have practised/do practise it in some form or other, the many and various means of which are generally designed to answer questions about:

> Future events, past disasters whose causes cannot be explained, things unknown, hidden from sight or removed in space, appropriate conduct in critical situations, including the healing of illness, determining the times and modes of religious worship, and making choices of persons for particular tasks. (Tedlock 2001: 189)

An astrological map indubitably affords the reader a unique view of its subject and informs her in making judgements appropriate to the otherwise unexplained purpose for which it has been calculated. Astrology would therefore seem to comply with both Peek's and Tedlock's requirements and consequently qualify to be described as a divination system. But this is not to say that many contemporary Western astrologers would choose to have their activities assigned as such by anthropological chroniclers. Divination is, I would suggest, an ascription generally bestowed by an external commentator upon sets of practices with multiple indigenous purposes, hazily arcane methodology and justifications which – on the theorist's view - defy empirical

corroboration. It is a term from the analytical observer's descriptive wordbook which people who operate the systems so described will seldom use unprompted of their own activities: individuals with atheist, agnostic or materialist sympathies are unlikely, after all, to claim too close a personal relationship with divinity, nor to be happily associated with practitioners who do not share their reluctance in this regard; on the other hand, those who declare a privileged association with their divinity may consider it sacrilegious to have their ritual interaction with it consigned to the mixed bag of goings-on which are labelled as divination.

In the book he recently co-authored with astrologer academic Patrick Curry, anthropologist Roy Willis describes contemporary astrology as 'warm-blooded, egalitarian, anarchistic and erotic' and enthuses that:

> There is obvious common ground between a divinatory and participatory astrology, and that segment of current anthropology called 'experiential', committed to first-hand investigation of the altered states of consciousness peculiar to divination and ritual healing'. (Willis in Willis & Curry 2004: 11)

But most astrologers could in truth do without the attentions of ethnographers eager to experience altered states of consciousness in bizarre fields and then categorise them from the safe vantages of their universities. Numbers of them struggle to see quite how their activities could in any way be taken to resemble those of the exotic diviners whose dramatic exploits are recorded with gusto in the anthropological literature. They will tell you that what they do is altogether too ordered, rule-bound, mundane and, for that matter, too commercially oriented to have much of the divine about it. So, before electing to model astrology as a divinatory practice, it should be stressed that it is somewhat contentious, within the astrological community, to describe it in these terms.

On a practical level, it may not be generally appreciated that to admit to astrology's being a form of divination is necessarily to invoke the official censure of the Roman Catholic Church, whose catechism of 1994 condemns astrology on precisely these grounds. Its Paragraph 2116 states that:

> *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 honour, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone. (Catechism 1994, my emphasis, http://www.usccb.org/catechism/text/pt3sect2chpt1.htm)

It is small wonder that astrologers with a commitment to, or an affection for, the Roman Catholic Church hesitate to define their practices as divination although it would seem that condemnation of astrology from this quarter far exceeds the mere fact of its being described in these terms. But the catechism's words are indubitably fiery enough even to encourage numbers of non-Catholic astrologers, especially those with Christian upbringings and/or beliefs, to shrink from defining their activities in terms which are sure to incur the wrath of their God or church.[72] The Church of England worried about the popularity of astrology in its 1997 report on New Age heresies entitled *The Search for Faith* (Spencer 2000: 14), while the Church Army has more recently highlighted the perceived challenge for its home mission represented by the fact that 'twice as many young people believe in horoscopes than the bible' (06/2006: www.churcharmy.org.uk).

The censure of the Churches and the general unease engendered by divination as a descriptive term have real-life effects: it was this definition of astrology that prompted the Independent Television Commission (ITC) to investigate its possible dangers as a topic for broadcasting (Sancho 2001, cited by Campion 2003: 182). In December 2003, the Office of Communications (Ofcom) took over from the ITC as the new communications sector regulator; in July 2005, it issued a new Broadcasting Code after a consultation process in which the Astrological Association of Great Britain had participated. The code subsumes astrology under the term divination, but there is confusion about its religious status.[73] During the consultation process, the Church of

---

[72] Some are made of sterner stuff. Rick Levine, (see appendix A), a professional astrologer interviewed by Nicholas Campion, quipped that, if astrology was so threatening to Christianity, then why - since Jesus invited only three people to his birth – were they all astrologers? (cited by Campion 2003: 263). And – somewhat surprisingly - John Frawley, (author, teacher, specialist in horary practice and one of Britain's better known practitioners, see appendix A), publicly cites astrology as the reason for his conversion to Roman Catholicism. When Garry Phillipson asked him how he reconciled astrology with Catholicism he replied:

> Ninety-eight percent of me sees no contradiction at all. I wasn't born a Catholic, I came to it through astrology. I found it the only system that was intellectually rigorous enough to satisfy me. The catechism says that all astrologers are the servants of the Devil, and the other two percent of me thinks that could be quite accurate. I suspect there will come a time when I shall cease to practise astrology because of it. But at the moment I find that the faith expands my astrology, and astrology expands my faith. (Frawley, cited by Phillipson 2000: 111)

[73] Ofcom Broadcasting Code, July 2005, Section 2 *Harm and Offence,* to be read in conjunction with Section 1 *Protecting the Under-Eighteens*:

England Spokesperson on Communications worried that, as astrology and spiritualism were defined as religions, the distinction between religion and the paranormal was uncertain. Ofcom responded confusingly that 'activities such as astrology and daily horoscopes, which are not based on religious or paranormal belief-systems, are not "Paranormal practices"'.

(07/2006: http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/Broadcasting_code/responses/C-D/ChuofEng.pdf and http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/Broadcasting_code/bcstat/260992_new.pdf#xml=http://search.atomz.com/search/pdfhelper.tk?sp_o=41,100000,0)

To complicate matters further, within the astrological community, (in so far as the loose affiliations of individualistic practitioners can be so described), the assertion that astrology is a form of divination carries the political load of being associated with one school of astrological thought and its chief protagonist: with Geoffrey Cornelius[74] and the Company of Astrologers which he co-founded. I have heard astrologers of different schools, and schools of thought, observe that Cornelius has taken this notion and made it his own; certainly, the association has now been politicised to the extent that to admit its validity is – in many people's minds - necessarily to nail one's colours to this single astrological mast, given the absence within the astrological world of any formal system for citation, debate and interchange of ideas that would counteract the *ad hominem* nature of its inherited patterns of allegiance. But this is not to deny that Cornelius makes a convincing case for astrology as divination. And, as one would expect from one of the astrological magi, he illustrates his argument with some inspiring horoscopy in his most comprehensive development of the thesis, *The Moment of Astrology:*

2.6. Demonstrations of exorcism, the occult, the paranormal, divination, or practices related to any of these that purport to be real (as opposed to entertainment) must be treated with due objectivity.
2.7. If a demonstration of exorcism, the occult, the paranormal, divination, or practices related to any of these is for entertainment purposes, this must be made clear to viewers and listeners.
2.8. Demonstrations of exorcism, the occult, the paranormal, divination, or practices related to any of these (whether such demonstrations purport to be real or are for entertainment purposes) must not contain life-changing* advice directed at individuals.
(Religious programmes are exempt from this rule but must, in any event, comply with the provisions in Section Four *Religion*. Films, dramas and fiction are generally not bound by this rule.)
* Meaning of 'life-changing':
Life-changing advice includes direct advice for individuals upon which they could reasonably act or rely about health, finance, employment or relationships.

[74] See appendix A.

Origins in Divination (2003), which - published originally in 1994 - was recently re-issued in a revised edition. Both books carry approving forewords by Patrick Curry.[75]

Roy Willis singled out Cornelius's work on the philosophy of astrology for recommendation during a personal conversation I had with him about the research he conducted for his recent book, co-written with Patrick Curry, in which he describes *The Moment of Astrology* as a 'key text in contemporary astrology' (Willis in Willis & Curry 2004: 23). The three authors share the project of properly acknowledging and publicising astrology's definition and provenance as a system of divination. Curry describes the origins of modern practice in the early astral omen-reading of Mesopotamia and the *katarchic* astrology of Greece,[76] which treated the heavenly bodies as:

> Divine omens in which the will of the gods, who are identified with the planets, can be discerned in relation to the question (concerning a human desire) that is asked. Such omens are signs, not causes. Nor is it assumed that the future is fixed, inasmuch as the will of the gods, or Fate(s), can change, and the diviner, and the divination, are not predicting a fixed future but necessarily intervening in and re-creating the future as an ongoing process. (Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 66-67)

On Curry's view, today's horary practice is clearly the direct heir of *katarchic* astrology and, as such, the most unambiguously divinatory branch of the art. But, it is Willis's and Curry's thesis that *all* kinds of astrology – nativities, elections, inceptions, mundane, etc. – can 'best be understood as divinatory, each in its own way' (Willis & Curry 2004: 67). Reflective theorists with a practical interest in the subject acknowledge that the 'astrology as divination' model is – after all – the only serious contender for any kind of effective defence in formal terms. Although this justification of astrological practice (necessarily) flies in the face of the so-called objective truths

---

[75] See appendix A.

[76] Curry tells us that the Greek term *katarche* originally described a human initiative which took the form of a ritual seeking of an omen by 'impetrating' the gods, notionally linking human and divine dimensions in order to discover their will in a particular matter (Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 59). The Roman equivalents were *aurispicium* (to begin something; to attend to an omen at or for a beginning) and *augurium* (to begin, divine, or consecrate). So, *katarchic* astrology concerned beginnings and the makings of beginnings as a result of human initiatives to enter into dialogues with the gods. Cornelius is of the opinion that the term had already been devalued by the time of late Hellenistic astrology in the fifth century (Cornelius 2003: 126). *Katarche* is another politicised term within the astrological world: Cornelius and the Company of Astrologers use it as the title of a correspondence course they offer in horary astrology; this has been the extent of the familiarity with the term which I have encountered among my fellow astrology students.

promulgated by science in that it recognises and celebrates a different type of knowing, for which Curry uses the term *metis* or cunning wisdom, whose supple embrace of paradox enables the construction of multiple and perspectival truths. Described as a 'mode of action' or 'attitude of mind', *metis* is recommended as a natural, if unacknowledged, adjunct to Socratic/Platonic *episteme* and Aristotelian *phronesis,* all three of which are posited as contributory factors in the sum of human social knowledge (Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 104 ff. & Little 2006: 56-57). Curry's characterisation of the creative, *metic* nature of astrological knowledge fits well with Cornelius's suggestion that it arises from a series of what he calls *takes,* a term he borrows from the film industry to illustrate the multiple meanings or signatures to be got from one chart when it is viewed from different perspectives and edited to form a single creative production of contextually appropriate symbolism by the practitioner and (where relevant) her client (Cornelius 2003: 203 ff.).

But, however interesting as attempts to describe and define a formally justifiable basis for astrological knowledge, these remain theoretical debates, albeit that – in Cornelius's case – the theory is interwoven with some lovely astrology. Like it or not, such conjectures are the preserve of a minority of practitioners who like to think about astrology in these terms. As one of their number, Kirk Little,[77] has ruefully acknowledged, the cogitations of academically-minded astrologers are unlikely to have much general influence in the community beyond the confines of the beleaguered astrology-related university programmes which are the natural venues for theorising of this kind (Little 2006: 57). Another thinking practitioner worried, during a conversation I had with her, that theorising its philosophy had the effect of reifying astrology as a singular and objective discourse when, in reality, the theory and the practice are inseparable; both are to be discovered and judged appropriately for the circumstances of different horoscopes, in each of which theory and practice manifest themselves in their traditionally allocated houses for appropriate astrological assessment. But, having acknowledged the externally theoretical and internally problematic and political nature of the statement, it is nonetheless my observation that astrology patently *is* a divination system, and one that seems to shelter comfortably under Van Gennep's 'magico-religious' umbrella. Notwithstanding the problems some

[77] See appendix A.

practitioners may have with this ascription, I will nevertheless explore it as such. Within an analytic frame that takes for granted the divinatory nature of astrological practice, the fact that astrologers exhibit some resistance to describing themselves as diviners is in itself noteworthy and will bear further consideration.

Barbara Tedlock (2001: 190-192) gives an interesting history of the term divination, starting with its different classical uses in Greece and Rome. Over the years, she tells us, analogies have been made between many so-called inductive forms of divination and developing scientific techniques. Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss (1963: 77), whose definitions of religion and magic I considered in the previous chapter, were two of the early theorists who argued that the science of divination was a system of classification. But some forms of divination are more intuitive than inductive, focussing on forecasting future events rather than disclosing what has already happened. Tedlock uses George Park's term 'interpretative divination' to describe an intermediate practice that combines induction with intuition to make pronouncements both about the past and the future (Park 1974: 917, cited by Tedlock 2001: 191). In comparison with their peers, as she characterises them, diviners of all types:

> Excel in insight, imagination, fluency in language, and knowledge of cultural traditions. During a divination, they construct usable knowledge from oracular messages. To do so, they link diverse domains of representational information and symbolism with emotional or presentational experience. In representational symbolism, specific intentional reference is paramount, the medium of expression is relatively automatised, and inductive reality is paramount. In presentational symbolism, meaning emerges as a result of an experiential immersion in the expressive patterns of the symbolic medium, which is grasped intuitively. By combining representational with presentational symbolism within a single narrative structure, diviners provide a surplus or superabundance of understanding for their clients. During the act of divination, individual creativity operates: jumbled ideas, metaphors and symbols suggest various possible interpretations. (Tedlock 2001: 191-192)

Tedlock notes that most analyses of divination rationalise the practice after the fact from a theoretical point of view which claims objectivity, in opposition to indigenous explanations of the phenomenon which are assumed to be largely subjective, but for an occasional passing resemblance to early technological science which might accrue them some small measure of objective credibility. This analytic model has, she regrets, hampered the development of a theory of divinatory practices which acknowledges and

examines the ways in which they 'combine mechanical procedures with sudden bursts of intuition or insight' and demonstrates their use of what Pierre Bourdieu has called practical mastery or knowledge (Tedlock 2001: 195). An astrologer undisputedly follows 'mechanical procedures' in calculating and drawing her chart, assessing its separate components and deciding their relative importance; and the construction of her final chart synthesis could well be said to combine the former with 'sudden bursts of intuition or insight'. But practitioners and tutors do not generally speak in these terms, at least not to students of the craft.

Most astrologers will have been taught, as I was, that good astrological interpretations and judgements are to be had by means of a thorough application of meticulous horoscopy – of whatever particular style advocated – but the more successful apprentices realise fairly early on in their studies that 'mechanical procedures' alone do not produce good finished astrological products. This realisation remains unspoken in a classroom situation dedicated to propounding theoretically oriented techniques to neophytes whose astrological knowledge acquisition may be tested academically in the same way as their proficiency in – say – English Literature or Bookkeeping. 'Sudden bursts of intuition or insight' were certainly not allowable explanations for the written chart judgements I submitted to obtain my Open College Network Credits in Astrology. But horoscopic symbolism is broad enough to be correctly translated at a number of levels for a range of situations and a disinterested observer might cite this fact before asserting that intuition or insight is necessarily brought to bear in the course of choosing between multiple sets of meanings, all of them demonstrably 'correct', for the assembly of a synthesised interpretation. But tutors and lecturers will generally elide the multivalency of astrological symbols, and the intuitive choices with which this presents them, in favour of demonstrating their formal horoscopic techniques with a set of well-worked charts chosen for the satisfying results they yield when these are applied. No one is encouraged to intuit wildly, the rule is deferred to and the classroom remains tidy. (This is *Blue Peter*, 'here's one I made earlier', controlled pedagogy which hobbles the demonstrator's creativity but saves her from getting sticky-backed plastic all over the camera.)

But, sometimes astrologers are so precisely accurate in their pronouncements that they will break with custom to wonder publicly at the source of their inspiration. A

professional working on one of the national newspaper phone-lines was at a loss to explain to me why she had, during a recent call, immediately and correctly identified that a client was having problems with a loft conversion when this horoscopically justifiable pronouncement was, after all, but one – unlikely - interpretation among many equally astrologically supportable scenarios which she could have speculated as describing her client's current situation. As far as my own experience goes, I remember being in a class of Jed's when he projected a 'celebrity' natal chart with name and birth data removed and asked us to speculate whose it might be: disagreeing vehemently with one of my fellow students who suggested it was the horoscope of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, I heard myself saying that it was Fred West's. And it was. But such successes are not made much of for their audacious divination: the latter phenomenon is invariably downplayed in favour of tracing the technical horoscopic justifications for the correct judgement. And this process of 'reverse engineering', favoured as a teaching method in the astrology classroom, has the effect of diverting attention away from the individual astrologer towards the procedures of her practice and the device which putatively generates all of her knowledge, as will next be considered in some detail.

THE HOROSCOPE AS AN INTERMEDIARY DIVINATORY DEVICE

Most, if not all, of the divinatory practices to which Philip Peek (2005) alluded in his address to the delegates (some of them astrologers) of an interdisciplinary conference on divination, hosted by the University of Copenhagen and entitled *Unveiling the Hidden*, employ some kind of intermediary device to facilitate the act of divination and inform their knowledge products. Astrology has the horoscope. Calculating, drawing and studying her skyscape maps diverts the practitioner's attention away from 'normal' life and her own concerns to concentrate it instead upon her subject's quality and condition, observed and encapsulated in symbolic, non-everyday terms. But, whatever this device might be, initiating it will invariably have the effect of demarcating a liminal divinatory moment; thereafter, implementing its routine procedures will facilitate the diviner to view her subject from a – literally - *extra*ordinary perspective.

A Tarot card reader, for example, will generally commence a session by performing some out-of-the-ordinary actions such as lighting a candle, invoking a good spirit's

blessing, putting a CD of whale music on the sound system and turning off the phone; she will set the scene in this way to focus her attention, and her querent's, in the present moment. When the cards are taken from their special wrapping, the concentration of both will be focussed entirely upon them, in nervous anticipation of the images which will present themselves during the forthcoming session. Inviting her client to choose some cards from the pack, the diviner will spread the selection on a table between them so that she can assess their combined images and synthesise their metaphorical themes in real language terms. She judges the cards to be an extension or a production of her client in which the latter has had some, albeit subconsciously operated, agency; she reads them as an externalised representation of the querent's current state of mind, and she does this from the other side of the table.

As the intermediary device used by an astrologer, the initial stages of choosing, calculating and drawing – or printing - a horoscope can be seen to remove her from everyday life and set the scene in much the same way as the Tarot reader's preparations do. The difference between the two systems is qualitative, in line with their distinct styles: whereas the Tarot reader will be looking to create a (scalar) mood, the astrologer will be interested rather in focussing upon (directional or vectorial) motivation (to borrow two terms from Clifford Geertz's (1993: 90ff.) model of religion considered earlier).[78] But, both of them having performed more or less the same function in establishing a divinatory place, the horoscope encapsulates a wider divinatory potential than do the selected Tarot cards. If the cards are viewed as an externalisation or a creation of a querent to be examined from across a table, the horoscope is read in the guise of the querent's *own* worldview or skyscape, her *own* subjective experience of

[78] While the practice of an astrologer hardly fits the classical definition of a rite of passage, in Van Gennep's (1960) original terminology, it does nevertheless follow the threefold ritual process he described as separation, margin and reaggregation. Liminality, the marginal state described by Victor Turner as a 'moment in and out of time', is the place from which diviners have always ever spoken for, on his view, it is only at the threshold of mundane perception that esoteric knowledge – the *sacra* – can be accessed (Turner 1969: 82 & 155 & Morris 1996: 252 ff.). Turner's description of the qualities of communitas, with which he associated the liminal condition, is applicable in part to the astrological experience: for the purposes of contemporary practice, the astrologer Bernadette Brady (see appendix A) updates the categories of medieval and earlier horoscopers that dealt with rebels and social misfits – communitas dwellers all of them in Turner's schema - to include modern citizens who, while perfectly well socially adjusted, elect to explore non-normative pursuits such as astrology. But the latter's individualistic nature rules out its being naturally associated with the more fanciful of Turner's 1960s-influenced ideas about comradeship and egalitarianism, which he developed into what Brian Morris (1996: 253) calls 'a veritable theory of society', except in so far as it facilitates a realisation of cosmic communitas, a category which would probably have been too 'sixties' even for Turner.

place in 'her' cosmos. The literature of landscape studies reveals that a meditation upon place encapsulates a study of time and of identity. As Kent Ryden expresses it, any contemplation of place:

> Is temporally complex, looking simultaneously at the formative past, the impending future, and the ephemeral present which separates the two; a meditation on place is necessarily a meditation on time. Moreover, to understand any place is to look deeply into a period of the life of the person to whom it belongs. Contemplation of place brings an awareness not only of time but of self and of the evolution of that self, evoking the simultaneous presence of past and present versions of one's identity and thereby illuminating the full chronological depth of that identity with a new and poignant clarity. (Ryden 1993: 256 & 259)

But, the querent having had no choice in the details of her birth, nor generally having given any consideration to the astrological qualities of other life-changing or interrogatory moments, she cannot be ascribed any agency whatever in the design of the horoscopes which match these; neither can she choose a different selection of charts, as she might pick more cards from a Tarot pack to alter – or corroborate - the overall picture presented by the previous selection. She has no second chances with her astrology. And so, the power of the divinatory encounter is shifted, in its astrological version, away from the querent and towards the medium of divination and its reader, albeit that the latter can shelter from responsibility behind the historicity and formality of her technique.

As divinatory devices go then, astrology's has the following qualities:

- It stands in relative authority over its subjects;
- It elevates its diviners over their subjects;
- It facilitates its diviners to get inside their subjects' skins.

Provided they are sufficiently proficient in the art and predisposed to attempt such an exercise in the first place, astrologers will find reading horoscopes to be an excellent way to imagine themselves authoritatively into others' positions or viewpoints, to see the world from their perspectives, the better to judge their subjects' present qualities and future potential. And, as astrology's intermediary device, the horoscope has a further advantage over – say – the Tarot cards. It adapts real and recorded astronomical phenomena for use as its primary data with the result that:

- It frees its practitioners from the constraints of the one-to-one divinatory encounter conducted in the present moment with a (human) client who chooses cards from a pack.

Astrologers need not wait, as must Tarot card readers, for a client to come in for a reading or – courtesy of electronic technology - request a virtual one online. The nature of their particular device gives them the agency to choose their own subjects: if they can discover birth data, or some other significant moment in space-time, for an individual then they can calculate and read his or her horoscope whether that person is known to them or otherwise, alive now or long since dead, desirous of divinatory knowledge or antipathetic to the very notion of its existence. The generational progress of the slower-moving outer planets in relation to the signs of the zodiac and to each other results in astrological age-sets of individuals whom an astrologer will recognise and feel they partially 'know' in terms of their natal horoscopic data. Nor need they confine themselves, as must Tarot card readers, to working with people. Given a significant time and place of inception or occurrence, they can calculate a horoscope in order to take up the point of view of a nation, an institution, a football match, a fictional character, even the family motor. Once calculated, the map need not be curtailed by the normal limits of material existence: it can notionally be regressed and progressed through linear time and relocated geographically across the globe. Individuals' horoscopes can be progressed for centuries beyond the extents of their human lives, and often are, to explain the timings of unexpected bouts of retrospective public interest or popularity such as the making of a new Hollywood movie about a long-dead hero. The charts of historical phenomena may be assessed by generations of astrologers to explain, say, the latest outbreak of hostilities between two nation states or successive re-publications of a book.

Taken together, these factors enhance astrology's potential to divine and give it the edge over most other systems of divination commonly practised in today's metropolitan societies. And, it makes life a whole lot more interesting for its students, too, as I know from my own experience. My teachers gave me assignments to prepare on Nelson Mandela's astrology, at birth and for other key life moments, culminating in the day of his release from detention; and on Jörg Haider's horoscope progressed to the time of his

leadership of the contentious far right Austrian Freedom Party.[79] I was urged to think as an Elizabethan astrologer would have done and explain Dr John Dee's reasons for electing the date and time he did for Queen Elizabeth I's coronation;[80] and to find the symbolic signature for communism in Karl Marx's birthchart.[81] I was encouraged to look at the relationships between the horoscopes of the disc-jockey John Peel and his all-time favourite pop song, The Undertones's *Teenage Kicks,* as well as charts of the BBC for whom he worked over many years.[82] And, as a matter of course, I was asked to consider topical charts: those of nations and their political leaders; of pop stars and royals; of anyone/thing in the headlines that week for whom/which astrological data could be discovered.

My experience of Tarot lessons is, admittedly, slight when compared to my familiarity with learning astrology: an astrologer friend signed up for a course in Tarot card reading being held at a local school as part of our Adult Education Programme at a time when there were no astrology classes for us to join, and persuaded me to go along with her. We were both already fairly familiar with the cards, but found that we were disappointed at the narrowness of the subject when it was shaped for evening classes. In comparison with our experience of learning astrology in the same circumstances, there was a lack of rigour and of formal procedure in the Tarot classroom. We could not imagine that demonstrating competency in this subject would ever be rewarded with Open College Network credits, as two of our astrology courses had been. Our subject matter was restricted to the mundane everyday issues of our separate daily lives for we could, after all, only read the cards for ourselves and our classmates. To do this, we had barely to map the symbols we saw in them; we were not required to justify the meanings we extrapolated from the cards, trace their provenance, or consider the everyday language terms in which they might best be expressed. Our teacher knew neither the history of her subject nor the myths which informed their images and, in marked contrast to what I have come to expect of astrology students, her class seemed as uninterested in these topics as she was.

---

[79] See appendix B.
[80] See appendix B.
[81] See appendix B.
[82] See appendix B.

It would be justifiable to use a class analogy to characterise our negative reactions to the Tarot classroom and the comparatively higher value which my friend and I allocated to astrology over Tarot, imagined as fellows in a hierarchy of divination systems, as a result of our direct experience of both. Astrology takes a lot of learning, and its serious students are generally fairly, if not very, well educated: they will be expected to think, read, write, research, lead seminars and remember details of horoscopes and sets of rules for their interpretation. (Actually, a common attribute of astrologers is an excellent memory: they will remember the salient features of hosts of charts, be they those of family members, friends and pets or politicians, pop stars and royalty; they will also familiarise themselves with the zodiacal positions of planets now and in the past and be able to comment upon the perpetually changing astrological scene without recourse to reference books.) Although some teachers will deny it, the interpretation or judgement of a horoscope can only be as good as its writer is literate; it used also to be the case that the chart's existence was dependent upon an astrologer's being competently numerate. By contrast, the student of Tarot needs only (as minimal requirements, of course, both the aforementioned being eminently desirable), a pack of cards, a lively imagination and a way with spoken words. One cannot now, to my knowledge, study Tarot for years on end and obtain a Diploma, still less an MA, in the subject.

Astrology is the thinking woman's divination system of choice. And, its comparatively high status *vis-à-vis* other divination systems is underwritten by the audacious ambitions of its practitioners to integrate it with the mainstream. In this it resembles alchemy, its close relative from medieval times, which 'made a continuous, always renewed effort to become part of a universally approved and institutionally transmitted cosmological system' (Obrist 2003). Then, as now, this was science. Alchemists were never content to be designated as mere craftspeople; not that they would ever have been accurately described as such, for reason of their being necessarily sufficiently literate to read and write formal rubrics. But they clung to science to validate their practices, (blind to the widening gulf between science and art/craft, *episteme* and *techne*, intellect and experience), on the basis of their use of scientific principles as guidelines for operating. Despite the fact that scientific principles were at that time deemed the preserve of theoretical contemplation, alchemy's scientific status was occasionally acknowledged

although for the most part it was denigrated as a mere craft or an activity of charlatans. This sounds very like astrology's more recent fate; astrologers' counter-intuitive claims for the scientific credibility of their craft, in post-Enlightenment societies which rate science above religion, and knowledge above belief, will be reviewed in detail in the following chapters.

Entirely fitted to occupy the highest rung of the divinatory ladder, astrology's intrinsic nature - described above - has facilitated its twentieth century practitioners' promotion of the fact that they are actually doing something else other than divining. In the face of rejection by mainstream science, which they don't necessarily recognise as such, they may claim relationships with proto- or yet-to-be-proved science; and/or they will subsume their astrology in therapeutic counselling, depth psychology, poetics or spiritual practice. Most practitioners educated during the second half of the last century primarily as psychological astrologers would think of divination as being more in the Tarot card reader's line; and, remembering that a fair proportion of astrologers also read the Tarot cards, their reluctance to be thought of as astrological diviners reflects their separate expectations and applications of the two practices. The fact of their separate images is corroborated in the literature and on the websites of both crafts. Whereas Tarot will often be linked unselfconsciously with divination in a 'New Agey' way, popular astrology tends not to be and *real* astrology never is. This typical excerpt from a website selling New Age accoutrements is headed *Divination and Tarot* and differs entirely from its astrological equivalents in stressing both the existence of a 'greater power' and the relative importance of free-flowing personal intuition as a means of contacting it over the application of instructions learned from books:

> Divination is the art of making apparent information that is hidden or not immediately obvious. Many who use divination believe that we have a higher purpose for being on this planet, and that our lives are connected to a greater power - and they believe that this power is good. When reading or divining they are looking for clarity - which way should I go for my greater good, or what is the right way to turn so that I may evolve into a better human being? To choose a divination system or Tarot deck choose one with pictures or a theme that appeals to you and then spend some time working with that system. Instruction books are fine, but ultimately you can read to a deeper level by using your intuition. What does that card remind you of, how does that spread make me feel, what completely unrelated (apparently) idea just came into your head? These are questions that will help you connect to your heart and give good readings.

(05/2006: http://www.holisticshop.co.uk/index_divi.html)

In sharp contrast to the recommendation that a Tarot reader should cultivate random ideas in an anything-goes sort of way is the serious astrologer's training in rules and the pursuit of method as publicly sufficient conditions for effective practice.

I asked a semi-professional astrologer, who also practises Tarot reading and crystal dowsing and relates to astrology in an entirely practical, non-academic fashion, whether she thought astrology was a divination system. She was surprised and somewhat discomforted by my question and thought for some time. No, she told me after a while, she didn't. Interpreting a natal chart was like doing a jigsaw, she said. You sorted all the separate pieces, picked out the ones with straight edges and other recognisable bits, and then proceeded to put a picture together, using all of the components to form one composite image.[83] She would do this in much the same way, she confirmed when I enquired, whether or not she knew or had ever met the person whose chart she was studying, so she could not always be said to be relying upon observation or other pre-knowledge of the individual concerned. For example, she had recently formed an opinion of the probable life course, interests, strengths and weaknesses of a friend's grandson, newly born on the other side of the world. For ethical reasons, she would not share the major substance of this with her friend, (other than predicting light-heartedly that he was a round-the-world yachtsman in the making!), but was comfortably sure of the accuracy of her otherwise covert prognostications on the baby's behalf.[84]

---

[83] This was pure *bricolage*, in Lévi-Strauss's terms. I have heard astrologers who are familiar with the term describe their practice thus; Geoffrey Cornelius and Maggie Hyde cite Lévi-Strauss in their *Astrology for Beginners*, and suggest that the doctrine of correspondences which forms the epistemological backdrop for much of astrological lore is a survival of handyman-type imagination. The problems with which astrology presents the modern rationalist do not bother the *bricoleur* practitioner who, on Cornelius's and Hyde's views, operates an 'if the cap fits, wear it' logic (Cornelius, Hyde & Webster 1995: 162-163).

[84] Now that the baby's parents have requested a report, she will write up her interpretation for them. Astrologers are generally advised by their teachers not to judge charts when requested to do so by third parties and without the specific instructions of the subjects involved. When demonstrating private individual's charts for teaching purposes, they will remove names and attributable data and, if they feel it necessary, obtain the client's permission. But not all practitioners are so ethically minded. A fellow student of mine with scanty horoscopic knowledge purchased a software package that produced chart interpretation reports and, thus armed, advertised herself as an astrologer in the local free paper. One evening, she brought two children's charts to a meeting, names clearly legible, and canvassed opinions about their possible interpretations. She had been commissioned by the children's grandmother and was to report directly to her without the parents' knowledge or approval. When I suggested that this was not quite the right way to practise, she brushed away my concerns and told me she was of the opinion that one of her subjects was bound for trouble on account of having what she was pleased to call 'a ghastly chart'. Aside from larger issues concerning the type of advice which can be bought by the unwary from so-called

When I asked her what she believed her information source to be – did she not think of it as divine or otherworldly - she countered that she relied entirely on the astrological tradition, upon the tried-and-tested rules passed down through many centuries by generations of astrologers. This was her information source; learning and implementing it to the best of her ability was what differentiated her astrological practice from her Tarot reading and crystal dowsing: the latter two were, she admitted, inherently divinatory or, in her terminology, fluffy-bunny and airy-fairy; by contrast, astrology was altogether more serious-minded an activity. After all, she reminded me, we both knew that learning astrology required serious intellectual application: properly assimilated, its body of testamentary evidence offered practitioners a unique form of time-travel; the better learned its traditions and methods, the richer the experience to be had from their application and the more useful the results. When using her Tarot cards or her crystals, she had no such supporting framework upon which to rely and she was never surprised when her results were unsatisfactory. By contrast, when dissatisfied with her astrology, she invariably put this down to her own erroneous application of its techniques.

In my experience, the majority of practical astrologers do not spend much – if any - time assessing their practice from an exterior perspective as a social commentator might. Except when its practitioners are bothered by the questions of ethnographers such as myself, astrology is a closed knowledge system governed by its own theory of practice. I argued in the previous chapter that today's metropolitan citizens demonstrate an ability to move between a range of apparently incommensurable knowledge systems that are available to them, compartmentalising them in a manner which elides contradiction to maximise their choices of information acquisition and the experiences to be had thereby. Astrology's clients and practitioners acquire its theory in proportion to their practice and increase both commensurately with their expectations of the latter's delivering satisfaction in a self-perpetuating spiral of knowledge production. Dealing centrally as astrology does with time and its notional cycles, much of what Pierre

---

astrologers, both of these examples raise the topic of judging babies' and children's charts which, though a useful source of income for many practitioners, is frowned upon by some who worry about attempting to discern the fate of a young life too soon.

Bourdieu has written about the inherently situated temporality of practice, as opposed to science, reads as being particularly relevant to its *modus operandi*. Additionally, he alludes to a metaphorical game, an image to which I will return in a subsequent chapter:

> Practice unfolds in time and it has all the correlative properties, such as irreversibility, that synchronization destroys. Its temporal structure, that is its rhythm, its tempo, and above all its directionality, is constitutive of its meaning. … Because it is entirely immersed in the current of time, practice is inseparable from temporality, not only because it is played out in time, but also because it plays strategically with time and especially with tempo. Science has a time which is not that of practice. … Because science is only possible in a relation to time which is the opposite of that of practice, it tends to ignore time and so to detemporalize practice. A player who is involved and caught up in the game adjusts not to what he sees but to what he fore-sees, sees in advance in the directly perceived present; he passes the ball not to the spot where his team-mate is but to the spot he will reach – before his opponent – a moment later, anticipating the anticipations of the others. … He is launched into the impending future, present in the imminent moment, and, abdicating the possibility of suspending at every moment the ecstasis that projects him into the probable, he identifies himself with the imminent future of the world, postulating the continuity of time. (Bourdieu 1990: 81-82)

The individual practitioner cedes agency to the tradition she learns and works with in direct proportion to her hands-on involvement with it: to come to grips with its practice and be a good astrologer, she need not question what or who informed the tradition and its variants; neither is she required to ponder what mechanism, material or non-material, physical or metaphysical, the edifice rests upon. Astrology is, after all, a practical matter, and a tricky one to master. Given this, it is little wonder that practitioners demonstrate an 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' attitude to their craft. It has frequently been pointed out to me by theoretically inclined practitioners that thinking about astrology in a detached manner is detrimental to their practice. Garry Phillipson[85], astrologer and author of *Astrology in the Year Zero* (2000) - a thoughtful work which reviews the current state of the art and canvasses the opinions of a number of professional astrologers on the subject – complains that you can't think about astrology in an academic sense and continue to practise it proficiently. His views corroborate my own fieldwork experience of travelling between various schools of astrological method, each one of which demonstrated a different approach to their common subject and had written their own rule book, after a few months of which I was horoscopically confused.

[85] See appendix A.

I don't think there was one single astrological phenomenon whose meaning was agreed upon in its entirety. If, in one class, my tenth house natal Pisces Moon was considered to be the Light of my chart, in another it would be demoted in favour of my Sun, and in yet another moved to the ninth house. One teacher would allow that my natal second house Venus conjoined Pluto, but another would reject Pluto as being superfluous to classical astrology's symmetrical schema and declare my Venus (without Pluto) to belong in the third house. As if coming to terms with the multiple personalities and dispositions with which these variations in astrological nativity presented me was not difficult enough, things got even more confusing when I switched from natal to horary or electional chartwork: here the rules were more rigidly applied; but the rules still varied from class to class. Better by far, for a practical astrologer, to be apprenticed to one mistress and concentrate her energies on learning one set of techniques in the belief that it is normative.

THE EXPERIENCE OF ASTROLOGICAL PRACTICE

As an intermediary divinatory device, in what ways does the horoscope shape the experience of astrological practice? Initially, the act of contemplation of the astrological skyscape depicted by the chart has the effect of concentrating the attention of the astrologer exclusively in the moment of interpretation: now, the time and place of judgement of the map's meaning. In many ways, this setting up of the conditions to divine could be said to resemble the lighting of a candle in a place of worship, in and of itself a small ritual which, in my observation and experience, involves its practitioners in a set of mundane tasks which somehow combine to facilitate a temporary withdrawal from a world dominated by just such tasks. (Taking and paying for a candle, deciding in which of the available locations it should be placed – before which statue, in which chapel – and in which of the vacant spaces in the chosen installation to anchor it before lighting it and finally standing quietly to watch its first flames sputtering before its settles down to radiate a steady glow.) Performing this small ritual has the effect of centring one's attention entirely in the present moment, shutting out the extraneous business of the day to demarcate a liminal place in space-time for the purpose of remembering the dead or considering the living from the slight remove of the

threshold's vantage point.[86] While the thoughts of the candle-lighter who has achieved this imaginary space are unconstrained, unless that is by a formal liturgy of prayers and their associations, those of the astrologer are focussed upon the symbols of the horoscope whose meanings she must experience, synthesise and (possibly) translate into real-life terminology. She cannot indulge in free-form imaginings and still remain accountable to a tradition of horoscopy.

Viewed in terms of an intermediary device in a specific type of ritualised divinatory encounter, reading a horoscope constitutes a triple process for the astrologer:

- The first activity is quantitative. It constitutes the mechanistic process of reducing or distilling an entity to a given moment in space-time in order to represent its entire potentiality in a one-page geometric figure before judging the qualities of its astrological condition. Until the advent of dedicated computer software, this involved painstaking calculation and neat draughtsmanship; now, the production of a chart takes only a few seconds sitting at one's home computer, a fact which has subtly altered the inherited balance of the astrological encounter. Numbers of practitioners recommend copying the computer printout and drawing the chart by hand as a way of recapturing the contemplative aspects of this process without reintroducing the headache of mathematical calculations. This shades the first aspect into the second.

- The second aspect is qualitative. The initial process of chart production and judgement removes the practitioner's attention from daily life and focuses it completely, not upon the moment symbolised by the map as might be supposed, but upon the present moment shorn of all extraneous background 'noise'. The interpretation of the potentiality of a moment in space-time occurs in a moment of liminality. The astrologer is neither quite in the moment of the map, nor is she quite in the present moment; she is betwixt and between worlds, occupying that threshold area from which diviners across space and time have ever spoken.

- The third stage of the procedure is, to use a term in the manner of Henri Corbin, imaginal.[87] As Corbin conceives it, the imaginal is:

---

[86] Cf. Caroline Humphrey's and James Laidlaw's (1994) study of Jain rituals, from which they extrapolate that ritual is a modification of ordinary human action, a ritualization that can be enacted without the requirement of belief, rather than a distinct type of event which bears intrinsic meaning.

[87] Henri Corbin used the term imaginal when translating Arabic and Persian texts because he was not satisfied with what he felt was the unavoidable association of the more obvious word imaginary with the unreal, the utopian (Corbin 1964: 1 ff.). His imaginal is associated with what he terms the seat of imaginative knowledge, the *Mundus Imaginalis* or *Na-koja-abad* (literally the city, country or land of nowhere) and the eighth clime of Islamic philosophy. It is one knowledge organ among three he posits, the other two being the intellect and the senses. Anxious to save the image and its related knowledge from being degraded to the 'level of sensory perception pure and simple', Corbin describes the *Mundus Imaginalis* as:

> A world as ontologically real as the world of the senses and the world of the intellect, a world that requires a faculty of perception belonging to it, a faculty that is a cognitive function, a *noetic* value, as fully real as the faculties of sensory perception or intellectual intuition. This faculty is

> Everything that surpasses the order of common empirical perception and is individualized in a personal vision, undemonstrable by simple recourse to the criteria of sensory knowledge or rational understanding. … It is often completely misconstrued through the habits of the rational mind, which identifies it simply with the unreal. (Corbin 1964)

This stage follows on from the first two and is the locus of the astrologer's interaction with the symbols which form her craft's stock in trade. The experience of sinking below the surface of the metaphors and tropes of astrology in order to imagine and synthesise their multivalent meanings, (generally, as exhibited in a horoscope but, as discussed in a later chapter, not necessarily so), is – on my view - the primary astrological experience.

The first two stages are means to this experiential end, which ranks more highly in value even than its derived knowledge product. The doing is more important, in and for itself, than the knowing which follows from that doing: the fact that such knowledge might be available at all being infinitely more impressive to one who seeks it than the knowledge itself which, by comparison with the experience of trying to obtain it, can so often seem prosaic and/or unreliable when translated into everyday terms. My claim that astrologers rank the doing of astrology above the knowledge derived thereby requires some consideration: it is not something which astrology's critics seem ever to consider when they focus upon its inaccurate prognostications and remind its practitioners yet again that the universe is now astronomically rather than astrologically ordered. It is a consideration which will recur throughout the following chapters.

Is this privileging of the act of divining over its purported product common among practitioners of all oracle systems and, if so, to the same extent? How do the diviners' clients figure in this schema? I suspect that all people who divine do so because they get something out of it over and above material remuneration which is in any case generally far from considerable. It is this extra factor that drives them to learn to do what they do, while their clients are content merely to consume their products. However, the attitudes of astrologers to their practice can be mapped onto the specific

---

> the imaginative power, the one we must avoid confusing with the imagination that modern man identifies with 'fantasy' and that, according to him, produces only the 'imaginary'. (Corbin 1964: 5 & 14 original emphasis)

mode of operation of their intermediary divinatory device. It has been established that astrologers have agency to:

1. imagine themselves in the places of their subjects;
2. divine for a subject without that subject's cooperation or knowledge;
3. draw charts for anyone, alive or dead, or anything, real or imaginary.

It follows that those people with a will to divine, (although they may not express it thus), who learn to become deft astrological symbolists, will treasure the experience of doing astrology for whom- or whatsoever takes their fancy, often as a solitary exercise of honing their horoscopy the more easily to imagine themselves occupying the places of a wide range of individuals and entities, and maybe only infrequently having to translate their astrological observations into real-life terms for the edification of clients or non-astrologers. Theirs is an individualistic and often covert pursuit of Foucauldian power/knowledge which, though more accurately conceived as originating in all three of the realms described by Corbin as intellectual, sensory and imaginal, readily lends itself – on account of its deep, recorded history, scholarly tradition and partial adaptation to Enlightenment modes of thought - to being packaged for public consumption as the product of the first of these alone.

Unacknowledged in the rubrics of many of the practical astrology diploma courses is the fact of astrology's divinatory purposes and the roles played by the imaginal, and the sensory, realms of knowledge-construction in the successful practice of the art. For enthusiasts of horoscopy could be described, within a frame of reference shaped by Corbin's terminology, as adepts of the *mundus imaginalis* cloaked respectably in a literate and numerate tradition which shares a respectable provenance with present day science. Viewed as inhabitants of Corbin's world, today's astrologers might be described as postmodern re-discoverers of myths and symbols which have been transposed across ages and cultures in a purported recovery of an overarching historical tradition. As newly-minted currency in a contemporarily acceptable neo-religious economy, it has been suggested that each myth and symbol can be conceived as an imaginal 'capstone on the archway into the infinite' (Wasserstrom 1999: 98 & passim.). It has been said that Corbin, along with his Eranos colleagues Eliade and Scholem, wrested symbols from their lived realities and re-cast artefacts from the raw materials of history to accessorise a newly synthesised esotericism predicated upon the elevation and

infinite cultural and historical transposability of symbols, and the restoration of a teleological relation between individual humans and the infinite. Conceived originally, some see it, as a defence against the social upheavals of the first half of the twentieth century through which these thinkers lived, their ideas have filtered into the mainstream sufficiently to serve the 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 1983) of today's new and New Age religions well. The legacy of these theorists of the history and sociology of religion who rejected a critique of ideology in favour of the retrieval of religious and metaphysical traditions is evidenced today in the absence of any real criteria for relative judgements, underpinned intellectually, between the knowledge products of symbolically informed divinatory systems, such as astrology or Tarot reading, which actively engage all participants in an assumption of belief in some sense of that word.

The relationship between the experience of doing astrology and its derived knowledge product is one which thoughtful astrologers discuss. This is a testimony, I would suggest, to the fact that horoscopes do not readily give up cogent meanings, even to the most experienced astrological symbolist and, when they do, their accuracy is patchy in the extreme. A cynic might say that – given the unreliability of the astrological knowledge product as a descriptive, leave alone a prognostic, device – there must be some benefit to be had along the way of acquiring this unreliable product by means of the practical experience it involves, or why would anyone pursue the exercise? Certainly not reliably to pick the winner of the two-thirty at Cheltenham on a regular basis. The investment of time and effort required of a trainee wishing to become only barely conversant with the language of astrology has the effect of seeing off all but those who actually enjoy the challenge of attempting to wrestle everyday meanings from its symbolic language, as an activity in and for itself, and not simply for the knowledge so acquired. I have heard a number of new students on astrology courses complain, after only a couple of lessons, that they haven't yet been able to unlock the secrets of their own, or their partners' psyches; the following week, they invariably fail to turn up for class and that's the last that is seen of them; in the first days of my learning astrology, students with no propensity for mathematical calculation would drop away quite quickly too. Now, courtesy of computer technology, students no longer have to be astrologically initiated in the time honoured manner by means of calculating and drawing charts; as a result, neophytes are faced, from day one of their studies, with

the daunting prospect of having to make some sense of complicated astrological symbolism.

And this isn't easy to do. For, as Garry Phillipson recently explained to the readers of *Prediction* magazine, the information which comes from astrology is, like that which originates in dreams, 'wrapped up in imagery'.[88] Sometimes, dream information:

> Might be fairly clear; sometimes you need to puzzle over it, playing a creative part in the attempt to make sense of the symbolism. And the readings we get from astrology are like that. The astrologer does not simply pluck facts from the heavens, as if they were apples from a tree. It is for the astrologer, and their client, to ponder the images which present themselves at a given time, always asking, 'what should I learn from this?'. (Phillipson 2005: 51)

Students of the art who stick with it sufficiently to become competent astrological practitioners present the opacity of its messages, even the fact that it doesn't always work, as a demonstration – not of its weakness – but rather of the inherent mystery which contributes to astrology's strength. Bernard Eccles[89], a professional astrologer, Sun-sign columnist and one of the first Cultural Astronomy and Astrology Masters graduates of the Sophia Centre, explains it thus:

> If it worked all the time, it would be too mechanistic. It would be a reliable technology. And one of the great things about astrology is that it is not reliable technology. … I don't want astrology to be like Meccano, with simple bits bolted together and a structure which is entirely understandable. That's not how it is; there has to be that mystery. And if sometimes things are withheld from you, well, that's the game. But that's the game with any kind of divination, I think. You seek to penetrate this veil of unknowing; and sometimes you reach out into the fog and you get more fog! That's what makes it scary, and that's what makes it – I won't say 'fun', but it makes you realise that you are dealing with something. It's an essential quality of life. If life were entirely predictable and knowable, mechanical in that sense, then I think you'd die of boredom. So for astrology not to work every so often is quite good! (Eccles in Eccles & Phillipson 2005: 39)

In pre-Enlightenment days, when knowledge of things visible and invisible rested upon resemblances, divination – on Michel Foucault's view – was a component of the main body of knowledge and not, as it is now, an optional, minority-interest supplement to it.

---

[88] Phillipson shows himself to be a confirmed symbolist in that he assumes, without explanation or qualification, that there is information to be had from dreams. It would be hard to find an astrologer who did not accept this supposition more or less as a matter of fact.

[89] See appendix A.

Then, it was assumed that God, 'in order to exercise our wisdom, merely sowed nature with forms for us to decipher (and it is in this sense that knowledge should be *divinatio*)' (Foucault 1989: 32-33). Once commonplace, divination is today a consciously chosen activity which, as Eccles confirms, is no longer conducted primarily for the knowledge it yields. In support of the idea that the experience of doing astrology takes precedence of and for itself over much of the knowledge derived directly from it, it has been argued that the fact that it is possible even to *try* to wrest meanings from the heavens by means of astrology is sufficiently miraculous to keep its enthusiasts practising it, irrespective of the difficulties they encounter in obtaining such meanings, (which in the circumstances would seem only right and proper), and the unsatisfactory nature of many of them.

Astrologers' experience might not be so different in this regard from that of the religious believers among the candle-lighters described above who may treasure their experience of praying in front of the flickering votive flames more than they anticipate the exercise's successful outcome; it being seemingly sufficiently comforting for them to lodge a formal plea for help with the Virgin Mary or a Patron Saint as an activity in and for itself with only the secondary consideration that their action might achieve a desired end. Again, the cynic would say that it is patently self-evident, given prayer's unreliability as an instrumental device, that those who pray must be doing so for reasons over and above their desire to influence a material outcome. Here cynics fail to appreciate that the act of prayer is primarily a formal handing over of responsibility to a divine agency; thereafter, all material outcomes in respect of the prayer's specific purposes are within the remit of a god or pantheon of deities who, in common with all divine agencies, will be expected by their adherents to move in mysterious ways. Maybe astrology can be judged in similar terms, as an activity akin to praying?

For Marcel Mauss, prayer was 'a religious rite which is oral and bears directly on the sacred' (Mauss 2003: 57). It was, above all, a means of acting upon sacred beings. It is they who are influenced by prayer, he insisted, it is they who are changed: it is only secondarily, by their mediation, that what he called the rite comes to affect ordinary life in line – or maybe not – with the request of she who prays; but this is only a by-product and does not dominate the actual mechanism of the rite, which is directed to the

religious powers to whom the rite is addressed. From his evolutionary perspective, Mauss posited a process whereby prayer became an increasingly individualistic rite as the religion with which it was associated grew more spiritual. Originally manifesting predominantly as a rite which involved mechanical agency, it gradually acquired the quality of a myth which is contemplated cerebrally just as, commensurately, the time, place, condition and form of its performance grew to be less social and more individualistic. Eventually, as 'creators of their own faith', those who pray are free to act largely as they please (Mauss 2003: 22-25). Howard Morphy (2003: 141) cites descriptions such as the following to object that Mauss's prayer is loose enough to be all things to all people, being:

> Infinitely supple, it has taken the most varied forms, by turns adoring and coercive, humble and threatening, dry and full of imagery, immutable and variable, mechanical and mental. It has filled the most varied roles: here it is a brusque demand, there an order, elsewhere a contract, an act of faith, a confession, a supplication, an act of praise, a hosanna. (Mauss 2003: 21)

But, realistically, any description aimed at embracing cross-culturally all existent and pre-existent global religious phenomena will, in the manner of Geertz's definition of religion as a cultural system reviewed in the previous chapter, have to be vaguely worded. By design, this facilitates ethnographers in tying the same definitive labels to human behaviours which otherwise appear to share few obvious characteristics.

Not surprisingly, then, there are many features of Mauss's prayer which I can match to the activities of astrologers. His faithful both act and think: a maxim which, (though largely a truism), captures the interrelation of practice and theory, (less of a truism, I think), which constitutes the activities of astrologers. And those who pray share with astrologers the primary medium of language which, as an instrument of action, of itself gives rise to belief; for Mauss (2003: 22), every prayer was 'always to some extent a *Credo*'. Mauss's individuals, who pray alone and voluntarily, exhibit a similar private attachment to the action/thought in terms of belief as do astrologers; I will explore this type of attachment in more detail in the next two chapters. For both types of practitioner, any perceived material effects of the exercise are generally of secondary importance to the activity itself, in so far as the responsibility for them has been formally given up to the propitiated divinity/ies.

To suggest that astrology has affinities with prayer is to confirm its description as a 'magico-religious' system of divination. But, though a neat one, it is an entirely 'etic' characterisation; I have never heard an astrologer describing the entirety of her practice as a prayer, albeit that some will admit to saying a prayer to a private god/dess when preparing to judge a chart. But, I have already adopted an 'etic' position in this chapter to define astrology as a divination system in line with the majority opinion of external theorists and with the few astrologers who publicly concur with the former that this is, after all, the only rationally justifiable stance to take. Noting that divination systems generally have an intermediary device which both facilitates practitioners' activities and demonstrates that they have ceded personal responsibility to a greater authority, I have suggested that, for astrology, the horoscope acts as such. Within this analytical frame, I considered the judgement of a chart as an activity which involves intellectual and sensory knowledge together with an engagement with creative symbolism of the type described by Henri Corbin as emanating from the *Mundus Imaginalis,* although the convention within astrology glosses over what Corbin called the imaginal, and for that matter also the sensory, components of its practice to present it as a thoroughly intellectual enterprise. Its practitioners concede personal agency and responsibility for their practice to its rational technique: claiming astrology as reliable knowledge allows them to distance themselves from notions of belief in 'magico-religious' divinatory practices which are less than respectable in modern terms; and, within this frame, their uneven knowledge products can be justified as contingent attempts to put into practice its universal, proto-scientific technique.

Astrology's fondness for underwriting its practice with a formal technique undoubtedly harks back to the classical era of its development, when science was considered to be knowledge of art, and art was any skilled activity; when *episteme*, (which from its Latin equivalent *scientia* is the etymological root of the modern term science), was still interrelated with *techne*, (etymologically connected with modern technology, but also with our art and artifice). It speaks of astrology's close medieval relationship with alchemy, which defined itself as both *scientia* and *ars*, in defiance of the widening divide between the two types of knowing: the first contemplative and theoretical; the

second productive and practical (Obrist 2003).[90] Astrology's pre-modern and alchemical provenance might explain the acquired reluctance of its contemporary practitioners to accept its modern status as a failed science; their pride in its ancient traditions could equally account for their unhappiness to read the commentaries of theoreticians who almost automatically assign them to the New Age, given the low opinion many of them have of what goes on under the last's banner. In the next chapter I will review astrologers' attitudes to science and religion and consider the validity of the New Age ascription; I will extend my review to consider the ways in which today's laypersons, non-scientists and/or non-astrologers, relate to the pronouncements and products of experts, scientists and/or astrologers, in terms of the knowledge/belief dichotomy which is generally accepted to map directly onto that of science/religion. Arguing that these oppositional notions do not in fact mirror reality, I will go on to question whether astrologers are correct to say they believe astrology, or are they more accurate when they protest that they know it?

---

[90] Cf. Martin Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology*, for his interesting contention that the essence of technology and technique, (from *techne* which is the Greek word for art, as in artful, art being the Latin for skill), is the realm of truth: not only as an instrumental means to a practical end but also as a *poietic* means to what Heidegger visualises as a revealing, a bringing-forth, of the world we live in (Heidegger 1977, O'Brien 2004).

CHAPTER SIX

ASTROLOGY, SCIENCE AND NEW AGE RELIGION

Having previously outlined the focus of my project and described my research method, before taking time to delineate my subject, I made a case, in the last chapter, for astrology's being considered, for analytical purposes and in the face of some 'emic' opposition to the terminology, as a 'magico-religious' system of divination. It follows, then, that practitioners might be presumed to interact with their craft with relations of belief rather than of knowledge, given the common association of belief with magical and religious discourses; knowledge remaining safely within the territory of supposedly rational science. But here we encounter resistance from many astrologers who prefer to stay put – perversely as it would seem - on the latter side of the fence. In this chapter I will review astrology's peculiar status as a failed science which is neither a successful religion, a provenance which problematises both its public image and the modes of its practitioners' interactions with it, particularly as regards the attribution of knowledge and belief. The craft's liminal status *vis à vis* both science and religion invites a wider consideration of the accuracy with which the two are generally paired, respectively, with knowledge and belief: it being assumed that science is known; religion, on the other hand, is believed. In reality, I will argue, non-specialists relate to specialists of all types, (whether scientific, religious or astrological), more in terms of faith and belief than of rational knowledge.

Citizens of today's metropolitan societies are faced with a multiplicity of expert pronouncements and products, some of which originate in discourses described as New Age. Astrology's Age of Aquarius having inspired this ascription, it is generally assumed, by non-astrologers, that this is an incontrovertible pairing. But practitioners themselves are generally hostile to being thought of as New Age believers, and the accuracy of this labelling will be examined in some detail. In the next chapter, I will consider whether belief is a fitting term to describe astrologers' relations with their practice; although it would seem to be the obvious word from an 'etic' perspective, it turns out that knowledge is as likely to be 'emically' invoked as belief, neither word being accepted unequivocally by astrologers themselves who are mindful of the baggage carried by both terms. Although, care must be taken not to set too much store by what Anthony Cohen (1992: 352) has pictured as the clichéd distinctions drawn by

social theorists between 'emic' and 'etic' analyses which should, he reminds us, 'be regarded as matters of emphasis and aspiration – of theoretical pretension – rather than of absolute and accomplishable difference'.

ASTROLOGY: YESTERDAY'S SCIENCE, OR MAYBE TOMORROW'S?

My task in describing my research subject is complicated by the fact that astrology is a catchall descriptive word. As I hope by now to have established, there are many traditions of technique within the craft, and a range of expectations of the horoscope as a means to very different ends and as an end in itself. To take but one example, a recent American publication invited each of twelve natal astrologers to write a blind interpretation of an anonymous subject's birthchart. The practitioners chosen by astrologer Rafael Nasser[91] (2004), who had conceived the project, describe themselves as: Asteroid-Centred; Archetypal; Uranian; Psychological; Modern Western; Western Sidereal; Light-Hearted; Medieval; Hellenistic; Vedic; Evolutionary; and Mythological. Their interpretations, collected in the book, are so diverse as to be incomparable with each other and, for that matter, with the subject's own life history supplied, not to the practitioners, but for the readers' enlightenment. But Nasser remains resolutely sanguine when he concludes that all twelve astrologers have 'lifted up my understanding' both by their separate interpretations and by their expositions of methods and philosophies which have together determined him (counter-intuitively or so it would seem) that 'the time is ripe to *take a leap from faith to reason*' and campaign against astrology's habitual mislabelling as an irrational superstition (Nasser 2004: 481, my emphasis). His use of this phrase is telling: reason (twinned with knowledge) is for many astrologers the obverse face of the coin of which faith (twinned with belief) is the reverse; when asked to choose between the two, they will invariably call heads rather than tails, no matter that the evidence, as in this case, would seem to dictate the other option. Nasser posits holism as a schema which accommodates and validates astrology; corroborated, he tells us, by scientists who assert that directed human consciousness – alone and without physical assistance – is an instrumental material force, an association with holism would allow astrology to reposition itself more favourably in the science wars. For, Nasser blusters, it 'has worn a dunce cap and stood in the corner too long' (Nasser 2004: 471-481).

[91] See appendix A.

But, given the wide variety and unreliable nature of astrology's finished products demonstrated in small part by the publication cited above - its chart judgements, interpretations and prognostications - it is hardly surprising that none of its tenets have ever been empirically corroborated by more mainstream scientists than Nasser's, not *really*, and this despite there having been some serious attempts to do just that. But many astrologers, if cornered by persistent sceptics at parties, will invoke science as an uncertain ally rather than admit to the divinatory nature of their practice which begs the question 'is it, therefore, not a religion?'. Caught in the no-man's-land between science and religion, astrologers will usually defend themselves with the trustiest of their weapons, the incontrovertible effect of the Moon on the tides, before asserting that scientists searching for physical corroboration of astrological lore have had some good results, (albeit that all of them have subsequently been challenged). They will gloss over the fact that even the most positive of these findings rides roughshod over horoscopy as they practise it. A number will know that British astronomer Dr Percy Seymour has argued that organic life responds via the nervous system to the magnetic properties of the Earth, Moon and other planets by means of resonance. Many will have heard endocrinologist Dr Frank MacGillion posit endocrine secretions from the pineal gland as a possible mechanism for planetary influence upon life on earth (Harvey & Harvey 1999: 22). Few will be unfamiliar with the so-called 'Mars Effect' demonstrated by the French psychologist and statistician Dr Michel Gauquelin who, having spent three decades investigating the possible influence of natal planetary positions on human personality with the assistance of his wife, found a higher than expected incidence of Mars, (either rising above the Ascendant or culminating around the Midheaven chart positions or, to a lesser extent, at the opposite two points), of five hundred and seventy babies who were subsequently to become French sports champions; this he speculated as demonstrating a human genetic predisposition to tune into apposite planetary orbits (Cornelius, Hyde & Webster 1995: 149, Gauquelin 1970).

Were the existence of such a predisposition to have been generally accepted, which it has not been, it would prompt a re-formulation of the thinking behind the inherited twelve house systems used by astrologers to divide the chart wheel and an introduction instead of eighteen 'Gauquelin sectors'; even more worryingly from an astrological point of view, Gauquelin found no evidence for the significance of Sun signs, nor any

for the supposed influences of the planets Mercury, (a key player on all astrological stages), or Uranus, Neptune and Pluto (Marshall 2004: 369 ff.).[92] Gauquelin's last book proposed the abandonment of inherited astrology in favour of what he called neo-astrology which would be founded upon science (Phillipson 2000: 177). But, for all this, his name is still regularly cited by practitioners of inherited astrology attempting to head off attacks by arch rationalists; although lately one increasingly hears them enlisting the support of newer notions, many from the very edges of theoretical physics, including The Anthropic Principle, Chaos Theory, Mandelbrot sets and the thesis of Dr David Bohm that there is an implicate order in the universe, all of which have – probably much to the surprise of any of their scientific proponents who happen to get wind of the fact - been drafted to astrology's defence.

These lines of rationalisation remind me of the embarrassing fairy-tale attempts of Cinderella's Ugly Step-Sisters to shoehorn their feet into a slipper which patently isn't theirs. Such proposals invariably overlook the subjective nature of astrological practice, and the variety of its wide range of techniques and methods, to engender desperate texts such as the following which invariably go beyond asserting a relationship between astrology and science to recommend the enlightenment which the former can bestow upon the latter:

> … A picture begins to emerge of astrology as a systematic algebra of life and consciousness which is entirely compatible with the new physics. But not only is astrology in accord with the new physics, it also has the power to reveal to physics and philosophy a profoundly potent dimension of reality which was familiar to the ancients but which has been all too long neglected and denied. This is the dimension of cosmic meaning, purpose and intention. (Harvey & Harvey 1999: 26)

[92] Despite the fact that their work was not well received and that most of their purported discoveries have proved not to be reproducible, the world's leading investigator of Gauquelin planetary effects declares that there remains a core which has withstood his and others' independent tests. If this cannot be explained by parental tampering with reported birth data then another explanation must be sought which, in Psychology Professor Emeritus Dr Suitbert Ertel's view, would have to be consistent, not with astrology's historical intuitions, but with existing astronomical knowledge and models of cosmological evolution (Phillipson 2000: 166). I heard Professor Ertel speak on what he calls the 'Tenacious Mars Effect' at the 2002 annual research conference of the Astrological Association (cf. Ertel & Irving 1996). Despite the fact that this gathering was held at the London headquarters of the Theosophical Society, it surprised this observer not a little, in that it consisted of a series of be-suited male lecturers with a fondness for Powerpoint presentations of impressive but (to me) incomprehensible bar charts and graphs; this was a style of astrological symposium I had not previously experienced.

Not that astrologers are alone in trying to catch the coattails of new scientific and quasi-scientific theories. I was dismayed to hear anthropologist Barbara Tedlock, when delivering a keynote speech at a recent conference, positing Dr Mae-Wan Ho's notion of a cognitive continuum of body consciousness, which operates via the protein matrix of the connecting tissue of organisms and demonstrates sentience, intercommunication and memory, as a possible organic explanation for intuitive ways of knowing (Tedlock 2005).[93]

But, compared with anthropologists, astrologers undoubtedly attract heavy criticism from all quarters, especially that of mainstream science. This situation, it has to be said, is very much of their own making for, ever since Descartes declared there to be nothing occult in nature, astrologers have been on a mission to justify their practice in Cartesian terms (Thorndike 1958: 559, cited by Phillipson 2006: 11). (By contrast, anthropology has worked even harder than has sociology to distance itself from their common origins in the positivist and proto-scientific social sciences.) Perhaps the chief effect of this surprising policy of astrology's has been regularly to attract the ire of scientists of all generations since astronomy split away from its embarrassing forebear. Today's astrological community still smarts at a concerted offensive by eighteen Nobel Prize-winners who, back in 1975, included their names with signatories totalling one hundred and eighty in endorsement of a statement entitled *Objections to Astrology* which had been sent to 'leading scientists', (professors and the equivalent mainly of astronomy and physics in the United States), with the suggestion that they sanction it publicly. Printed in *The Humanist,* the statement was circulated worldwide to journals and newspapers (Cornelius 2003: 22 ff.).

---

[93] Dr Mae-Wan Ho's work was cited by Barbara Tedlock (2005) during her keynote address at an interdisciplinary conference on divination, hosted by the University of Copenhagen, entitled *Unveiling the Hidden*. The citation attracted some criticism from delegates who suggested that Dr Ho's theories and scientific practices are far from mainstream, as the following fairly typical extract from her work will illustrate:

> The knower participates in her knowledge. And to the extent that she participates with maximum sensitivity to all being, she participates in the cosmic being and purpose, which is life to the fullest extent and intensity, i.e., the sublime. When coherence is established between the knowing self and all that can be known, the self partakes of no-space-no-time and all-space-all-time. … For centuries now, the most fundamental problem in western philosophy is how it is possible to know. This problem arises because western knowledge is predicated on the Cartesian divide between the knowing mind and the nature known. Quantum theory has brought us back full circle to the concrete, organic reality that observer and observed, the knower and the known are inextricably entangled. There is no 'objective' observer separate from nature. (06/2006: http://www.cts.cuni.cz/conf98/ho.htm)

Declaring astrology to be a gross superstition with no scientific basis, it continued:

> Scientists in a variety of fields have become concerned about the increased acceptance of astrology in many parts of the world. We, the undersigned – astronomers, astrophysicists, and scientists in other fields – wish to caution the public against the unquestioning acceptance of the predictions and advice given privately and publicly by astrologers. Those who wish to believe in astrology should realise there is no scientific foundation for its tenets. …
>
> Why do people believe in astrology? In these uncertain times many long for the comfort of having guidance in making their decisions. They would like to believe in a destiny predetermined by astral forces beyond their control. However, we must all face the world, and we must realise that our futures lie in ourselves, and not in the stars.
>
> One would imagine in this day of widespread enlightenment and education, that it would be unnecessary to debunk beliefs based on magic and superstition. Yet, acceptance of astrology pervades modern society. We are especially disturbed by the continued uncritical dissemination of astrological charts, forecasts, and horoscopes by the media and by otherwise reputable newspapers, magazines, and book publishers. This can only contribute to the growth of irrationalism and obscurantism. We believe that the time has come to challenge directly, and forcefully, the pretentious claims of astrological charlatans (*Humanist,* September/October 1975, cited by Marshall 2004: 363)

The arrogance of this collective statement drew criticism from non-astrologers such as Paul Feyerabend (1978) who observed that the *Humanist* statement 'shows the extent to which scientists are prepared to assert their authority even in areas in which they have no knowledge whatsoever'. Astrologers of the time must have been tempted to respond by invoking the then newly postulated *First Law* of Arthur C. Clarke*,* which holds that:

> When a distinguished but elderly[94] scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong. (Clarke 1973)

But as noted above, it could be said that – when it comes to severe scientific criticism - astrology has in a very real sense 'asked for it'. And, in any case, Isaac Asimov's *Corollary* to Clarke's *First Law*, following on a few years later, deftly returned the advantage to the scientists:

> When, however, the lay public rallies round an idea that is denounced by distinguished but elderly scientists and supports that idea with great fervor and

[94] Clarke acknowledges the need to define his use of this adjective, which he does thus:

> In physics, mathematics, and astronautics it means over thirty; in the other disciplines, senile decay is sometimes postponed to the forties. There are, of course, glorious exceptions; but as every researcher just out of college knows, scientists of over fifty are good for nothing but board meetings, and should at all costs be kept out of the laboratory! (Clarke 1973)

> emotion - the distinguished but elderly scientists are then, after all, probably right. (Asimov 1978)

Geoffrey Cornelius[95] reacts in inimitable astrological style to his memories of the attack and demonstrates his magical horoscopy by discovering an 'anti-astrology signature' in the apparently randomly chosen chart which illustrated the *Humanist* article; furthermore, he links the astrological symbolism he discovers in this chance chart significantly with the 1463 horoscope of Pico della Mirandola, author of the 1493-4 *Disputations against Divinatory Astrology*, in its day an extremely influential critique of astrology.[96] After all, he explains away his imaginative linkage of seemingly disparate astrological data across the centuries, 'astrologers belong to that section of humanity that *believes* there is usually more going on in life than meets the eye' (Cornelius 2003: 22 ff., my emphasis).

Cornelius's celebration of astrologers' belief in a not entirely empirically verifiable world in which 'there is usually more going on than meets the eye' both corroborates the sceptics' assumption that astrology is a failed science and illustrates why it is that astrologers' interactions with their craft are more often characterised by external commentators in terms of metaphysical belief than of physical knowledge. This is in itself a dubious ascription, of course, in so far as it invokes the far from unproblematic belief/knowledge dichotomy which assigns all empirically verifiable hypotheses to the latter term while reserving the former to describe assertions judged to be counter-factual. Byron Good has conducted a useful review of the cultural history of the use of the word belief as an analytical term in the anthropological literature in explicit or implicit opposition to knowledge; this encompasses the so-called rationality debate sparked by what Clifford Geertz irreverently refers to as Evans-Pritchard's 'chicken stories' and reviews Favret-Saada's very different approach to the semantics of witchcraft practices (Favret-Saada 1980, Geertz 2000: 61, Good 1994: 1-24).

Good observes that belief is variously defined and generally used as a kind of Wittgensteinian 'odd job word'; it is most closely associated with religion, with accounts of the seemingly empirically unknowable, and with understandings of the

[95] See appendix A.
[96] See appendix B.

natural world which are judged to be mistaken in terms of that which is known (Good 1994: 20). It follows, presumably, that knowledge is most closely associated with science, with accounts of the empirically verified, and with understandings of the natural world which accord with reliable observation and logic. Good notes, however, that science's assumed function as final arbiter between knowledge and belief has been challenged of late by philosophical, subaltern and feminist critiques, while its reputation in the public's mind has been adversely affected by the fallibility of its own judgements and their uneven consequences (Good 1994: 22). But scientists – of all types including the social variety – have not necessarily taken much, or any, of this on board: so the world they inhabit remains exclusively astronomically, and not at all astrologically, ordered; the apparently central contradiction which these two orders display when judged in scientific terms militates against a rapprochement and assigns astrology a native of the territory of belief, the natural home of all things unknowable, misguided and false.

Nicholas Campion,[97] (an astrological 'elder' and professional practitioner who - after years of experience of writing and thinking about astrology – went back to university to conduct doctoral research and lecture in his own subject), has surveyed the generalised theoretical commentaries concerning contemporary adherence to divination systems such as astrology and notes with no surprise that they tend to proceed from the initial assumption that the latter *must* be false because it no longer accords with the way the world is generally accepted to be (Campion 2003: 172). As cosmologist Stephen Hawking, for example, explains it:

> 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. (Hawking 2001: 103)

After scientific sceptics, Campion finds those who voice the greatest concern that such an anachronism should still exist in the modern world are Christian evangelicals (Campion 2003: 150): the former invoke the knowledge/belief dichotomy and dismiss astrology's claims on the grounds that science has disproved them;[98] the latter –

[97] See appendix A.

[98] Among the most vociferous of scientific sceptics are ex-astrologers who have crossed over to the other camp, so to speak. The best known of these in the astrological community is Dr Geoffrey Dean who, a sometime practising astrologer himself, has displayed all the zeal of a poacher-turned-gamekeeper in his

interestingly - reject them for the same reason *and* because of their Satanic origins, introducing a sub-distinction between true and false beliefs.[99]

In vain might astrologers of postmodern persuasions who hold no brief for astrology being a proto-science attempt to sidestep the objections of the scientists; it being better, after all, to ignore altogether the hysteria of the evangelicals and the attribution of orthodoxy and heterodoxy on the belief side of the knowledge/belief divide. As Observer Sun sign columnist Neil Spencer[100] has objected, 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?'. (Spencer 2000: 245)

Spencer's words uncannily echo those of Tolstoi, cited by Max Weber as early as 1918 in acknowledgement of the fact that no inhabitants of science's increasingly disenchanted world with any sense would celebrate scientific techniques of mastering life as a path to human happiness. 'Science is meaningless', Tolstoi had complained, 'because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us: "What shall we do and how shall we live?"' (Tolstoi, cited by Weber 1970: 143).

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE OR CULTURALLY EMBEDDED BELIEF?

Science may not have answered our 'meaning of life' type questions: we have learned to enquire elsewhere about these matters; to ask astrologers, for instance. But this is not to deny science's huge effect on our daily lives and our indisputable dependency upon the products of its technologies. Although as regards our interactions with science in all its guises, its eminent scientific theorists, such as Stephen Hawking, fail to acknowledge that most of us have to take on trust much of what is passed down to us as tried-and-tested empirically sound knowledge, having insufficient educational grounding in – say – mathematics, theoretical physics, chemistry, bio-genetics and the like – to be able

---

efforts to disprove any possible instrumental causation underlying the tenets which he was once happy to apply (cf. Dean 2004, Dean & Kelly 2003).

[99] The Reachout Trust demonstrates these twin objections to astrology. Having first been sure to discount the fact that astrology is a science, it condemns it on religious grounds:

> There are only two sources of supernatural power, God and Satan. If God condemns astrology then we are left with no alternative but to conclude that this power is from the demonic realm. (06/2006: http://www.reachouttrust.org/articles/occult/astrology2.htm)

[100] See appendix A.

intelligently to assess it otherwise. Or, more accurately, they are content for us to accept as true beliefs those of their pronouncements that, validated they assure us by scientific evidence which is in reality too difficult for the non-scientific majority to grasp, they circulate among the laity for its own good; and very far from content for us to accept as true those beliefs which, informed by the pronouncements of 'other' experts whose non-scientific explanations are equally difficult for us to follow, they necessarily judge to be false.

Laypersons' relations with science have been the subject of a deal of theoretical speculation in modern times. In the early years of the twentieth century, Max Weber pondered the practical manifestations of the 'intellectualist rationalization created by science', asking his students:

> Does it mean that we, today, … have a greater knowledge of the conditions of life under which we exist than has an American Indian or a Hottentot? Hardly. Unless he is a physicist, one who rides on the streetcar has no idea how the car happened to get into motion. And he does not need to know. He is satisfied that he may 'count' on the behavior of the streetcar, and he orients his conduct according to this expectation; but he knows nothing about what it takes to produce such a car so that it can move. … The increasing intellectualisation and rationalization do *not,* therefore, indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives. (Weber 1970: 139)

Although Weber recognised that science embodied the egalitarian potential for anyone wishing to learn about the streetcar to go ahead and do so, in reality its growing sophistication has increasingly elevated the status of the expert few and commensurately relegated the rest of us to relate to it and its products as matters of faith. Later in the century, Evans-Pritchard argued that this taking of science on trust was as culturally embedded in the West as was his *Zande* informants' belief in poison oracles. If he attributed rain to physical causes it was not, he assured his readers, a conclusion he had arrived at by observation or inference; having little knowledge of the meteorological processes that lead to rain, he had simply learned and accepted his society's normative explanation of the phenomenon as an article of faith (Evans-Pritchard cited by Winch 1979: 79-80).

I was reminded of Weber's and Evans-Pritchard's remarks recently when I overheard two women discussing the weather forecast. 'What was today's weather supposed to

be?' asked the one, to which the other replied 'Oh, a bit of everything, as I remember'. 'The forecasters are careful to cover all eventualities, aren't they?', she observed ironically, 'so as to be right, whatever the weather turns out to be'. 'They aren't any different in that regard', she added after a moment's thought, 'than the writers of astrology horoscopes who use vague words and woolly phrases in the hope that some of them have a hope of ringing true to each of their readers'. Without wishing to read much more than postmodern irony into this interchange, it nonetheless serves to illustrate my contention that many of us spend a great deal of our daily lives relating on trust to the pronouncements of experts the constructions of which we have no hope of rationally assessing. The non-meteorologists among us listen to the weather forecasts and consult the Meteorology Office website, taking on faith the predictions of the professionals as being the best that today's science can come up with, despite what we recognise only too well to be their patchy accuracy.[101] In much the same way, those of us who are not astrologers might consult our newspaper horoscopes, taking on faith their astrological authors' optimum application of their arcane techniques to produce the most accurate prognostications possible without really expecting – or for that matter desiring - to have our future fortunes truly told.

For, our faith in expertise is not blind. It has been tested time and again over the years and been found wanting as the overheard conversation reported above illustrates: the majority of us no longer anticipate blinding epiphanies of absolute truths from science, from religion, or from anything else for that matter; we are unlikely to accept unquestionably the pronouncements of either meteorologists or astrologers, though we may take advice from both and avail ourselves of their products. The increasing

[101] My window-cleaner, indubitably someone with a professional interest in the weather, today took the trouble to give me the unsolicited information that he didn't believe anything the meteorologists said and made a point never to consult weather forecasts. But, meteorology's hegemony is well established, despite the fact that its mid- and long-term forecasts are not particularly accurate; astrologers specialising in astro-meteorology point out that they have the edge over the scientific meteorologists in being able to predict the weather for any time in the future and there are some who will undertake to do this professionally. John Frawley, (see appendix A), who specialises in horary astrology, says that 'questions about the weather are among the simplest of horaries' (Frawley 2005: 238). Astro-Meteorology has an impressive tradition, having been assigned by Plato, along with botanical and medical astrology, to that branch of astrology which he labelled a natural science, contrasting it adversely with judicial astrology that, concerning itself with human affairs, was in his opinion the poorer of the two arts.
(07/2006: http://www.astrolodge.co.uk/astro/atthelodge/2003/summer/07jul.html)
Cf. Charles Stewart's interesting consideration of rationality and modernisation, as they are demonstrated by changing popular approaches to meteorology and traditional weather forecasting techniques on Naxos, to which I referred in a previous chapter (Stewart 1991: 117 ff.).

impenetrability of science has resulted in those of us whose lives are shaped by its technologies having to relate to it more and more in quasi-esoteric rather than rationally intellectual terms. Which brings another law of Arthur C Clarke's to mind:[102] having quoted his *First Law* above, I will skip to his *Third Law,* (also his last for three laws had after all, he reminded his readers, been good enough for Newton), which asserts that 'any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic' (Clarke 1973).

Ironically, then, our interactions with science and astrology are qualitatively not all that different and are probably moving closer together. Shrouded in mystery though both may be, we (fortunately) need not know how either of them works in order to be able to avail ourselves of their products and heed their practitioners' advice. Contributing to the levelling of the fields are two factors:

1. Popular astrology, in its modern guise, is now a few generations of consumers deep. Astrology's successful exploitation of the potential of the technological market place to re-invent and disseminate its own brand of expertise, dating from the beginning of the twentieth century, has today acquired almost sufficient history to be considered as culturally embedded a metropolitan knowledge-institution as was Evans-Pritchard's meteorology.[103]

2. Astrologers' products are not entirely out of place in a scientific culture which, though it might not formally acknowledge them as such, pragmatically exploits laypersons' interactions with the world in terms of faith. When ideology dictates, establishment scientists give up the unequal struggle of getting the public to grasp intellectually what they tell us and instead try to persuade us to adopt true rather than false beliefs for our own and society's benefit. Good suggests that government health policies designed to get people to believe the *right* rather than the *wrong* thing can sound uncannily close to fundamentalist and missionary exhortations to replace false beliefs with true ones (Good 1994: 7).

A great deal more of our received knowledge may of necessity be predicated upon our faith in the expertise of others, rather than our rational understanding of their inscrutable disciplines, than we might unthinkingly assume. In reality, a fair proportion of all types of knowledge, scientific and otherwise, may be founded upon hypotheses

---

[102] Clarke himself demonstrated a disappointing grasp of my subject's lore when he quipped 'I don't believe in astrology; I'm a Sagittarius and we're skeptical'. The astrological shorthand for a male whose Sun is in Sagittarius is a man who, far from being sceptical of the matter, knows for certain that he is god! (06/2006: http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/arthur_c_clarke.html)

[103] I am distinguishing here between metropolitan and rural ways of knowing; folk astrology's deep tradition obviously pre-dates modernity and is part-provenance of current practice, but it is completely beyond the ken of today's urbanites.

assumed/believed, rather than proven/known, to be valid. This is neither a new, nor a particularly contentious, assertion. Representing a very different, but nonetheless equally respectable, historical view in the social sciences than that inherited from the works of Comte and Durkheim, that assume a discontinuity between positive scientific knowledge and mere common sense or ideology (Outhwaite 1983), is the thought trajectory which, originating with the 'philosophy of *As If*' posited by the neo-Kantian Hans Vaihinger (1925), is said to have led Lévi-Strauss to ponder whether his structuralist analyses of myth were perhaps just another myth and Pierre Bourdieu to suggest that all assertions in the social sciences should be preceded by the qualifying phrase or sign indicating 'everything happens as if …' (Outhwaite 2000: 59). Bourdieu recommends the regular use of the qualifier to 'constantly remind us of the epistemological status of the constructed concepts of objective science' (Bourdieu 2000: 203, n. 49).

For it was Vaihinger's contention that, as a logical extension of Kant's view that the ideas of reason regulate but do not of themselves necessarily constitute that which is reasoned, many concepts including scientific ones start out as fictions or unverified hypotheses to which reason is subsequently applied. Vaihinger recognised that knowledge is reliant for its development upon these originating fictions and hypotheses which function as 'ideational constructs that are interpolated in the stream of thought in order to assist and facilitate it': while it is generally hoped that the hypotheses are true, the fictions are accepted from the start not to be (Vaihinger 1925: 105). On Vaihinger's view, hypotheses, discovered at some stage to be mistaken, and fictions, acknowledged as such from the start, are nonetheless invaluable in providing 'helpful pictures' which inspire perfectly valid knowledge (Vaihinger 1925: 63).

Arnold Van Gennep recognised the utility of Vaihinger's knowledge model for ethnographers, especially folklorists such as himself, who struggled to explain the attachment of otherwise rational moderns to fairytale characters and myths. As he described it in his vast though unfinished *Le Manuel de Folklore Français*, the 'specific atmosphere of folklore' - like that of magic, folk medicine and astrology - was difficult to define in formal terms, being 'sensed and imagined much more than logically thought out and constructed'; but it was extrapolated in the same way as was all knowledge

from originating facts, hypotheses or fictions (Van Gennep 1937: 105, cited by Belmont 1979: 96). Citing Vaihinger's philosophy of *die Welt als ob* as a model for all knowledge production, (albeit one which I suspect Van Gennep, living too early to be infected with postmodern anti-scientific malaise, saw as being particularly suited to non-empirically provable knowledge), he suggested that:

> The whole of folklore is bathed in the world-as-if. Most men … do not appear to be absolutely convinced of the existence of a God-Judge, or of direct intervention in our personal affairs by Providence, or in some countries by local or universal divinities, or of the absolute truth of dogmas, or of the material reality of miracles. But *they act as if they believed them.* (Van Gennep 1937: 106, cited by Belmont 1979: 96-97, my emphasis)

Which puts Van Gennep's folklore informants on a par with Weber in a streetcar and Evans Pritchard in a shower of rain. But folklore informants, social philosophers and anthropologists are all restored to epistemological respectability by Van Gennep's assertion that belief ought not to be systematically opposed to science, for it was his opinion that belief could yield valid knowledge. And he acknowledged that, whatever its sources, knowledge is only conceptualised as such when it has been filtered through the sets of norms - logical and affective - that form part of each knower's culture (Belmont 1979: 97-100).

Hans Vaihinger and Arnold Van Gennep have unwittingly authorised contemporary metropolitan citizens to avail themselves of the multiple sources of knowledge made available to them, courtesy of the technologies which they take for granted. *Acting as if they believed* a range of such products, they can maximise their chances of gathering useful and felicitous information in the pluralist world they inhabit. Which is not to deny that people seem naturally to apply a 'horses for courses' knowledge selection procedure which takes for granted the relative reliability and utility of scientific technologies and acknowledges dependency upon them as the base-line of everyday metropolitan life. But the contingent nature of human knowledge processing which has been posited is generally unrecognised by experts and theoretical commentators except in so far as it aberrantly flies in the face of the ideal functioning of the enlightened human mind. Judged by the latter standard, astrology is written off as an incorrigible belief. It is designated the preserve of those suffering from intellectual gullibility or delusion, psychological disorder or disadvantage, or social deviancy. Sufficient reason,

one would have thought, for astrologers to be wary of the word belief (Campion 2003: 171).

Writing as a professional Sun-sign astrologer and journalist, Neil Spencer describes belief as a 'troublesome word' in the context of opinions about astrology (Spencer 2000: 104). Not just astrology. Following his extensive investigation of the philosophy of belief, anthropologist Rodney Needham was forced to conclude that:

> More than two hundred years of masterly philosophical application have provided no clear and substantial understanding of the notion of belief. (Needham 1972: 61)

Clearly and substantially understood or not, in both theoretical and popular usage the word belief implies faith and the likelihood of a religious or neo-religious personal investment in the existence of empirically unsubstantiated phenomena often also regarded as being unsubstantiable. Which is where religion comes in. Margaret Hone, whose *Modern Text Book of Astrology* (1978), first published in 1951, regulated and shaped much of the teaching and practice of British psychological astrology in the second half of the twentieth century under the auspices of the Faculty of Astrological Studies, advised her students to sidestep the question of belief altogether and talk instead about their observations that 'certain traits of character and certain *types* of events appear to *correlate* with certain planetary relationships' (Hone 1978: 15 original emphasis). Very probably, Hone was anxious to avoid any suggestion that her 'new look' and modernised Post World War Two astrology was a religion rather than a counselling tool for, as Campion observes, talk of belief in astrology is closely associated with the proposition that it is a religion (Campion 2003: 174).

In my observation, astrologers themselves always reject this. With the benefit of his years of astrological experience, Campion is of the same opinion, reporting 'strong rhetorical resistance among astrologers to astrology's categorisation as a religion' (Campion 2003: 181). In the course of his doctoral research project, Campion interviewed thirty-nine professional astrologers who all responded negatively when asked whether astrology could correctly be defined as a religion (Campion 2003: 259). I have never heard an astrologer asserting that their practice is a religion. In astrological terminology, it has been explained to me that religion falls within the sphere of Jupiter's

influence; astrology, on the other hand, is traditionally a Mercurial enterprise and of late possibly also a Uranian project. As Mercury stands in relation to the gods as their messenger, as but one of his widely-ranging roles, so astrology could be said to have something religious about it, but not to be a fully-fledged religion in its own right. The most negative reaction by far to the association came from an astrologer of my acquaintance, a woman in her sixties of Jamaican descent now living in London, who was horrified by my asking her if she considered astrology to be a religion: 'you shouldn't be asking questions like that, or even thinking about astrology in those terms' she reprimanded me sternly before pointedly changing the subject.[104] Many practitioners hold (other) religious views as well as their astrological ones; my first astrology teacher informed us at the start of our course that she was a Christian, although she was not a regular church-goer. Other astrologers are agnostics, materialists or confirmed atheists, and resent the fact that they might be described as religiously committed to astrology. But, as with belief, speakers' meanings are informed by their definitions of religion.

IS ASTROLOGY NEW AGE?

Having reviewed astrologers' attitudes to the terms belief and religion, Campion considers the popular assumption – of theorists and of non-astrologers - that today's astrology fits into the range of philosophies termed New Age (Campion 2003: 264). He reports that he encountered universal hostility when he put this suggestion to his interviewees. Some rejected the notion with the simplistic response that astrology was old, not new: household name, Sun-sign superstar Jonathan Cainer asked 'how can it be new age? It's as old as they bloody get'. Other astrologers acknowledged that it was characteristic of New Age culture to revive old systems of thought, but were not happy that astrology should be afforded this treatment. Nor were they sure that New Agers would, in any case, welcome 'real' astrology into their fold; Jonathan Cainer invoked the suspicion felt by many astrologers for what they perceive to be the superficial 'mix and match' eclecticism of much of so-called New Age practice when he quipped 'just

[104] A recent card I had from my friend, whom I knew to be currently engaged in a private study of the early twentieth century works of Alan Leo, (of whom more below), exclaimed excitedly that astrology 'is an *extraordinary science*', (the words were underlined), 'and I am gob smacked every time I pick up Alan Leo's books!!'.

because New Agers do astrology, doesn't mean astrology is New Age' (Cainer, cited by Campion 2003: 265).

My own experience corroborates Campion's findings: people who have invested time and resources to learn astrology 'properly' are naturally horrified by manifestations of their craft which, seemingly simplifying and trivialising it, render it – to their eyes - a travesty. I was present at an informal gathering of fellow students when one of them objected that astrology certainly didn't belong within the clutch of philosophies which described themselves as belonging to the New Age because – and here there was general nodding and agreement – adherents of these were generally guilty of cherry-picking in a frivolous manner among different belief systems to construct hybrid creeds which lacked coherent traditions. More recently, a friend of mine rang me to complain about the March/April 2006 issue of the Astrological Association's *Astrological Journal* which she had just received: 'why was it full of palmistry events?' she grumbled; she hadn't paid to be a member of the AA, she assured me, just to find out about trivial fortune-telling of this kind. Prompted by her phone call to check my own copy of the Journal, I found flyers advertising a Postgraduate Research Conference at the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University; the annual London Research Conference of the Astrological Association known as Kepler Day; an academic conference on Cosmology and Divination, entitled *Seeing with Different Eyes,* hosted by the Sophia funded postgraduate programme at the University of Kent at Canterbury; and, in among these notices the single leaflet which had so offended my friend, *Astrology and Palmistry Events* at the London School of Astrology. Just a few years ago, before the advent of the new astrology-related university programmes, the palmistry connection would have been far less contentious; today, it demonstrates the success of the astrologer/academics in dressing astrology in new, respectably knowledgeable clothes which have nothing of the New Age about them.

Which is not to say that a number of practitioners, my friend included, would not enjoy combining palmistry with their astrology. But now that the game has been raised, academically speaking, this no longer seems the stuff of serious astrology and, whatever that may be, it can always be told apart from New Age pursuits. (Ironically, Frank

Clifford,[105] the astrologer who has made this particular combination his own, is also one of the few whom I have heard advocating the use of the supposedly scientifically corroborated Gauquelin chart sectors in natal astrology.) But serious astrologers practise and teach a selection of techniques which they develop and make their own; and, as a consequence, they seldom agree with each other. As I mentioned in a previous chapter, the finer points of horoscopy have been contended for as many centuries as astrology has existed: on Tamsyn Barton's view, its practitioners tended from the start to develop innovative personal styles of horoscopy (Barton 1994: 209). But dedicated astrologers can be divided between very, very broad schools of tradition in line with their initial tuition and the subsequent creative trajectory of their practices. A mutual respect of sorts exists within the astrological community, albeit that it is generally hidden beneath manifestations of the professional and personal rivalries that drive much of its everyday relations; to be included in the latter is, in itself, an acknowledgement of worth. No such recognition is ever afforded to aficionados of so-called New Age approaches to astrology that are perceived to ride roughshod over all of its multiple traditions and seemingly short-cut its 'proper' practices.

I have told the following anecdote about a chance encounter I had with one such New Ager to a few astrologers, all of whom were as put out as I by her apparent lack of appreciation and respect for the traditions of horoscopic methodology, the language in which it is communicated and the specific scholarship required of its practitioners. I had been sitting on a train on my way to an astrology class, taking advantage of the quietness of the journey – there were only a young woman and myself in the carriage – to catch up on my homework. I was studying some horoscopes on my lap when my fellow passenger put away the small bottle of brightly coloured fluid whose contents she had been dabbing on her wrists and temples, leant across to me and asked if I was an astrologer. We got into conversation, and I learned that she was a drama student and a 'therapist' who was seriously considering taking up the latter activity as a full-time occupation. She got a lot of satisfaction from her healing work, she told me. And she found her clients' birthcharts to be an invaluable diagnostic tool. Of course, I was interested to hear more. Where had she learned her astrology, I asked. 'Oh', came the vague reply, 'I have a friend who prints out the charts for me when I've got the birth

[105] See appendix A.

details, and I sort of just sit quietly with my hands above the chart and it all – er, er, - it all sort of just comes to me that way'. That this incident, typically of most encounters between New and Old Age users of astrology, should irritate the latter demonstrates the antagonism with which nearly all astrologers greet any attempt to assign them to the New Age.[106]

In fact, Old Age astrologers react negatively to New Age-type styling of their practices, whether or not they describe it as such. This was demonstrated to me when my local interest group ran its first Saturday workshop. Entitled *Neptune*, Southeast Astrology's study day took place in the meeting room it hired regularly in the premises of a local community association. Twelve women and one man took their places as our guest lecturer unaccountably drew the glyph of the planet Jupiter on her flip-chart. We contemplated this in bemused silence while picking one tarot-type card each, at her instruction, from a velvet bag she circulated among us. A protracted session ensued, as each person was invited to describe the card she had picked and guess at its significance. Broaching the subject eventually, our speaker recommended that we trust that the *processes* of psychological astrology and metaphysics, (which latter term she took to mean 'beyond the known'), would reveal the bigger picture to those of us who pursued them. Our individual birthcharts were the lenses through which we surveyed our individual worlds; our lives would be shaped by the patterns contained within our natal horoscopes. We should all stop looking to others to supply us with the love which we craved; we should strive rather to love ourselves, just as we were, and realise that our lives were centred – not upon other people, possessions, jobs, and so on – but simply and solely upon us, ourselves, alone. Our tutor backed up her arguments with quotes from a mixture of old Asian and new American self-help philosophies. She kept a joss stick burning throughout the day, and repeatedly dabbed coloured water from a

[106] Shoshanah Feher, having conducted a survey at the 1989 United Astrology Congress in New Orleans on the relationship of astrologers with the New Age, distinguished between a New Age astrology, mainly represented by women and concerned with personal growth, and an 'Old Age' astrology, mainly represented by men and concerned with event prediction (Feher 1992 reported by Campion 2003: 124). This division is not one which I have noted. I prefer to distinguish between New Age and Old Age users of astrology on the basis of the latter's knowledge of their subject's tradition, irrespective of the wide range of purposes for which they employ it, and the formers' ignorance of it and uniformly 'woolly' use of it. If I were to distinguish between the predominant attitudes of women and men, I would suggest - with no great surprise - that the former are the almost exclusive representatives of the lower echelons of the subject while the latter, given their comparatively small number, have a disproportionate role in running its community.

small bottle onto her hands. 'What's that strange smell?' asked those of the class for whom the New Age had not yet dawned. It was afterwards agreed by members of Southeast Astrology that the workshop material had been all well and good, but it most certainly – and regrettably – hadn't been astrology. But then, participants laughed, should we have expected anything other than confusion and contradiction to be the outcomes of any session dedicated to a study of Neptune, the planetary archetype of deception and illusion?

Campion canvassed universally negative 'emic' responses to the New Age ascription, in line with my own observations that astrologers react against a perceived dumbing-down and generalisation of their practice which, while fitting the New Age stereotype, are not necessarily described as such. But these responses are countered, Campion points out, by the contrary 'etic' opinion of most external commentators – defined as academic, historical and evangelical – that modern astrology *is* essentially a New Age discipline (Campion 2003: 103). Of course this could in part be explained by the reference to the astrological New Age of Aquarius; but astrologers disagree amongst themselves about the date of this phenomenon's inception. Widely believed by non-astrologers to have dawned already - especially those of the *Hair* generation who, in 1968, heard the event celebrated in song[107] - numbers of serious astrologers will tell you that its advent is, in fact, a few years away yet. (I have heard Nicholas Campion railing at the inexactitude of those who assume that we are currently living in the Aquarian age.[108]) Although it must be said that, among those who make this assumption, there are numbers of astrologers who are nonetheless explicitly opposed to being labelled as New Age (Cf. Feher 1992).

Campion observes that there has to date been no study of astrology's nature in any commentary on New Age culture, with the sole exception of Feher's (1992), although

[107] Written by Gerome Ragni and James Rado with music by Galt MacDermot, the musical *Hair*, with its memorable song *This is the Dawning of the Age of Aquarius*, has been performed more or less continuously since the show's opening on Broadway in 1968.
(06/2006: http://www.hairthemusical.com)

[108] It seems popularly to be accepted that we are currently living in the Age of Aquarius. In 1904, Aleister Crowley apparently claimed personally to have ushered in the Age. But most serious astrologers anticipate its dawning around the year 2060, among them the contemporary and learned practitioner Rob Hand and the twentieth century astrologer Dane Rudhyar. Coincidentally, this was apparently also the date picked by Sir Isaac Newton as the likely time of the apocalypse.
(06/2006: Nancy Fenn, http://www.bemyastrologer.com/age_of_aquarius.html)

he reports the general observations of Paul Heelas, some of which would certainly seem applicable to astrology. Heelas acknowledges, for instance, what he calls the radical detraditionalisation of New Age discourses, numbers of whose affiliates display a simultaneous - but contradictory - devotion and aversion to tradition; along with this, Heelas records their tendency to replace inherited requirements for formal confessions of belief in favour of the knowledge that follows practical engagement (Heelas 1996: 22 ff.).[109] As an experienced professional astrologer, Campion surprisingly does not reject the 'etic' in favour of the 'emic'; rather the reverse. Introducing Kelly's division of astrology between two basic forms, (the one 'outward', based on traditional techniques and concerned with behaviour; the other 'inner', and concerned with psychological matters), he suggests that the latter form of astrology does indeed emerge from, and remains correctly associated with, New Age philosophy (Kelly 1998: 528, cited by Campion 2003: 104).[110] And this, despite the wholehearted denial of practising astrologers that astrology could correctly be called New Age.

Campion outlines in some detail the twentieth century development of Kelly's 'inner' astrology, taken to be what is generally referred to as psychological astrology, to support his contention that this type of practice has a New Age provenance. Largely as a result of the work of the Theosophist astrologer Alan Leo (1860-1917),[111] astrology

[109] As Heelas (1996: 23) puts it, 'much of the New Age Movement is beyond tradition, beyond established or codified ethicality, indeed beyond belief'. He illustrates the 'Self-ethic' which is to be found at the core of most of the Movement's discourses by quoting the early Theosophists who were the originators of the concept of the New Age. As discussed below, the Theosophical Society was additionally instrumental in the shaping and propagation of twentieth century Western astrology.

[110] Kelly's division is reminiscent of Feher's distinction between New Age astrology, mainly the province of women and personal growth, and 'Old Age' astrology of men and event prediction; but Kelly does not make Feher's mistake of attributing the difference to gender, thereby oversimplifying it and ruling out the fact that one astrologer can – and often does - indulge in both types of practice.

[111] Born William Frederick Allan, Alan Leo became interested in astrology when he was eighteen and was subsequently to adopt the name of his Sun sign. Born with four planets in Leo, he rectified his horoscope, adopting a notional time of birth, in order that his Ascendant should also fall in the sign of Leo (see appendix B). In 1890 he joined the Theosophical Society and remained a devoted member for the rest of his life. He was influential in re-shaping and simplifying astrology for the twentieth century in line with many Theosophical concepts and publicising it to a wide audience. His work ushered in the humanistic astrology that gained popularity as the twentieth century progressed, incorporating the later developments of depth psychology, psychotherapy and new spiritual movements. In response to the demand for horoscopes advertised in the astrology magazines which he published, Leo devised the first production line astrology reports; he wrote copy for Sun, Moon, Ascendant and so on in each of the zodiac signs which was mimeographed and assembled by his staff in accordance with each client's birth data. But he was prosecuted twice under the Vagrancy Act for pretending and professing to tell fortunes: the first case was dismissed on a technicality; the second imposed a fine and costs on him as defendant. Leo founded the Astrological Lodge of the Theosophical Society in 1915 and had as his primary goal the

swapped its original planetary deities and mundane purposes for psychological archetypes and a metaphysical teleology; it was generally fitted for its times under the central influence of Theosophical philosophy and the opinions of Madame Blavatsky who outlined what Campion (2003: 105) refers to as 'a manifesto for what was to become New Age astrology' when, in 1877, she wrote:

> 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. (Blavatsky 1976: I.259 original emphasis)

Alan Leo additionally simplified inherited horoscopy and brought it up-to-date, fitting it for commercial development in the guise of Sun-sign astrology. Much of what he said about the value of Eastern notions such as Karma and Reincarnation to Western natal astrology, and the purpose of psychology in analysing an individual's spiritual condition, now seems as New Age as was his prescient marriage of exotic metaphysics with technologically-driven commercialism.

Another Theosophist astrologer, Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985),[112] is frequently singled out as Leo's successor in the creation of modern astrology and, after him, the second most innovative astrologer in the twentieth century English-speaking world. On Campion's view, Rudhyar took Leo's theosophical astrology forward an important step by adding Jungian principles (still very new when Rudhyar began writing in 1930) and ideas from depth psychology to the mix. He updated Leo's Theosophical model in tune with the growing Western popularity of the project of personal individual development.

---

modernisation of astrology and the removal of what he thought its ill-advised fatalistic and materialistic tendencies, although it must be remembered that he was a professional astrologer.
(Cf. Leo 2003, 1978a, 1978b, Curry 1992: 122 ff., Neil Spencer lecture 07/09/2006 & 06/2006
: http://www.solsticepoint.com/astrologersmemorial/leo.html)

[112] Born in Paris, Dane Rudhyar emigrated to America at the age of twenty-one as a composer of orchestral and piano music and a writer about contemporary Western classical and Oriental music. Becoming an American citizen in 1926, he studied occult and Oriental philosophies, and H.P. Blavatsky's Theosophical writings. He became involved in dance and in art. Rudhyar was a chosen name, being close to the Sanskrit terms implying dynamic action, the colour red and the planet Mars, and the electric power released during storms. (He was a Sun-sign Aries, which sign is ruled by Mars.) (His non-astrological works include titles such as *Rhythm of Wholeness* (1982), *Beyond Individualism* (1977), *Culture, Crisis and Creativity* (1976), *Occult Preparations for a New Age* (1974), *The Planetarization of Consciousness* (1970).) (06/2006: http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/)

Rudhyar's most popular title, published in 1936 but still regarded as a classic in the astrological literature, is aptly entitled *The Astrology of Personality* (1970). In support of his contention that the psychological astrology of Leo, developed by Rudhyar, is truly New Age in nature, Campion emphasises the relativism that was central to Rudhyar's astrological philosophy (Campion 2003: 119). This was very much in tune with its times. (I remember discovering a copy of his *Person Centered Astrology* (1980) in the Astrology Shop in Covent Garden when I had just completed a totally unstructured 'anything goes' weekend course in Person Centred Counselling facilitated by a pupil of Carl Rogers (e.g. *On Becoming a Person: a Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (1982)), and reading it delightedly all the way home on the train.) As a corollary of his emphasis on the agency of the individual, Rudhyar downplayed the importance of the astrological rulebook; in his relativist schema, any right-minded practitioner, bent upon interpreting her relationship with the universe, was free to establish her own astrological way of working. It can certainly be argued that this was the origin of the free and easy attitude to the traditionally strict methods and processes of chart interpretation demonstrated by New Agers who remain seemingly unaware of the fact that it is imperative, on Old Agers' views, that this task should be conducted 'properly', with due deference to astrological provenance.

Campion makes a convincing case for popular twentieth century psychological astrology's belonging under the New Age umbrella by virtue of its Theosophical provenance. But it should not be forgotten that this is an 'etic' categorisation for, in my experience, few students – or teachers - of standard modern psychological astrology appreciate the extent of Theosophy's influence on it, or know that a number of British astrological elders were also Theosophists whose philosophy informed and shaped their practice. Most of them would be hard pressed to say anything at all about Theosophy. And, while broad psychological notions and terminology have entered everyday vocabulary, and certainly that of astrology students, many of the latter would struggle to explain in any detail the twentieth century development of depth psychology and Jungian philosophical principles as they relate to astrology. Which is not to say, when they spurn the New Age attribution, that astrologers are turning their noses up at either Theosophical philosophy or Jungian psychology, but rather at the term's more popular associations. When they deny that their practice is New Age, astrologers are distancing

themselves from the caricature of a typical New Ager who, dangling crystals and burning incense, has extended her hairdressing services to offer a little Reiki healing, a Shiatsu or an Indian head massage, a pick of the Tarot or the angel cards, possibly some so-called Buddhist chanting and a birthchart reading - all or any of these - to while away her clients' time and part them from more of their money while they wait for their hair colour to develop.

ASTROLOGY AS A *RE*INVENTED TRADITION OF THE NEW AGE

But Campion has traced a lineage for psychological astrology which would seem to corroborate theoretical notions of the New Age identity of this branch of the subject. And I would argue that the more recent proto-traditional astrological revivals which increasingly rival psychological astrology's popularity are as easily attributable to the New Age on the grounds that they hark back to a supposedly historically authenticated 'pure' knowledge base which has, in reality, been dressed for contemporary consumption. It should nonetheless be remembered that to define astrology as New Age flies in the face of its practitioners' own understanding of their craft. And, if astrology is New Age, then – given its complicated provenance as a hybrid of science and religion - we are still left with the question of whether or not it can accurately be thought of as a religion to which its followers relate in terms of belief and/or faith. It will take more than an apposite descriptive term to answer this question, although social theorists seem to have an unending supply of these, apposite and otherwise: Campion reports that there is general agreement within the academic literature that contemporary astrology be characterised as a New Religious Movement of the New Age (Campion 2003: 174, citing Bruce 1995: 105, Hexham & Poewe 1997: 85-86, 104 & Melton 2001: 53). If contemporary astrology is correctly so described then, given the authority afforded its historical provenance which is the *sine qua non* of a New Religious Movement, then it could probably properly be thought of as incorporating an invented tradition, in Hobsbawm's terminology (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983).[113]

[113] Paul Heelas (1996: 27) discusses the seeming paradox whereby New Agers, who are naturally averse to traditions, nevertheless draw centrally upon traditions. He concludes that they are 'perennialists' who, shunning the straitjacket of any one coherent belief-system, pick and mix arcane, esoteric and supposedly ageless wisdom according to their personal preferences. This way of doing things was pioneered, he notes, by the Theosophists.

During my early days as an astrology student, I was certainly never made aware of the comparatively new provenance of much of the supposedly ancient art I was studying. Rather, I was encouraged to examine the extent of Ancient Egypt's influence upon it, and to research the works of historical figures working at the crossroads of astronomy and astrology, such as Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler. The more recent changes to astrology's central characteristics made by Alan Leo and those who followed him were glossed over entirely. Fellow students, looking back to their early days in the classroom, confirm my memory; many are still of the opinion that the horoscopy they were taught had been venerated and handed down the generations of astrologers from time immemorial, although they will acknowledge that history has, unsurprisingly, left its mark. When I asked my classmates in Hove what they thought these might be, they agreed that whereas astrology's prognostications used to be mundane, ('along the lines of Mars equals war and Saturn equals shit'), now they are much more psychological; astrology has, they decided, been increasingly internalised. This they explained by the fact that we have lost our intimate relationship with the stars and planets which inspired and maintained our craft down the ages until recent times: 'how many of us look up at the light-polluted night sky any more, or could see any stars if we did?' they asked; it follows that there is now little, if any, recognition of the fact that charts map the skies above their subjects with the consequence, they guessed, that astrology had become more virtual than actual.

If, to conclude this review of astrology's relationship with science and the New Age, it is allowed that the Western astrological 'magico-religious' divination system is well described in 'etic' terms as a New Religious Movement then, as is the norm for all discourses described as belonging to the New Age, it will necessarily be legitimated by an invented tradition; or, perhaps more correctly in this case, by a *re*invented tradition. Because astrology, in some guise or other, *is* actually as old as human society; its survival is a testament to the tenacity and the adaptability of its practitioners, who have driven and steered its cyclical re-inventions to keep successive generations of astrologers in the business of divining for themselves and their peers. In its most recent, urban manifestation, it has had to adapt its primary resource: images of planets and stars in the sky above us, the experience of which was once ubiquitous. These outdoor images have largely been replaced by glyphs, figures and tables which flicker, not

overhead, but indoors, on our computer screens; but, in an electronic age, our relationships with the virtual can be every bit as real, and religious too for that matter, as our interactions with the actual. And which of us now thinks always to differentiate the two types of communication by consciously separating fiction from fact, or knowledge from belief? It is to the relationship between these last two contentious terms, and the associations which attach to them, that I turn next.

In this chapter I considered the surprising attachment of post-Enlightenment astrologers to science and their concomitant indifference to religion, arguing that this is explained by astrology's unique provenance as a rejected science that is not quite a religion. Astrologers' public acceptance of the superiority of scientific knowledge over religious belief led me to question the accuracy of the modern oppositions of science and religion to knowledge and belief. Given the increasing sophistication of contemporary scientific technology, which has left most of us unable to judge rationally much of what the experts tell us, I suggested that belief and its correlates play a larger role in the everyday lives of non-scientists than is generally credited. More rarely acknowledged is the contention that scientific expertise may itself be rooted in belief: Hans Vaihinger developed the philosophy of *As If* to demonstrate that all knowledge, including the scientific type, is based on originating hypotheses or fictions. Arnold Van Gennep applied Vaihinger's ideas ethnographically and observed that his research field of folklore was 'bathed in the world-as-if'. It seems then that astrologers can take comfort from two facts: firstly, that the public's relations with their pronouncements is qualitatively not all that different from their conceptions of the messages of mainstream scientists; secondly, in a 'world-as-if', their products can claim an epistemological provenance every bit as respectable as those of scientists, for both begin with and develop from hypotheses and fictions, albeit that, as with folklore so with astrology, there is a hefty dose of '*As If*' in the latter's discourse. Which is to assert that there is more of religion in astrology than science; and it seems, following a review of the evidence, there is a good case to be made for its being labelled a New Religious Movement within the New Age, founded upon what I have called a *re*invented tradition, although it must not be forgotten that astrologers themselves are mostly disdainful of the characteristics demonstrated by the kinds of movement that boast a New Age ascription. But, having argued in the previous chapter – against the majority 'emic'

opinion - that astrology is a 'magico-religious' system of divination, I will now risk irritating its practitioners still further by discounting its aspirations to be a science and identifying it as a New Age religious discourse. Which leads me, in the next chapter, to review the ways in which practitioners and their clients relate to astrology: a layperson's assumption that they believe in it turns out to be a simplistic reduction of the real-life relationships people have with astrology.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ASTROLOGY, KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

In the previous two chapters I argued that contemporary Western astrology is well described as a 'magico-religious' divinatory system which belongs within the New Age, possibly as a New Religious Movement, and certainly as a twentieth century discourse which is founded upon a *re*invented tradition. But, though seemingly apposite, these theoretical ascriptions would not be wholeheartedly approved by practitioners themselves, many of whom are resolutely determined to claim scientific respectability for astrology in inverse proportion to the weight of contrary testamentary evidence. Their assumption that science, and knowledge, are preferable to religion, and belief, caused me to ponder just how those of us who are not experts relate, in today's technological societies, to the pronouncements and products of those who are, be they scientists or otherwise and - who knows - maybe even astrologers. And I concluded that we do so more in faith than in judgement although our conceptions of both categories are coloured by cultural conditioning which can obscure the fact that all knowledge is rooted in '*As If*' hypotheses, if Hans Vaihinger is to be believed.

But, however the boundaries between fact and fiction, or knowledge and belief, are blurred, practitioners remain reluctant, as I relate in this chapter, to accept without qualification the assumption of non-astrologers that, as astrologers, they believe in astrology. It is the nature of these qualifications that leads me, in what follows, to suggest a recovery of the pre-Enlightenment senses of the word belief which are seemingly better suited than its current associations to describe the ways in which people relate to astrology. For belief, albeit in a specific, pre-modern sense of the term, seems the natural companion of astrology despite the fact that a number of its practitioners prefer to invoke knowledge to describe their interactions with the craft. As these interactions are linguistically-founded, studying astrology is often described as learning a language and I will move on from my review of belief and knowledge as they relate to astrology to consider, in the next chapter, whether astrologers can usefully be described as players of a Wittgensteinian language-game.

BEWITCHED BY A *RE*INVENTED TRADITION?

Framed analytically as New Age 'magico-religious' divination, I would suggest that

contemporary Western astrology can be pictured as a postmodern *re*invention of the tradition referred to by the astronomer scientist George Abell as:

> The polytheistic religion of ancient Babylonia and Greece [which] is based in symbolism – a magical correspondence between the gods and the planets that bear the same names. (Abell 1981: 73)

For, if astrology has any gods to justify its being a religion in any classical sense of that term, then they are the ones to which Abell alludes. There are no directives, though, that astrologers should believe in, pray to or placate this pantheon of deities by thought, word or deed; there are no controlling institutions supposedly invested by the gods with the authority to dictate dogma (although the professionalisation of astrology might be interpreted as a movement in this direction). A single cogent philosophy with which astrologers might underpin their practices has yet to be delineated; nor are they required or expected to behave in one prescribed fashion. Who, in any case, would have sufficient public profile and authority among self-styled astrologers to propagate and police such a philosophy and behaviour? The disparate nature of astrological opinion and the individualistic nature of much of its practice are enough in themselves to make any general statements about the nature of astrology difficult, but it is undeniably the case that people who call themselves astrologers admit to holding a wide range of religious views, while others assert that they hold none whatsoever.

Only some of the former group would suggest that astrology functions courtesy of daemonic or spiritual influences. I recently heard a group of reflective practitioners debating the relationship of astrology and religion: while they were more or less in agreement that their art was spiritual in nature, they stopped short of defining it as religious in its own right; for it was adaptable enough to find a niche in the cosmologies of a range of other religions, as is witnessed by the numbers of their adherents who also practise astrology in some form or other. One of them insisted that its adaptability was its strength; astrology had survived for so long as it had because it was an adept shape-shifter. Another admitted always to saying a prayer, of her own creation, to a goddess each time she prepared to see a client. A teacher of hers, she told us, apparently always sat on a cushion which, in the manner of the Lord Chancellor's woolsack or the film Director's chair, formally designated him an astrologer for the duration of the session. But, whereas astrologers undoubtedly perform private rituals of this sort to set the

liminal scene for divining, it is debatable how many of these are consciously conceived as invoking daemons, which were never, ever mentioned in any of my beginner or intermediary level classes, nor in the rubrics of my Open College Network courses.

One might justifiably observe that astrologers are collectively bewitched in a 'magico-religious' fashion by the *re*invented tradition of their craft, but the general trend towards secularisation alluded to in a previous chapter manifests itself today within the astrological community as a preference for recognising human psychological archetypes, or the mundane hiding places of family cats, in a chart's symbols rather than the doddering footsteps of very, very old gods and goddesses.[114] All of which is to confirm that astrology in its current guises has been well fitted to the requirements of members of today's technologically driven societies: for it invokes the archaic wisdom associated with pre-modern, magical and enchanted cosmologies; but it does so within a methodological structure which honours individual agency and avoids embarrassing modern and rational sensibilities with the palpable presence of unruly daemons and occult spirit guides. Which does not sound particularly religious, certainly not in any pre-secularist sense of that term.

Not surprisingly, then, the only quasi-religious performance which I have witnessed astrologers enacting in celebration of their art is also the single collective ritual of any kind which I know practitioners to indulge in. As such, it serves to emphasise the private and cerebral nature of astrology. (I have been present when individuals have invoked the planetary deities as an *ad hoc* activity and know that a very few practitioners do this seriously on the day and at the hour of the planet being supplicated, but these are minority and essentially private activities.) *The Rite of the Planets* is conducted twice a year to mark the Spring and Autumn equinoxes at The Astrological Lodge of London (ALL) which, founded in 1915 by Alan Leo, still meets weekly in the

[114] I was present at the Canonbury Masonic Research Centre, which specialises in the study of Freemasonry and allied traditions, to hear Michael Edwards, (see appendix A), give a lecture entitled *On Contemplating the Heavens: Hermetic and Cultural Cosmology*. Having inspired his audience with descriptions of the pageantry of the planetary deities against the backdrop of the zodiac, he illustrated his talk with a chart drawn for the purpose of locating a lost cat. Afterwards, one of the audience worried to me about this mundane use of the ancient and sacred art just demonstrated. An airline pilot by profession, this young man told me he could see the charm of astrology and would not be averse to learning more about it; but he was shocked that its practitioners should use it for such trifling and non-spiritual matters as finding wandering pets.

headquarters of the Theosophical Society. Described as 'a meditation on the Planets', it requires a cast of Lodge members to represent one planet each while costumed in white robes emblazoned with the glyphs of Mercury through Pluto. (The older typeset copies of the order of service include the latter planet as a handwritten addendum; it will be interesting to see whether it retains its place in the ritual following its recent 'demotion'.) While the meditations to the planets which each character proclaims betray the ALL's Theosophical provenance, the words are more poetical than religious; the sentiments they express invoke those 'Ideal Principles' which are attributed by astrologers of this type to the Sun, the Moon and the planets; they take care to emphasise that these material bodies are not being venerated in place of the one unspecified overarching deity, referred to as 'That Great One' which is symbolised astrologically by the blue vault of heaven within which all planetary bodies exist (07/2007: http://www.astrolodge.co.uk/astro/atthelodge/2003/spring/24mar.html).

The ritual is something of an anachronism in today's astrological community; a number of astrologers of my acquaintance would scarcely believe its existence and even ALL members seem somewhat embarrassed by it.[115] Which confirms astrology as primarily a private practice of individuals whose beliefs must be separately canvassed in the face of my anthropological elders-and-betters' warnings that encroaching upon this territory is foolhardy. 'Just what does 'belief' mean in a religious context?', ponders Clifford Geertz, before concluding:

> Of all the problems surrounding attempts to conduct anthropological analyses of religion this is the most troublesome and therefore the most often avoided. (Geertz 1993: 109)

As if this wasn't dissuasive enough, Byron Good exposes what he calls the myth presumed in much of the philosophical literature that subjects' beliefs can be deduced from the sincere assertions and statements they make about what they really think without taking account of the fact that all discourses are pragmatically located in social relationships (Good 1994: 23). Arnold Van Gennep was of the opinion that direct observation never reveals belief; neither are fieldwork informants in the habit of

[115] Having missed one performance, I was e-mailed the next day by a Lodge member who chided me for my absence. 'How can you call yourself an anthropologist', she quipped, 'and miss the only ritual which "your people" perform?'.

beginning sentences with 'people believe that …'. But he recognised belief as being always there, just beneath the surface (Belmont 1979: 102).

BELIEF, BELIEF *IN*, OR BELIEF *OF*?

With these cautionary words in mind, I will report that I have noted resistance from community members to having their relations with their practice pinned to any one single, unqualified theoretical term - like belief - and all of the ideological baggage which attaches to it. The professional practitioner Bernard Eccles,[116] a church-going Christian who is regularly involved in the ritual described above, tells us that – while he *believes* astrology – he does not *believe in it* (Eccles in Eccles & Phillipson 2005: 43, my emphasis). Similar sentiments are voiced by James Davidson, a sceptical academic who sets out to discuss the subject by declaring 'I don't *believe in* astrology but I am *rather fond of* it'. Attempting to explain his rejection of wholehearted belief in the subject, while guarding an affection for it, he tells us:

> I like to be reminded that things are happening in the solar system. If Neil Spencer didn't tell me in the *Observer* that Mercury is 'retrograde' – i.e. moving up to overtake us on the inside lane – I would have no idea that Mercury was doing anything at all in our blinded night sky, going forwards, going backwards, or indulging in figures of eight. Anything could be happening out there. The Earth could be lost in space. (Davidson 2004)

But Davidson could more accurately chart what was happening in the solar system by reading a column written by an astronomer than an astrologer. There is undoubtedly an appeal in Neil Spencer's words which cannot be explained simply in terms of information supply, as the otherwise incredulous Davidson does not shrink from acknowledging:

> People just get enmeshed in astrology's elaborate nets, the way it shades the contours of the world, its slicing up of moods, traits and time, its sublime juxtaposition of the precise-measured progress of remote heavenly objects with fuzzy feelings inside. … Getting into astrology is like being drawn through the door of your own private cathedral or seduced by a fugue constructed out of the letters of your name. People aren't deceived into thinking astrology predicts the future correctly, they are simply entranced by it. They *fall for it* in the same way they fall for languages or football: because it's beautiful. (Davidson 2004, my emphasis)

[116] See appendix A.

Students will often relate an initial encounter with astrology which instigated Davidson's process of falling for it and drove their decision to learn the craft for themselves. Ruth told this story to her peers, of which I was one, in an informal gathering away from the classroom. As a Jew studying the *Kaballah*, she explained that astrology had 'clicked' with her some years ago when her teacher had 'positioned my natal planets on a tree of life diagram, and I saw that all of the fire was concentrated within the area representing my body'. Having been at that time puzzled by knowing that 'I had a lot of fire in my chart, but none in my life', it had then and there been graphically demonstrated to her that the former was manifesting itself corporeally as the chronic inflammatory illness from which she had suffered for some years, and indeed battles with to this day. At times of sickness and life crises, Ruth explained that astrology had saved her from 'total despair' by reminding her that experience is variable and cyclical. *All* things pass. During bad and sad periods of her life, astrology had reassured her that 'it wasn't *all* my fault; I hadn't fucked up'.

Davidson's confession to being rather fond of astrology, to falling for it because of its beauty while being sure to say 'I don't believe in it' brings to mind Byron Good's review of Wilfred Cantwell Smith's consideration of the etymology and shifting semantics of the words 'to believe' and 'belief'. Smith contends that 'the idea that believing is religiously important turns out to be a modern idea' and that the meanings of the two expressions have changed over the last three centuries in accommodation of the development of Western Enlightenment notions to the extent that we are now scarcely able to understand our own pre-Enlightenment religious heritage, still less the faith professed by ethnographic 'others'. In the Old English, as Smith explains it, the words which have evolved into the modern term 'believe' meant rather to 'belove', to 'hold dear', to 'cherish', to 'regard as lief'. They are echoed in today's German word *belieben* and share a root with the Latin *libet,* it pleases, or *libido,* pleasure. The Old English meanings survive in today's archaism 'lief' and the past participle 'beloved' (Good 1994: 15-17, Smith 1977: 41-48). Smith argues that alterations in the language with respect to belief can be traced in the grammar and semantics of English literature and philosophy, and in popular usage, indicated by shifts in the objects and subjects of the word believe, and the changing relationship between belief and knowledge. As an example, Frances Bacon wrote in 1625 – an era when believing still had about it an air

of holding dear - about 'the belief of truth' which he defined as the 'enjoyment of it' and of its pursuit. By the nineteenth century, Good points out, belief had come to connote doubt. Today its meaning has shifted further along this trajectory to suggest outright error or falsehood in implicit, if not explicit, contrast to knowledge which assumes certitude and correctness (Good 1994: 17).[117]

If, for theoretical purposes, astrology is to be considered a New Age discourse grounded by a *re*invented tradition, then I would suggest that individuals' interactions with it would be well described in terms of a belief whose traditional meanings and associations have been similarly *re*invented. Recovered from pre-modernity to suit the purposes of post-modernity, Smith's model of pre-Cartesian belief seems eminently suited to describe that frame of mind with which people relate to astrology. At one with the enchanted, occult cosmos which the practice of astrology both assumes and confirms, this type of belief, with its connotations of cherishing and of holding dear, precisely describes the attachments of practitioners and their clients to astrology whose enjoyment of it, and of its pursuit, would be well described in Frances Bacon's phraseology as a 'belief of astrology'. Smith, (whose intellectual presence has been acknowledged by Clifford Geertz as an influence upon his own work (Geertz, cited by Bennett 1996: 17)), argues that belief, faith, religion – all of these descriptive terms – are in any case only to be understood via the persons who profess or practise them in all the full variety of their individual expressions of adherence (Smith 1967 & 1963, cited by Bennett 1996: 107).

And, while ethnographers could not help but agree with him, they would likely be well aware that he was setting them a daunting task for, as Tanya Luhrmann observes:

> It is optimistic to think that people have an ordered set of beliefs about a particular endeavour which forms a consistent set with other beliefs which

[117] Discussing typical twentieth century uses of 'belief-in', Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1998: 67) quotes what he calls 'an exemplifying entry' in the Random House dictionary of 1966 that discusses 'belief in astrology'. This example, says Smith, bears pondering: it does not mean what 'belief in ghosts' would have meant a couple of centuries earlier for, unlike ghosts, the existence of astrology is taken for granted. But its validity or usefulness is not. However, it is not clear from this phrase alone, without further elaboration:

> Whether the person who believes in astrology simply holds the view that this body of lore and of moods is what it claims to be, or also adds to that abstract judgement a moral decision, of existential participation, involving himself in them in his personal life and behaviour. It could be that he merely theoretically opines that the thing is sound, without himself doing anything about it; he might be intellectually interested only. Or, he may trust it; may entrust himself and his affairs to it. (Smith 1998: 67)

> together describe the totality of thought and action. People are much fuzzier, and more complex, than that. (Luhrmann 1989: 309)

Luhrmann describes the attachment of her modern-day fuzzy and complex research subjects to magic in terms of 'serious play' which, however powerfully engaging in terms of belief, remains forever distinct from the non-play world (Luhrmann 1989: 324 ff.). She depicts her witches playing at magic in a serious manner, while 'the truth of magical theory hovers in limbo between reality and fantasy' in a manner which reminds me of Filate, Dan Sperber's elderly and imaginative informant, who apparently believed in the existence of a golden dragon (Sperber 1985: 35 ff.).

Filate's description of this chimera prompted Sperber, reflecting subsequently upon this fieldwork incident, to review the nature of belief. He found Steven Lukes's utilitarian definition of belief as 'a proposition which is accepted as true' too narrow to fit Filate's fantastical notions (Lukes 1979: 207). Suggesting that Lukes's classification described – in Sperber's preferred terminology – only factual beliefs with propositional content, Sperber proceeded to introduce the two further categories to broaden the range of his schema: representational belief and semi-propositional content. These allowed him to accommodate phenomena such as Evans-Pritchard's *Nuer* bird-twins and Filate's golden-hearted dragon within a class of representational beliefs whose content was semi-propositional (Sperber 1985: 58). And it could be argued that the 'serious play' of Lurhrmann's witches, which has them enacting collective nude rituals which are 'full of blasted heaths, illicit sexuality, daggers, darkness and archaic symbols' (Luhrmann 1989: 340), would seem to fit well, alongside Filate's dragon, in this belief-category of Sperber's.

But, I would not be happy to assign to this category of belief, nor to any of Sperber's sub-divisions of the phenomenon, the practices of astrologers who pore over their computers and reference books, at home alone with the electric light and all of their clothes on, struggling to learn and apply their horoscopy. Thanks to Smith's exposition of the pre-Enlightenment meanings of belief, it is possible for me to match astrology with the type of belief with which it would have been associated in its geocentric glory-days, and say that astrologers cherish their art and continue their involvement with it because it pleases them so to do. Rather than describe astrologers as playing, however

seriously, at their practice, I would prefer to describe these serious individualists as indulging their love affair with it; and falling in love, according to Luhrmann, is not to be thought of as an instance of the sliding process of assimilation that she calls 'interpretive drift' (Luhrmann 1989: 307 ff. & 312). Which statement strengthens my conviction, alluded to in chapter three, that this term of hers - which excellently describes the ways in which magicians' ways of interpreting events slowly and imperceptibly shift to accommodate their fantastical world - is as unsuited for transfer from magic to astrology as is her concept of 'serious play'. After all, if it is to be accepted that astrology is truly a creature of the New Age, despite the near universal rejection by astrologers themselves of this proposition, then it is surely adding insult to injury to try to characterise astrologers in terms coined to describe magicians (or, for that matter, dragon-believers). How much more appropriate to describe astrologers' attachment to their practice in terms of a belief the meaning of which comes near to matching, historically, the provenance of its *re*invented tradition.

BELIEVING, RATHER THAN KNOWING?

In contrast to that of witchcraft, astrology's public face is an almost exclusively theoretical one, backed by its requirement for painstaking processing of astronomical data and meticulous application of formal, replicable techniques. Most current practitioners will have learned their astrology from tutors who presented their subject by means of a set of rules which, once learned, supposedly render all studious pupils capable of its efficient practice. Lessons will have been supplemented with the study of how-to-do astrology textbooks that allocate meanings to the range of horoscopic variations in a painting-by-numbers fashion which brooks no indeterminacy of meaning. No matter what style of astrology is being promoted, the message to neophytes is invariably the same: students who apply themselves and learn the rules sufficiently well will, in time, certainly be able to read the appropriate meaning or message of any chart. If they cannot, they must apply themselves better to the task, try different techniques and check the accuracy of their chart data. It was never suggested in any of the classrooms or lecture theatres in which I sat as a beginner that successful astrologers need be anything other than serious and dedicated in the application of their craft. In sharp contrast to my experience of learning Tarot, no astrology tutor ever told me I needed to work on my intuition, empathy or psychic abilities: fellow students invoking

such phenomena were invariably encouraged to concentrate on developing their technical knowledge of astrology; 'that's all very well but where's the astrology' was a stock tutorial response to a beginner's flight of fanciful symbolism favoured by my first teacher as a means of getting us to keep our interpretations horoscopically accountable.

But those who persevere with their studies soon come to appreciate that, in reality, the extraction of relevant, accurate and symbolically apposite meaning from a chart is neither so easily, nor entirely intellectually, accomplished. Speaking amongst themselves, astrologers will describe their attempts to mine the message of a chart as much in instinctive as in intellectual terms; of sensing or imagining their way to the meaning in addition to computing it. Spectacular instances of success will be described as otherworldly. When stuck with difficult charts, astrologers may deliberately invoke non-intellectual understanding; a semi-professional practitioner I know confessed that she would put maps such as these under her pillow at night and sleep on them in the hope of more easily intuiting their meanings come the morning. Astrologers will admit to making chart judgements inexplicable in technical horoscopic terms alone but neither obviously attributable to logical deduction, nor even to canny observation. I would contend that doing astrology encompasses an experience not altogether explicable in terms of intellectual knowing no matter that it is generally presented as such; in practice if not in theory, identifying and articulating apposite horoscopic symbolism requires empathy, intuition, clairvoyance and sometimes – who knows - even a little (respectable, fully clothed) magic.

And now, with a few years of basic astrological education under my belt, I discover that there are accomplished astrologers and teachers who publicly acknowledge these aspects of the craft. Discussing the attempt to synthesise a chart's multivalent symbolism, the American astrological elder Rob Hand[118] is as careful as were all my past tutors to stress the central role played by the correct application of formal techniques in grounding the art of astrology; but, within this firm constraint, he acknowledges that the process of chart synthesis is an 'entirely intuitive' one and not in fact teachable at all (Hand, cited by Phillipson 2000: 193). His words are echoed by

[118] See appendix A.

Penny Thornton,[119] sometime astrologer to Princess Diana who, when leading a workshop I attended in Bromley, told us that she now firmly believed astrologers' most important tool, after their ephemeredes of planetary positions, to be their intuition. She went on to tell us that she had of late experienced a 'sea-change' from her previous opinion that astrology was a science; she now recognised that there was more to astrology than the application of a rule-book, and this was intuition. Still, she was reluctant to let go of Cinderella's slipper, confessing to remaining half-hopeful that science, in the form of some new physics of the future, would prove an instrumental connection between the planets and our lives on earth.

Aptly described in Henri Corbin's terminology considered in a previous chapter, the *imaginal* activity that is astrology generally starts with the demarcation of a liminal space, albeit generally only a notional one, often described as 'a world of my own where time stands still'; identifying a chart's symbolism and putting it into words, which could be termed prophesying when inspiration is correctly invoked, constitutes its second phase; the recognition of having spoken prophetically, whether it comes immediately or some time later, concludes the experience but leaves the practitioner with a residue of wonder and anticipation which encourages repetitions of the cycle. All astrologers will be able to report instances when they have felt that they have 'got it right' - whether they were working on their own, face to face with a client, or doing duty on a national newspaper phone-line – their apposite words seemingly unconsciously chosen from the wide range which would similarly have fitted the astrology in question.

Successful practitioners often report instances of inexplicably prophetic insights that they experienced very early on in their student days, way beyond their fledgling knowledge of the subject; they admit that these had the effect of hooking and reeling them in to the subject although they often regret that their first blinding insights did not develop in proportion to their growing astrological scholarship: rather the reverse, they will admit ruefully. A fellow student of mine joked about the time when she had glanced cursorily at the natal chart of a young woman who was unknown to her, at the latter's request. On the basis of rudimentary astrology, she had heard herself telling her

[119] See appendix A.

subject ‘you come from a very musical family’. As it turned out, she couldn’t have been more accurate: the woman was the granddaughter of a ‘household name’ European classical composer!

I remember an instance, very early on in my own astrological education, when I was presented for the first time with the horoscope of one of my classmates who, although unknown to me at that time, was later to become a close friend. Called upon to deliver my interpretation of her chart to the group, I tried tactfully to allude to the searing separations I surmised there to be between her children and herself. She brushed off my tentative suggestions, but I was soon to know that she had been hospitalised some twenty-five years earlier with a supposedly terminal illness when she was only twenty-two; she had missed the first steps of her then one-year old daughter whose care had been taken over by her mother. Defying the medics and effecting a complete recovery, she was subsequently, in the 1970s, to be one of the first women to give birth to a healthy baby following chemotherapy treatment. Some years later, her husband was partially paralysed following an accident; finding himself unable to accept the constraints which this imposed upon him and his family, he committed suicide to free the remaining three from the burden he felt he had become to them. Very recently, after we had become close friends, I was starkly reminded of the family separations which I had read in her chart before I knew her when, diagnosed with a truly terminal illness at just over fifty, she asked me on her deathbed to be an unofficial godparent to her son who, with his elder sister, was supporting his mother during the last days of her life. My primary-grade astrological prognostication turned out to be all too tragically accurate; but I would struggle to justify it at the level of horoscopy which I would now be looking to apply.

Neophyte practitioners may be surprised by their abilities to stretch a little astrological knowledge a long way towards uncanny prophecy, but astrology’s inherent magic really comes to the fore in cases where what later transpires to have been the ‘wrong’ chart works; not only works, but works far, far better than the ‘right’ chart would have done. I would suggest that all experienced astrologers have examples of this phenomenon in their portfolios, and some will discuss them privately. But, the official line given to non-astrologers and students alike is that wrong charts, (maps drawn incorrectly for

correct data and/or maps drawn correctly for incorrect data), don't work as well as right charts. I have heard Rob Hand state unequivocally that no wrong chart has ever worked better, for him, than a right one. Within the astrological community, public acceptance of the fact that wrong charts can yield valid and apposite symbolism is led by The Company of Astrologers and Geoffrey Cornelius,[120] who has admitted that:

> [Astrologers] get *correct* readings from wrong maps on sufficient occasions for it to be, clearly, an astrological phenomenon. One has to be very sparing with that, because it is *so* ruthlessly undermining of the status of astrology. (Cornelius, cited by Phillipson 2000: 118 original emphasis)

Cornelius's willingness to discuss this phenomenon has resulted in its inevitable politicisation as an adjunct to the 'astrology is divination' camp; never will it be openly acknowledged in the 'astrology is an unproved science' group. In fact, most astrologers who have been taught standard psychological astrology are, in my experience, quite unsettled by the suggestion that wrong charts can produce useful results. Members of my local astrology-interest association were all disdainful of the notion; so were a class of my fellow students who argued that astrology differed from occult practices, like Tarot or the *I Ching*, precisely because it was worked out mathematically, and correctly, not incorrectly or randomly; a personal chart drawn for any time other than the accurate moment of birth would, they agreed, be 'complete bollocks'.

Bollocks or not, the most striking example of a wrong chart working which I have heard comes from the practice of Nicky Allsop,[121] a professional Western astrologer who works and lives in Cape Town, South Africa, and specialises in giving her clients fertility advice (October 2005: CoA handout). Nicky told a Company of Astrologers' Hampstead gathering this story, following it by advising her audience that we should overcome our fear of making incorrect statements and *dare* to divine:

> Amanda (not her real name) was a forty-two year old divorced career woman when she first consulted Nicky to enquire anxiously if she would ever manage to have a baby. In the recent past, she had undergone unsuccessful IVF treatments with her husband of the time which had put such a strain on both of them that their marriage had broken down and her husband had moved away from South Africa to start a new life in one of the Gulf states. Now single and running out of time, Amanda remained very, very sure that she wanted a child. Nicky

[120] See appendix A.
[121] See appendix A.

> studied her birthchart and asked her whether she had lost a baby in the past, as she suspected she had; yes, Amanda admitted to having had a pregnancy termination many years ago which had lately been preying increasingly on her mind. Nicky advised her client to take up a creative hobby and to get some closure therapy with a view to coming to terms with the abortion. Meanwhile, Nicky worked on Amanda's nativity using the mixture of traditional and modern horoscopy techniques which she has devised for her practice. This involves some considerable calculation, 'figure work' she called it, which frees her imagination, she told us, to read the symbolism of the chart.
>
> Having followed the astrologer's initial advice, Amanda contacted Nicky again and repeated her original question. Would she ever have a baby? This time, informed by her extensive horoscopic calculations, which she shared with us, Nicky *dared* to divine: she told her client that she would meet up with her ex-husband a couple of months hence, conceive his child on a given date and deliver a healthy baby at full term. Now, this was an audacious prophecy and one destined surely to fail: given the fact that Amanda and her husband had failed to achieve an assisted pregnancy when they were co-habiting, what chance had they of managing a natural conception now that they were divorced and living in different countries? But, shortly after this second consultation, the incredulous Amanda received an unexpected invitation from her ex-husband to go and spend a few days' holiday with him following a family bereavement she had suffered; he suggested that she arrive on the day Nicky had identified as the baby's conception date. I will leave the ways and means of its achievement to the reader's imagination, but suffice it to say that Amanda did indeed conceive on the date prophesied and subsequently gave birth to a healthy baby girl. The happy parents have managed over the last three years to rear the child amicably though still living in separate countries.

Now, this story raises worrying issues about the power of prophecy to alter the actions of those who seek it out and act to try and make it come to pass. But I am only concerned here to illustrate the spectacular success an astrologer can achieve with the wrong chart: for, having taken us through the technicalities which informed all of her judgements and their specific timings, Nicky told us that – some two years after Amanda's baby had been born – she discovered that she had from the start being working with the wrong birthchart. Her client had then chanced to tell her that she had been born, not in Cape Town, South Africa as Nicky had surmised, but in Leamington, England. With some trepidation, for she had been working up Amanda's chart as a case study for publication, Nicky tried out the right chart, only to find that it supported none of the successful prognostications and prophecies which the wrong chart had yielded.

The Company of Astrologers' crowd enjoyed this story hugely. For they were quite prepared to accept that, astrology being a matter of divination and not of empirical

science, the right chart will show itself even if it is on occasion the wrong one. But, as stated above, this is a view not generally stated in public. (In fact, if I have remembered the details correctly, it might be argued that the chart Nicky used – admittedly unknowingly – was an astrologically valid 'relocated' one and therefore not wrong at all; which illustrates, if nothing else, astrology's flexible and creative relationship with supposedly absolute truths.) Astrologers have been educated in the key quality of the 'seed moment' and in the practice of faithful and accurate calculation of natal and inception charts from this rationalised starting point. To question the supremacy of this one moment in space-time is, for a number of practitioners, tantamount to threatening the foundation of astrology itself, despite the fact that many will have encountered similar, if less spectacular, examples of charts which subsequently turned out to be wrong working very well. Or maybe not. For, as a footnote to this anecdote I must record that, just before going to press, so to speak, with this manuscript, I heard that Nicky Allsop somehow and very recently discovered that her original chart for Amanda had indeed been the 'right' one all along! From which, if we are to deduce any general laws over and above that which states that it is a specious exercise to apply general laws to divinatory discourse, then it is that the power of realised symbolism will invariably supersede in importance the raw data which inspired it.

Having once had the experience of making uncannily accurate astrological prognostications, (whether it be out of proportion to her grasp of horoscopy, based on afterwards rejected data or in the course of her normal practice), the anticipation is aroused in the practitioner that she may have it again. Analogously, the potter who throws a perfect pot early on in her apprenticeship at the wheel cannot help but anticipate doing so again each time she cuts herself a new lump of clay. If she does this often and for a living, she may incorporate prompts to maximise and regularise her chances of success just as an astrologer will, often unknowingly, enact small routines to nudge herself into prophetic mode. And so, the practice of astrology turns out to incorporate an experience of anticipation; and one of joy when it is realised. If the anticipation prompts the astrologer to surrender herself to her practice as a matter of personal faith, then its realisation corroborates that faith in a cycle of celebratory belief that confirms the otherwise inexplicable existence of an occult cosmological interrelation.

Which would explain why astrologers seem happier to describe their craft as metaphysical or spiritual rather than religious, given that the former terms assume an interconnected cosmos which is shot through with meaning, while remaining free from the prescriptive and proscriptive associations born by the latter description, and open to the more esoteric theories of the scientists. To accept the existence of such a world and work consciously within it are sufficient conditions for its manifestation. But, unlike organised religions, astrology stops short of legislating for its world. Hence, there is – in a sense – nothing for the astrologer to believe in, as Bernard Eccles, the professional astrologer, and James Davidson, the sceptical academic have noted. All an astrologer needs to do to confirm that there is meaning in the world, for herself and for her subjects and clients, is to practise astrology. As Garry Phillipson,[122] astrologer, Theravadin Buddhist and sometime monk, explains it:

> … The real payload of astrology is the simple fact that it works; so that any information which is given is actually a secondary phenomenon. What I mean is – no matter what difficulties someone comes to an astrologer with, and no matter how useful the specific advice they get might be, the most enduring impact will be what is implied by the simple fact that astrology works; that there *is* meaning in the world. (Phillipson in Eccles & Phillipson 2005: 44)

So, neither the astrologer, nor her client (when she has one), need *believe in* some astrological lore or other in order for the encounter to work. But, it turns out that both practitioner and client need to *believe* the fact of astrology's existence as a worthwhile practice, if that worth is to be corroborated. For, as Phillipson notes, belief seems to be an essential ingredient in the mix required of a good divinatory experience, in that it generates:

> An interested, charged emotional state, helping create the right conditions for an accurate, useful reading. So that those who believe tend to find their belief vindicated; those who doubt find good reason to doubt. (Phillipson 09/2005: http://www.skyscript.co.uk/mercury5.html)

Participants should value their engagement with astrology, probably in proportion to the extent of that encounter, if they are to get anything meaningful out of it. Which is to say that, if they can't bring themselves actually or formally to believe, then they should at the very least suspend their disbelief and enter into the spirit of the activity if they are to find it at all rewarding. Sceptics who cannot go this far will invariably fail to fall for

[122] See appendix A.

astrology's charms. But when has a detached commentator watching from the sidelines and evaluating an activity in theoretical terms ever been given credence for appreciating the experience of those who have, albeit temporarily, had the courage to enter the field as participants?

OR KNOWING RATHER THAN BELIEVING?

In sum, astrology's practice benefits greatly from – possibly even relies upon – the belief of each involved party, in Smith's pre-Cartesian sense of that word, that it is an efficacious activity; at least if a satisfactory astrological experience is to be had by all. It is possible to see how regular, pleasurable involvement with astrology, belief of it in Bacon's terminology, adds value to the extent that its more enthusiastic practitioners describe their interactions with it in terms of knowledge rather than belief. Committed astrologers will frequently object that they need not *believe* the efficacy of their practices, for they *know* their worth. After all, they do know that every individual, every situation, proposition or enquiry, everything under the Sun, has a chart to match it and, given sufficient dedication to the craft and its centuries' long traditions, they have been taught that they will be able to read, judge and interpret these horoscopes. As a fellow student of mine in Hove remarked, 'astrology isn't a belief at all; it's not a belief because it's five thousand years' worth of knowledge built upon observation'. But this knowing should not be taken, as it so often is by rationalist sceptics, for a deluded conviction that astrological prognostications are invariably true and/or useful. For these are two very different types of knowing: the first describes confidence in the reliability of the method of practice and reflects the practitioner's certainty that her cosmos is astrologically ordered; the second relates only to the accuracy or otherwise of individual interpretations and judgements.

Which is not to deny that the efficacy of the latter, astrology's knowledge products, is not something which astrologers continually assess. After all, the livelihoods and reputations of professional practitioners depend upon their delivering satisfactory goods to their clients. But the comparative importance of this should not be overemphasised: professional astrologer Penny Thornton says that there are only a handful of Western astrologers in the world who deal with clients' charts on a daily basis; many more may write Sun-sign columns, serve on the astrological phone lines which these advertise, and

maintain elaborate websites, but few have a queue of clients waiting for personal consultations. So, a rigorous examination and realistic consideration of astrology's products may be more a personal than a professional concern which need not necessarily detract from the continued commitment, faith, belief, knowledge – whichever of these words is used – with which an astrologer relates, and aspires, to an idealised standard of practice. And the fact that astrologers continue to ply their wares in the face of not especially accurate results confirms the fact that their clients too are getting more out of the astrological experience than simple information gathering.

When astrologers find their chart interpretations wanting, they are faced with various options, which divide roughly as follows:

1. They might resolve to improve their interpretive techniques; to explore different methods and traditions of chart judgement; to engage more authentically with their practices. This invokes Madame Blavatsky's Theosophist model, cited in the previous chapter, of an infallible astrology available to the pure and properly prepared practitioner.[123]

2. They could change the subject-matter of their charts: having become disenchanted with natal horoscopy, they may resolve to concentrate instead on horary chartwork; rather than trying to unlock clients' psychological problems, they will offer instead to locate their lost cats; or *vice versa*.

3. They may use another divination system to substantiate their astrological judgements; a number of astrologers do this, fairly often using the Tarot and *I Ching*.

4. They will acknowledge that divinatory knowledge is, at best, partial and symbolically encoded and, at worst, not to be had at all. In the latter case, they will assert that to do anything other than accept the fact gracefully would be disrespectful of the interconnected cosmos which astrology assumes and thereby conjures. When charts yield only garbled, contradictory messages, then these should be read as reflections upon the subjects themselves and the situations

[123] The Australian astrologer Bernadette Brady, (see appendix A), told me about a crisis point in her practice which illustrates both options one and two. The incident has been recorded in print in her own words as follows:

> What really pushed me into examining my own astrology, deconstructing it and then rebuilding it in more of an Arabic/Bonatti* mould, was that I had a client I had seen about four times over four years. The police rang me and said this guy was a murderer. I had not spotted it in his chart, and that drew me up really fast. I thought, 'What the hell am I doing here?'. … So basically I deconstructed my astrology piece by piece, quite thoroughly, and rebuilt it again. I stopped seeing clients for a while so that I could do that, and started working much more on predictive work. (Brady, cited by Phillipson 2000: 113)

*Guido Bonatti was a thirteenth century Italian astrologer who wrote a twelve-book treatise, *De astronomia*, and is mentioned in Canto XX.118 of Dante's *Inferno* (Tester 1987: 189).

which prompted them to seek astrological advice. In a world laden with potential meaning, the lack of an apparent message is as meaningful, after all, as a clear answer.[124]

5. They might give up astrology altogether, and do, in my experience, generally when they have approached it as a means to an end and have failed to 'fall for it' as an end in itself. Whether that goal is a primary search for answers, or a secondary desire – meeting new friends, finding a lover, making money – they will abandon it and move on when astrology fails to deliver.

Most astrologers will have explored all or most of the first four options in the course of a lifetime's practice; their continued commitment to the craft throughout changes in style and philosophy having the cumulative effect of tying them ever tighter to it by means both of their often considerable investment of time and money, and of their reputations either as the family astrologer or as a significant presence in the astrological community. It is more difficult for (literally) disenchanted individuals to walk away than to stay. Some, usually only marginally involved, practitioners will choose the fifth option and drop out of the world of astrology, at least until some life change leads them back to try it again. But, in so far as these individuals have engaged with astrology's symbolic language, they will to some extent retain their knowledge of it. A speaker of – say – French as a second language will retain images expressed in its terminology long after she has lost daily familiarity with the language. Having spent my childhood in Kenya, I find myself searching, in middle age, for the English translation of a Swahili word or phrase that has come first to my mind and remains still somehow a more

[124] While this viewpoint is generally associated with Geoffrey Cornelius and the Company of Astrologers, practitioners with ostensibly different astrological approaches will sometimes come very near to it.

Horary specialist John Frawley, (see appendix A), declares it to be his firm belief that correct judgement is a matter of grace rather than skill and recommends that his students pray for this before attempting to come to such judgements (Frawley 2005: 9 & 11). Heading his sample horoscopy worksheet *For the Glory of God,* Frawley tells us that 'it is an inescapable consequence of the very premises of horary practice that the judgement given will be the right one, whether it be 'correct' or not' (Frawley 2000: 45). Although I doubt whether this nice distinction between right and correct would satisfy the author of the e-mail I received bemoaning the fact that Frawley's horary method entirely failed to predict the outcome of that day's England match in the 2006 Football World Cup. John Frawley warns that he will soon be giving up his teaching commitments, but he is currently still advertising his horary correspondence course, estimated to take between one to two years to complete, at a cost of £1,900. (06/2006: http://www.johnfrawley.com/qhp.html)

Another practitioner who celebrates her predictive results, irrespective of their usefulness or otherwise and without apparent loss of face or reputation, is Penny Thornton. At a workshop she was leading in Bromley, I was surprised to hear her telling participants that her husband had wanted to fly from New York to London on or around 5th September 2001. She had dissuaded him, on astrological grounds, from travelling so early in the month, telling him to book a flight instead on 11th September 2001, by which time the unfavourable astrology would be all over. Taking her advice, her husband ended up stranded on Long Island having been taken off his plane in the disruption following the Twin Towers attack of that very same day. Thornton does not teach courses, but her one-hour telephone conversations cost £150 including all phone call costs. (06/2006: http://www.astrolutely.com/consultations.php)

accurate expression of the moment than any of its English counterparts. And, astrology is like that too. Which simile leads me to the next chapter and a consideration of astrology as a language-game.

Having established, in the previous chapter and contrary to the convictions of many of its practitioners, that astrology is less a science and more a New Age religious movement, I moved on, in this one, to consider its practitioners' somewhat contradictory public and private engagements with their craft in relation to their proclamations of knowledge and belief. If the former of these promotes astrology as knowledge which can be learned by all, the latter acknowledges aspects of it which are accessed rather as matters of belief or its variants, faith, commitment and so on. Astrologers' tendency to qualify and problematise the term belief and its correlates led me to suggest that Wilfred Cantwell Smith's charming pre-Enlightenment characterisation of the word as something precious, esteemed and beloved is ideally suited to describe the ways in which astrologers relate to astrology; its being historically attuned, after all, to an earlier and astrologically more comfortable worldview that had not yet separated and opposed science and religion, knowledge and belief. That astrologers should fall in love with astrology, as an exercise in and for itself, explains what sceptical scientists and non-astrologers perpetually rail against, namely the fact that they continue to learn, practise and relish their art in the face of the repeated failures of their prophecies. As, to a lesser extent, do their clients. And, once this investment of dedicated affection is acknowledged, it follows that it repays those involved to the extent that they feel the need to elevate their opinion of astrology's potential above and beyond the scope of belief, which they assume to be degraded in relation to knowledge, and claim that they know its worth. And, as the medium in which astrologers interact with their 'beloved' craft is a linguistic one, it follows that they should revel in the poetics of their translations of its symbolism. Which leads me to wonder, in my next chapter, if it is accurate and useful to describe astrology as a language-game, in Wittgenstein's original sense of the term.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ASTROLOGY AS A LANGUAGE-GAME

Having reviewed astrology, in theoretical terms, as a magico-religious divinatory system of the New Age whose practitioners demonstrate somewhat counter-intuitive allegiances to science and religion, and unexpected relationships with knowledge and belief, I intend in this chapter to consider it instead as a linguistic system or discourse which might be described as a Wittgensteinian language-game. Indeed, this analogy has already been drawn and developed in some detail by at least one contemporary astrologer, and I will review his thesis below. The next two chapters will record some ethnographic encounters in astrology class and seminar rooms.

ASTROLOGY AS NARRATIVE KNOWLEDGE

Justine Picardie, writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, draws an analogy between popular astrology and popular literature; critics of the former, such as Richard Dawkins, are missing the point entirely, she suggests, in centring their attacks upon the fact that astrology's primary data and its resulting knowledge products are *wrong*. Picardie hastens to assure her readers that, despite her apparent defence of it, she doesn't herself believe that 'astrology can really predict the future'; predicting the future is not, she would have us realise, astrology's primary appeal (Picardie 2005). She is well aware, she tells us, that astrological phenomena, such as – say - Mercury travelling in retrograde motion, are entirely illusory in Dawkins's terms; so, for that matter, are the constellations which we search out among the scattered stars in the night sky, despite the fact that Dawkins has advised us that they are no more meaningful than patches of curiously shaped damp on a bathroom ceiling. But, Picardie asserts, whether Dawkins likes it or not, there is poetry in the stars for seekers of meaning less supremely rationalist than he. (You only have to read the words of poets influenced by their astrological beliefs such as W. B. Yeats or Ted Hughes, she tells us, to appreciate this fact.)[125] The charm of the exercise of discerning figures redolent of meaning among the

[125] The astrological attachment of Yeats was always well known: Virginia Woolf noted in her 1934 diary that he 'believes entirely in horoscopes. Will not do business with anyone without having their horoscopes' (cited by Spencer 2000: 238). Hughes's lifelong interest in astrology, however, did not come to light until the recent publication of *Birthday Letters* (1998), although his sometime wife Sylvia Plath described him in her 1956 journal as 'a competent astrologist, reading horoscopes' (Plath, cited by Spencer 2000: 232). Other notable poet/astrologers were Chaucer, Dryden and Louis Macneice, whose last book *Astrology* (1964) was published posthumously; those who knew something of the subject and

stars in a dark night sky or, for that matter on mouldy bathroom ceilings, is its power to stimulate the beholder's imagination. As Picardie summarises her argument against Dawkins:

> My point about astrology is not whether it is true – or, indeed, whether I believe it – but that very many people find it engaging. … At their best, [horoscope writers] tell short stories that the reader can imagine themselves into; becoming the central characters in a small drama that is partly of their own making. (Picardie 2005)

Justine Picardie recognises and articulates astrology's appeal to its consumers in terms of an exercise in literary participation. The sceptical columnist Emma Brockes acknowledges this more cynically when, setting out to interview Sun-sign superstar Jonathan Cainer, she tells Guardian readers that:

> It is metaphors that Cainer is famous for – metaphors and money. … By making them decode their own forecasts, Cainer cleverly encourages his readers to regard them as hard-won truths rather than dashed-off fictions. (Brockes 2004: 5)

Observer Sun-sign columnist Neil Spencer describes the enterprise from a practitioner's point of view as 'fundamentally a matter of writing riddles that require the collusion of the reader to become meaningful' (Spencer 2000: 109). In their separate considerations of astrology's properties, Picardie, Brockes and Spencer all invoke the inbuilt human tendency to discern connections and to make sense; this is a founding principle for personal construct or narrative psychologists, social constructivist epistemologists and a range of similar theorists who study, not so much human information processing, as people's propensity for making meaning: when presented with two or three pictures of apparently unrelated events, the research subjects of such theoreticians can apparently be relied upon to plot stories that connect the images with each other in some way; what is more, having explained the current situation to their satisfaction, they will go on to prognosticate its possible future outcomes. This tendency has led researchers in the field, such as Sarbin (1986), to propose narrative emplotment as the organising principle in what is conceptualised as a proactive process of meaning construction (Botella 2000: 5). The exercise of contemplating maps of land- or rather sky-scapes, which informs

---

were sympathetic to it include Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Kipling, Masefield and William Blake (Spencer 2000: 232-234). As I noted in my introduction, the latter undertook a psychical research project in 'zodiacal physiognomy' at the home of his friend the astrologer and artist, (and many times great uncle of mine), John Varley.

the Sun-sign horoscopes referred to above and is central to the broader astrological enterprise, would seemingly fit this model well, for it has been said that our sense of place is rooted in narration: resembling a story being told again and again, the recording and reading of landscapes are, on this view, as much imaginative literary activities as they are geophysical or geographical enterprises; the multiple meanings and memories encapsulated by maps must, after all, sooner or later be communicated linguistically (Barbara Johnstone, cited by Ryden 1993: 42 & 242).

In an earlier chapter, I cited James Davidson's (2004) proposition that 'getting into astrology is like being drawn through the door of your own private cathedral or being seduced by a fugue constructed out of the letters of your name; this adds religious and musical engagements to literary participation as analogies for the astrological experience. It seems there is a measure of agreement among commentators, both interested and disinterested, that the appeal of astrology – for a practitioner, a client or an occasional newspaper horoscope reader – is more correctly appraised in terms of literary, poetic, mystical or musical interactions than as an instrumental means-to-an-end activity aimed at discerning incontrovertible truths. Reading a poem, a work of fiction or a figurative map, listening to music, or meditating upon the metaphysical are among the activities which can, with participants' collusion, open escape hatches in the imagination and invite otherworldly, numinous encounters. These are generative of knowledge which is appositely described, I would suggest, by constructionist metatheorists who demarcate ways of knowing which are not susceptible to judgement by formal justification: for they are better assessed for their pragmatic value and/or their coherence; almost certainly by aesthetic and rhetorical criteria; and even in terms of their emotional impact (Botella 2000: 3). This view assumes that:

> Knowledge is a hypothetical (i.e., anticipatory) construction. Thus, it departs from the traditional objectivist conception of knowledge as an internalized representation of reality. This constructivist epistemic assumption can be traced back to Kant's philosophy and to Popper's notion that no knowledge originates in pure observation, since every act of observation is theory laden (see Popper 1974). (Botella 2000: 2)

Being unqualified to judge between the various theories and metatheories of narrative psychology and social or radical constructionism, I will retreat from their interesting

epistemological theories to cite a practical example from my own repertoire of participatory knowledge.

As something of an opera enthusiast, I relish the chance of standing uncomfortably for five hours or so in the 'gods' of a theatre such as the Royal Opera House Covent Garden to take in a production of Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, despite the fact that I hold no personal brief for *der Liebestod* nor thankfully have ever been tempted to try this particular, terminal, rite of passage for myself. And yet I have experienced sufficient heartache in my prosaic life to be a candidate for temporary transportation by Wagner's audacious music-drama rendition of the Schopenhauerian doctrine that phenomenal existence is a web of inherently unsatisfiable willings, strivings and longings for the noumenal from which the only permanent liberation is the cessation of being (Magee 1983: 356 & cf. Magee 2000: 126 ff.). But having said that, if I am to engage satisfactorily with the noumenal, I must deliberately overlook the fact that the Tenor singing *Tristan* is half the height of his feisty *Isolde*, that both performers are way beyond the tasteful age for such shenanigans and, despite this, are having to spend the evening singing above a full orchestra while rolling dramatically around on the floorboards of an unaccountably bright red set inexplicably devoid of furniture.[126] But, if I work against the odds, my sore feet and the whimsy of trendy set-designers to suspend disbelief and enter into the spirit of the evening, then I will be well rewarded; for I know from experience that the extent of my personal commitment to a performance will be matched by the value I get from it.

I presume that any messages promulgated by the story of *Tristan und Isolde*, or by words employed - however unsatisfactorily - to express Wagner's powerfully dramatic musical rendition of the tale, would be definable, in the terms of Jean-François Lyotard's (1984) dualistic schema for the postmodern epistemological condition, as narrative – as opposed to scientific – knowledge. In the execution of what is generally referred to as his linguistic turn, signalled by this study of knowledge, Lyotard acknowledged the influence of the later works of Wittgenstein which, along with

[126] Fellow Wagner enthusiasts will recognise this as Herbert Wernicke's production of *Tristan*, conducted by Bernard Haitink, which was first performed at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on 14th October 2000.

Kant's, could - on his view - be read as 'epilogues to modernity and prologues to an honourable postmodernity' (Lyotard 1988: xiii). In attempting to plot the latter's likely trajectory, Lyotard opted to accept and work with difference – which he described as the *differend* - in preference to formulating models of reconciliation which, though popular with his fellow social theorists, were in his opinion hopelessly unrealistic (Williams 1998: 3).[127] To evaluate the extent of the disjuncture that he believed knowledge systems increasingly to exhibit, Lyotard needed a mode of analysis that would reveal this disparity without imposing a single theoretical unity upon it (Lash 1990: 93-94, Steuerman 2000: 22, Williams 1998: 27). Wittgenstein's depiction of linguistic communication as a language-game (*Sprachspiel*), one of the very few new terms he introduced in his later philosophy and one that was to become a favourite trope of his for illustrating what he had come to see as the contextual dependency of meaning, was ideally suited to Lyotard's task (Chihara & Fodor 1965: 282-283).[128] By means of the metaphor, Wittgenstein was able to survey the current condition of knowledge as a series of separate, linguistic, rule-defined and game-like internally coherent practices.

Lyotard's development of the language-game had the dichotomous analytical effect, firstly, of drawing disparate knowledge systems together upon one field of analysis in order, secondly, to confirm their incommensurability. He concentrated his attention upon the language-games, firstly, of science, identified by the rules it embodies concerning the admissibility of evidence that is taken to constitute absolute proof, and, secondly, of narrative knowledge, which includes linguistic devices in its repertoire of

---

[127] A differend, as distinguished from a litigation, is defined by Lyotard as a case of conflict between (at least) two parties that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. Applying a single rule of judgement to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (Lyotard 1988: xi).

[128] The language-game first appears in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Grammar* (1974) as part of a discussion about ostensive definition (Stern 1995: 21). The story goes that Wittgenstein was passing a field on which a game of football was being played when the idea struck him that language constituted nothing so much as the playing of games with words (Malcolm 1958: 65). From this initial observation, Wittgenstein went on to develop his concept of the language-game as an aid to thinking about language *in situ* and a means to illustrate – metaphorically – his ideas about the contextual dependency of meaning. An extensive list of language-games is to be found in *Philosophical Investigations I* §23 (1963), in which work Wittgenstein extends linguistic activities beyond the simple operations he had outlined at *I* §7, such as giving and obeying orders, to include the following, more involved, transactions: describing the appearance of an object or giving its measurements; constructing an object from a description; reporting an event; speculating about an event; forming and testing an hypothesis; presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams; telling a joke; translating from one language into another; asking; thanking; greeting; and praying (Kenny 1973: 165).

justifications (as mentioned above) that are rejected out of hand by science (Williams 1998: 30-31). The separate rule-sets that inform these two language-games govern all knowledge acquired by their players; it is impossible, in Lyotard's schema, to recognise the existence or judge the validity of scientific/theoretical knowledge on the basis of narrative/practical knowledge and *vice versa*: the relevant criteria for judgement are – if not incommensurable – then, at the very least, completely different. What is more, the mutual relations of the separate game-players are agonistic in nature for, on Lyotard's view, 'to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing' (Lyotard 1984: 10).

Lyotard considered game-like features which could be drafted to illustrate metaphorically his ideas about the interrelation of linguistic narratives. These can be summed, very generally, as follows:

- There can be no one common set of rules, norms and values that operates across separate games. It is impossible to reconcile two different language games in such a way as to do justice to both of them. For, how can the rules of – say – baseball be judged against those of – say – chess?
- Moves in a game invite counter-moves on the part of players alternating between the roles of sender or addressee.
- But 'everyone knows that a countermove that is merely reactional is not a "good" move'.
- As do all systems, games rely upon the novelty supplied by new and unexpected moves to combat their own entropy.
- Games are associated with competition, generally involving winners and losers, and affecting the balance of social power.
- Playing games is a pleasurable experience.
- Games involve an element of choice: to play one game is not to play another; to participate wholeheartedly in one game is to reject, if only tacitly, the chance for similar involvement in others (Lyotard 1984: 10ff & cf. Bird 2002).

Scientists such as Richard Dawkins certainly demonstrate the rectitude of Lyotard's observation that the players of language-games are mutually agonistic for, in relation to science, they degrade non-scientific or narrative knowledge by declaring it the preserve of people with a somehow substandard mentality: savage; primitive; underdeveloped; backward; alienated; composed of opinions, customs, authority, prejudice, ignorance, ideology (Sarup 1993: 136 ff.). But in doing this they fail to recognise that, as Lyotard pointed out, science itself relies upon narrative to communicate and advertise its products, to persuade the layperson of its worth and, concomitantly, of non-science's worthlessness. The linguistic deadlock that occurs at the limits of the spheres of

influence of all rule-based knowledge systems was expressed by Lyotard as the *differend*; excellent instances of this phenomenon are to be found in Dawkins's attacks upon astrology which, too numerous to cite individually, are exemplified by an article entitled *The Real Romance in the Stars*, published in the *Independent on Sunday* (1995), which he concludes with the dramatic question 'why, actually, are professional astrologers not jailed for fraud?'. The chasm between rival truth-claims, (represented here by Dawkins's science on the one hand and astrology on the other), which lack a common measure of justice or a universal truth-standard resembles, on Lyotard's view, the Kantian sublime in being expressible only in terms of analogy (Lyotard 1988).[129]

ASTROLOGY AS A LANGUAGE-GAME

On the occasions that I have asked philosophically aware astrologers whether they thought there was any mileage in describing astrology as a language-game, they have invariably responded 'oh, you've been reading Mike Harding's work, then'. For, within this community of individuals defined by their separate 'takes' on astrology, to display a passing interest in Wittgenstein is to be directed without further ado to Mike Harding,[130] who has made the astrological language-game his own, and who says of himself:

> I've read a certain amount of traditional astrology, and I know the basics of Hindu and Aztec work, but for me it's important to put astrological ideas and techniques within some clear philosophical framework. I see astrology as a language. For myself, I place it within ideas stemming equally from Heidegger and Wittgenstein. Too often astrologers think that somehow we can exist without reference to anyone else, as if astrology were some kind of objective truth. Here we risk becoming just like Richard Dawkins.

---

[129] An analogous illustration of the postmodern condition could be a city divided into quarters:

> Each quarter has its laws (language game) and these laws are what give it its identity. For example, one quarter could have laws based on property, another could have laws based on class and another could have laws based on strength and sex. Legal problems arise in the city in cases where a 'crime' takes place on the boundary between quarters. In such cases a judgement according to the laws of one quarter will offend the inhabitants of another. What makes this city postmodern is that there is no way of avoiding these conflicts between quarters; neither is there any way of resolving the conflicts in a manner that is acceptable to all the sides. In the postmodern city, there is no possibility of a benevolent ruler uniting all the quarters under one just law. Instead, in order to bring peace to the city, such a ruler will have to subjugate some or all of the quarters. (Williams 1998: 28)

However, this illustration fails to address the fact that people actually inhabit, figuratively speaking, two or more quarters simultaneously. For all his recognition and celebration of difference, Lyotard fails ultimately to allow that individuals are generally proficient in more than one game, demonstrating a joyful facility to 'doublethink', the very idea of which was so alarming to George Orwell (1989), its creator, and – so it seems – to the majority of commentators upon the current epistemological condition.

[130] See appendix A.

(07/2006: http://www.skyscript.co.uk/harding.html)

Not that Mike Harding has restricted himself to philosophising about astrology; in addition to his current work as an existentialist psychotherapist and lecturer in psychotherapy and counselling, he has in the past done a fair bit of astrological business work, particularly in the area of research for market trading. He reports that he doesn't do this at present because he finds it too time-consuming, but he recounts an instance when, in 1989 and a few months before the crash in British housing prices of that year, he warned a property developer client of his that the market would soon suffer a significant fall. Heeding his advice, his client got out of the market. Admitting to being surprised by the extent of the crash which ensued, which he had not foreseen, Harding notes that his apposite astrological advice had saved his client 'millions, even tens of millions' (Phillipson 2000: 54-55).

Delivering a lecture entitled *Astrology as a Language Game* at the first conference hosted by The Sophia Centre at Bath Spa University, Mike Harding summarised the later Wittgenstein's relativist concepts of language for the benefit of his audience before asserting that:

> There can be little doubt that astrology is a language game. It has its own rules, and ways of talking about life and the world that are relatively consistent and coherent. Indeed it is quite a remarkable example of a language game, in the fact that its rules allow for a word to have a multiplicity of meanings, where one is not favoured over another. For example, Lee Lehman's *Book of Rulerships* (2000) lists nearly six hundred objects, situations or concepts that can be signified by the Moon. (Harding 2004: 173)

In the terms of Harding's thesis it follows that, if astrology is a language-game, then the symbols of a chart are primarily descriptive, and not representational, devices. So what is happening, he asks, when astrologers trace connections between apparently quite different descriptive phenomena, such as planets and events, house placements and character traits? In answer, he updates an example of Wittgenstein's and asks his audience to imagine a moment in a piece of music: this can be expressed by the way a conductor moves his hands; by the way the pianist touches the keys; by the arrangement of particles on magnetic tape; by a pattern of shapes on the musical score; by a sequence of binary digits on a CD; by the movement of air coming from loudspeakers; by the flickering of dials on a music console. If all of these capture the same moment of

music, then it must be the case that they have something uniquely in common. We cannot say what, precisely, this is. But we can know what connects them: it is our perception or, as Wittgenstein would have put it, it is human thought.

But, the temptation to which astrologers often fall prey, Harding warns, is to conceptualise the glyphs of a horoscope as being somehow different from the everyday words into which their encoded meanings must sooner or later be translated: practitioners tend to treat the chart as a second-order device; as a map of something else which it represents and to which it stands in some kind of relation. Astrologer Kirk Little[131] confirms Harding's view in this respect, suggesting that it is common for people new to the study of astrology to believe that the horoscope accurately mirrors outer reality; indeed, he admits that this attitude may even be necessary if they are to progress in their studies (Little 2006: 46). But, over time, Little observes that students come to understand that there are no neat one-to-one correlations between the symbols whose multivalent meanings they are learning and physical phenomena in the world. This realisation can lead some of them to abandon their astrological studies; others come, on Little's view, to accept and understand the metaphorical nature of astrological symbols.

I would take issue with Little's rather too theoretical conception of the astrology classroom: if they must, most students of practical astrology will reluctantly substitute for 'real' physical phenomena the authority of the subject's tradition and what they conceive to be its historically tried-and-tested laws; but the first tentative moves from actual to metaphorical frames of reference are, in my experience and observations discussed in chapter four, neither easily made nor publicly acknowledged. It is, in fact, their attachment to the subject's supposedly empirically verifiable source data which lures astrologers into what Harding identifies as the danger zones which attend their claim that:

> Their language game uses the names of the planets and signs, not for reasons of poetic whimsy, but *because the positions of the planets dictate how the language is to be used.* (Harding 2004: 175 original emphasis)

[131] See appendix A.

Put plainly, the empirical nature of their primary data lures astrologers into getting carried away by the language of their art to the extent that they attempt to transform horoscopic descriptions of the world and its possible partial meanings into causal astrological principles that govern that world.

Granted we are by nature meaning-makers; as considered above, we make sense of apparently unrelated events by imposing (often a narrative) structure on them (Botella 2000: 5, Sarbin 1986). But Harding cautions that we should not forget that our meanings are, of necessity, the products of our perceptions; for astrologers to go beyond narration and 'seek a causal relationship between a planet and an event it describes is to betray the fact that they are substantially misguided about the nature of language' (Harding 2004: 177).[132] Language does not, after all, cause what it describes; and astrology is a language which no more goes around causing things to happen than the telephone directory causes our phone bills to arrive; it's our use of the directory (and the phone) that does that. Why, he asks, should the language of astrology be described as fraudulent because it fails to explain itself in causal terms, when this requirement is not expected of the everyday language of – say - road signs? If we stop when we see a sign that says 'Halt', this is not because it possesses magical influences that cause us to reach for the brake pedal, but because we know what the sign signifies.

In Harding's opinion, to say that the language of astrology describes but does not cause what it describes is as far as any philosophically inclined astrologer can be expected to go in explaining how her particular language works. She may be able to show – not *how* – but *that* it works, but this is quite another matter. As Patrick Curry[133] (in Willis & Curry 2004: 113 & 125) puts it, astrological divination is unconcerned, in its own terms, with questions of 'how?'; those who experience what he calls its 'domain of wonder' are content to assert that 'it is so!', an observation – 'concerning the fact that the world *is*' – which, he reminds us, was made by Wittgenstein, whose later philosophy

---

[132] Centuries before Wittgenstein's linguistic philosophy, and Lyotard's development of it, Plotinus had objected in principle to the idea that planets could cause things to happen:

> … Countless myriads of living things are born and continue to be: to minister continuously to every separate one of these; to make them famous, rich, poor, lascivious … . What kind of life is this for the stars, how could they possibly handle a task so huge? (Plotinus 1991: 80, cited by Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 116 & Phillipson 2002)

[133] See appendix A.

is invoked by Harding when he tells astrologers that there is nowhere they can go outside of language to explain the nature or mechanism of the attribution of meaning: all attempts to do so can only involve the impossible exercise of expressing the attributes of one language-game in the terms of another (Harding 2004: 179). But, properly played, Harding recommends the astrological language-game audaciously as:

> A unique form of speaking about the world, in which mathematics and poetry coexist. Its richness and complexity open up the possibilities of language in ways that no other form of thinking – no other language game – appears to match. But, like all language games, there is a deep mystery in how we come to understand it. As Wittgenstein put it: 'but how can a language game become clear … God only knows. – One day it starts doing something'. (Harding 2004: 179-180 citing Wittgenstein 1988: 112)

This is not to promote some postmodern idyll, Harding assures us, in which all is relative and everything is a matter of opinion. For, if something is to make sense to us, it must after all exist in the world: it should appear coherent with what and how things are. It would be no good making up a language of – say - colours if there were no colours in the world. It is the nature of the world that ultimately dictates the rightness or wrongness of our ideas, and confirms or denies the appropriateness of our language. Speaking on this point, astrologer Demetra George[134] has highlighted the fact that historically, astrology's symbols have demonstrated 'a remarkable capacity to adapt themselves to the norms and paradigms of the particular culture that is looking for meaning through the use of astrology', a facility that has ensured astrology's survival down the ages (George in Nasser 2004: 80). As Harding puts it, the astrological language is a rich one which has been tried and tested over many centuries. It is also unique, on his view, in having the rules for its use set by mathematics: every aspect of its framework is dictated by a precise point in an agreed system of co-ordinates (Harding 2003).

Despite his acknowledgement of astrology's close ties to precise mathematical points, Mike Harding's astrological language-game thesis is too relativistic by far for the numbers of practitioners who, as discussed in previous chapters, remain wedded - against all odds - to the notion that their practice is, if not scientific, then at the very least proto-scientific in nature; it is highly unlikely that astrologers of this way of

[134] See appendix A.

thinking would approve of his Wittgensteinian arguments concerning the primacy of contextual linguistics over astrological materialism. Others of his critics would be justified in suggesting that, while his thesis is fine as far as it goes and successful at demarcating a field for astrology that is fenced off entirely from science's, it is inclusive of sufficient types of human linguistic communication to be barely useful as anything other than a pleasing descriptive trope. While it attempts to establish an analytically defensible base for relativist and linguistically oriented astrological practices, it does not help those who wish to judge between separate styles or manifestations of the astrological language-game. Harding might boast the six hundred or so objects, situations or concepts that can be signified by the Moon, but he fails to explain how a player of these games chooses between them in the process of construing the meanings of individual charts, or indeed determines the words in which she couches these.

Liz Greene addresses the tricky subject of meaning, its expression and its definition within the language-game of astrology, from a more practical angle than Harding's, when she asserts that astrologers' levels of literacy need to be high if they are to understand and communicate the riches of astrology's symbolism; (the same could be said of those who wish to inform their practice with the philosophy of Wittgenstein and Heidegger, as Harding has done). Greene bemoans the impoverishment of vocabulary as well as the truly awful grammar she encounters, both as a general social trend and one demonstrated by today's astrologers, some of whom, she is shocked to relate, 'can't even spell Jupiter'. 'You can have an intuition or a feeling about a planetary placement', she says, 'but how are you going to explain this to the client if you can't even put sentences together properly?'. Astrology, she warns, is:

> A beautiful language, but it's easy to get lazy with it, both in thinking and in communicating. You get around a bunch of astrologers, and someone says, 'How are you today?' and someone else replies, 'Oh, Saturn's on my Moon'. We all think we know what that means, but each person might mean something quite different by it. (Greene in Gunzburg & Greene 2005: 48-49)

But so it is, surely, with all language-games that rely heavily upon metaphor? Astrologer Steven Forrest[135] asserts that the act of interpretation of a horoscope is poetic and metaphorical in nature; astrologers should resemble poets rather than mathematicians, he asserts, given the fact that a birthchart is more like a poem than an

[135] See appendix A.

equation.[136] Now that technology does the calculation which all prospective astrologers had once to master as a preliminary to interpretation, Forrest celebrates the fact that the way has at long last been cleared for people with linguistic sensitivity, but only rudimentary arithmetical skills, to take up the practice of astrology (Forrest in Nasser 2004: 92-93). Although, whether the clients of such practitioners are always appreciative of their literary sensitivity is doubtful. 'Why do I bother?' asked an astrologer of my acquaintance, complaining that an elaborate and beautifully presented chart interpretation she had executed for a friend, upon request, had hardly been acknowledged by its recipient. Answering herself, she admitted that it was the process of interpretation of a chart's pattern of symbols that she revelled in; her client's reaction was actually of secondary importance. While walking her dogs each day, she enjoyed the process of sifting potential interpretations of a chart's symbolism in her efforts to achieve a pleasingly worded synthesis. Working out the 'key' to a horoscope was better than puzzling out 'who dun it' in an Agatha Christie mystery, she told me. By education a linguist and an interpreter, she felt that this task played to her strengths; lacking the confidence to describe herself as a creative originator, she was nevertheless secure in her abilities to interpret and translate given symbols.

But even though the quality of their poetic realisation of horoscopic symbolism may not always be fully appreciated, astrologers' linguistic flights of fancy must be readily decipherable to their clients and students, and true to their life experiences, if they are to be satisfactory players of at least one of the astrological language-games available to them and avoid the pitfalls of solipsism and private language construction. The more advanced of these games will at times involve their contestants in abandoning the device of the horoscope to recognise what might be termed free-floating or chart-free astrological symbolism in their everyday lives; for some imaginative practitioners, who move the mode of their craft beyond metaphor towards metonym, astrology's imagery becomes so real that it manifests itself in the material world as ontological confirmation of its existence. For these individuals the heavenly symbols of the zodiac, all animate bar one (Libra, the Scales), and the pantheon of planetary deities, with their all-too-human foibles, leave tantalising traces of their footsteps upon the earth. Real and

[136] Cf. Gaston Bachelard's interesting discussion of the philosophy of poetry and the poetics of space (Bachelard 1969).

interactive to those who have acquired a fluency in astrology's linguistic concepts, these images weave themselves into the fabric of such practitioners' experience in a manner described by astrologer Rafael Nasser[137] (2004: 477) as 'a form of semantic geometry'.

Putting together a satisfying piece of astrological symbolism, such practitioners might chuckle to themselves at its descriptive aptness; later, they will be tempted to share their recognition of astrology's imagery erupting into the world with fellow linguists. I will record a few examples of this phenomenon starting with a presentation I attended, entitled *The Cock and the Chameleon*, at the Hampstead venue used by The Company of Astrologers. It had been advertised that lecturers Patrick Curry and Maggie Hyde[138] would that evening explore the symbolism encapsulated by two literary examples of divination which the former had cited in a paper he had delivered to the Sophia Project's sponsored conference, entitled *The Imaginal Cosmos*, which had been hosted by the *Cosmology and Divination* group at the University of Kent (UKC) a couple of months earlier.

THE COCK AND THE CHAMELEON

The first of the two stories with which Patrick Curry had illustrated his presentation to the conference had been taken from Karen Blixen's autobiographical account of her life in early colonial Kenya, entitled *Out of Africa*. It concerned an omen which had seemingly manifested itself in response to Blixen's desperate urge, on waking one morning, to 'get up and look for a sign'; she had fervently hoped for a symbolic revelation of the central cosmic principle which she felt sure must underlie her undeniably tragic life experiences of that time. Coming out of her house immediately after making her plea for such an omen to manifest itself, she immediately witnessed a confrontation between a big white cockerel and a little grey chameleon: Blixen relates how she watched with horror as the cock plucked out the chameleon's tongue; knowing that the latter could not live without its tongue, Blixen picked up a big stone and killed the creature (Dinesen 1992: 379). Curry's second example, also an autobiographical account of the manifestation of what was perceived to be an omen, had been Val Plumwood's graphic description of her near-fatal struggle with a saltwater crocodile in

[137] See appendix A.
[138] See appendix A.

the Kakadu National Park, Australia; with the reflection of hindsight, Plumwood remembers the horrific incident to have been presaged by a demonstration of immanent crisis – 'a shout of danger' – in the form of a striking rock formation which had caught her attention (Plumwood 1996: 33 ff.).

Patrick Curry had originally presented these two accounts, in his UKC conference lecture, as examples of divinations in his definition of that term. His paper had been written, both as a critique of what he argued were the disenchanting tendencies inherent within neo-Platonism, and as an exposition of the latter cosmology's philosophical inadequacy as an explanatory framework for astrological practice and philosophy. Divinatory customs, he had explained, displayed certain 'family resemblances', in the Wittgensteinian sense of that term, but most of these were seemingly antipathetic to a Platonic worldview: for, in stark contrast to the latter, such practices were pluralist, local, sensuous, *metic*; they invoked what Roy Willis has called 'ecological spirits' of place; they had recourse to animistic and polytheistic pantheons (Willis in Willis & Curry 2004). And the symbolically rich, enchanted and chthonic worlds within which diviners worked had been impoverished, Curry had told the conference assembly, by the introduction of hierarchical and monist conceptions of the universe. If the former were described as Homeric in nature, then the latter could be attributed to the directly contrary influence of Plato.

Introducing the two speakers to a larger than average Hampstead audience, Geoffrey Cornelius[139] asserted that it 'really mattered what relationship we astrologers have with Plato'. Patrick Curry spoke first and warmed immediately to a favourite theme of his: the Platonic provenance of the developmental process that Weber had described as the disenchantment of the world. The rot had set in, he told his audience, with the privileging of *logos* over *mythos* and *doxa*, a preference which had informed the Enlightenment project as a whole. Maggie Hyde intervened in order to attempt, as she put it, to rescue a form of ultimate truth which did not discount the authority of diviners working within a pluralist world: universal truth was best described, she told us, as a Jungian *unus mundus*, imagined in the form of a *mandala* and experienced in a participationist fashion by individuals as the phenomenon described by Jung as

[139] See appendix A.

synchronicity (cf. Hyde 1992: 121 ff. & 2004). She presented the diviner as a *bricoleur*, in Lévi-Strauss's sense of the term, who constructed and re-constructed meanings which exceeded the range and scope of their given components in that they reached beyond the local and the situated to afford a glimpse of the bigger picture which could otherwise be described in terms of a unifying, overarching truth.

In a practical demonstration of the *bricoleur's* craft, Maggie Hyde proceeded to trace and embroider, within Curry's two previously given examples of divination, a symbolic rendition of his core argument which far exceeded the role of mere illustration for which he had first – and randomly - chosen them. By means of Hyde's practice of *bricolage*, the significance of the cockerel was stretched beyond its implication in the omen invoked by Blixen to represent, in a wider-reaching metaphor, the Plato of Curry's lecture; in this secondary symbolic take on the story, the chameleon was recast as *metis* with which Patrick had contrasted Plato's philosophy. The big, white 'cock of the walk', the one male among a flock of subservient female hens had, in Blixen's account, plucked out the tongue of the little chameleon who, dappled, camouflaged, low to the ground and archetypically adaptable to her surroundings, had been unlucky enough to cross his path. Having extended Blixen's two creatures' confrontation to illustrate two opposing themes in modern metropolitan philosophy which might be described as intellectual monism and instinctual pluralism, Maggie Hyde wondered if Plumwood's crocodile could not be employed as a metaphorical agent to synthesise the original pair. The crocodile was well suited to play this part, she told us, for it was a liminal creature who, in the myths of ancient Egypt, had reportedly been portrayed as having an interest in stealing humankind's magic and knowledge for its own purposes (cf. Naydler 1996).

This performance reflected Maggie Hyde at her imaginative best; she is one among a handful of astrologers who never cease to inspire me with their lyrically poetic, and wittily apposite, symbolism. She had discovered, within the two examples chanced upon by Patrick Curry to illustrate and lighten a formal academic lecture, a symbolic rendition of the opposing principles demarcated by the central argument of his thesis. In his consideration of poetic imagery, Gaston Bachelard seems to speak of instances such as these when he asserts that 'because of its novelty and its action, the poetic image has an entity and a dynamism of its own' which is not the subject of an inner

thrust any more than it is directly referable, by cause, to an unconsciously-perceived archetypal image or to an echo of the past. Rather, it is referable, on Bachelard's view, 'to a direct *ontology'* (Bachelard 1969: xii ff., original emphasis). Which accurately describes the interaction of those practitioners, for whom it manifests materially, with the astrological symbolism which erupts, bidden and unbidden, in their worlds. As the first of three examples I will give of this phenomenon, the following story was chuckled over, in like-minded astrological circles, towards the end of 2004.[140]

CRAB ROYALE

In the run-up to the US presidential election in the November of that year, Jessica Adams[141], (a media astrologer who lives in England and Australia, and writes columns for Vogue in Australia and South Korea, and for Cosmopolitan in Britain), was preparing her regular four-weekly predictive radio show for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Guessing that she would be asked to forecast the outcome of the forthcoming election, she looked at both candidates' natal astrology and cast the Tarot cards, (which she generally uses to corroborate her astrological judgements) in order to make a judgement between them.[142] Still undecided between Bush and Kerry and urgently needing to make a definite prediction in time for her broadcast, she found herself compelled to try a little bibliomancy using a copy of the *South Beach Diet Cookbook* which just happened to be at hand.[143] (As she explained it, the diet wasn't

---

[140] This account was extracted from an e-correspondence between Garry Phillipson, PhD research student at the Sophia Centre, BSU, and the professional media astrologer Jessica Adams. Its use for general research purposes was cleared by both and copied to me on 10/08/2005.

[141] See appendix A.

[142] See appendix B.

[143] Jessica Adams was not alone among practitioners who were undecided between the two presidential candidates, in terms of their astrology. 'Astrologers are completely divided over who will win', declared astrologer Shelley Ackerman before the election, after canvassing the opinions of a number of her peers for the website *Beliefnet*.
(06/2005: http://us.rediff.com/news/2004/oct/25arun.htm+bush+kerry+astrology&hl=en)
On 19th November 2004, the British astrologer Adrian Duncan, (see appendix A), wrote:

> Subsequent to the November 2nd election in the US, a lot of astrologers have gone into hiding, because a large majority of them predicted a win for John Kerry. (John who?) I had been predicting for two years that Bush would lose – *mea culpa* – but was it really because I could not stand his swagger? It is not wise to make predictions about subjects in which one is emotionally involved. … Obviously predicting an election is never going to be an exact science; if it were, then no one would vote. In their attempt to find a winner, astrologers use a myriad of very different techniques to reach their conclusions; when they get it right they naturally see it as a vindication of their techniques. With a presidential election getting it right could simply be luck, so it's the argumentation that's important, and the precision of detail. … One astrologer who got it right this time was Lee Lehmann, who predicted a win, based on statistical methods, in *The Mountain Astrologer*. She writes: 'the fact is, attempting to call the election based on transits,

working anyway, and she was about to donate the book to a local charity shop; so, it was lying on a table close by.)

She rifled the recipe book's pages asking aloud 'who's going to win the election?' and landed on a recipe for *Crab Royale*. Seeing this, she laughed with recognition at the aptness of the astrological symbolism she had invoked. As she described him, George W. Bush was, after all, probably the most famous Sun-sign Cancerian on the planet; in the astrological sense of that word, he is a *crab.* Furthermore, Bush's natal Sun conjoins that of the USA itself; inaugurated on the 4th July 1776, the United States of America is also a sun-sign Cancerian or a *crab*.[144] But, Bush also has a stellium of planets (Mercury, Pluto and Venus) in Leo, which is the ascending sign of his horoscope; in traditional, rather than Sun-sign, astrological terminology, Bush could be described as a Leo, after the sign of his Ascendent, and Leo's ruler – the Sun in Cancer – called the 'Lord' of his horoscope. Bush's chart is dominated by the signs of Leo, which denotes *royalty,* and Cancer, the *crab*. Jessica Adams read the omen from the cookery book; in her words, 'everything added up'. George W. Bush would be the next President of the USA. Immediately, she posted the prediction on her website and went live with it on ABC radio. History vindicated her prognostication, acquired with the aid of horoscopy backed up by the random seeking and finding of omens in the real world, expressed in terms of astrological symbolism.

Had Kerry been declared the victor, would she have shared this divinatory experience and method with her peers? Probably not: it is – of logical necessity – correspondences and sympathies which command a diviner's attention and underpin any epistemological system which allows that useful knowledge can originate in symbolic associations and

---

progressions and other such techniques to the natal chart is very subjective - and being subjective, is unfortunately subject to one's own personal biases'. So true.
(08/2005: http://www.world-of-wisdom.com/04_articles/2004/08_election.htm+bush+kerry+astrology&hl=en)

[144] Astrologers will tell you that the inauguration of the United Sates was almost certainly astrologically elected, given that a number of the signatories to the Declaration of Independence, being Freemasons, would have had a rudimentary familiarity with astrology. There is, however, apparently no documentary evidence to support this and, perhaps more tellingly, the chart has Mercury in Retrograde motion, an anathema to any electional astrologer worth her salt. The chart most often used now was published first by Ebenezer Sibley, an eighteenth century English astrologer, Freemason and self styled 'astro-philosopher'. It is known as the Sibley chart, (see appendix B). (Cf. Campion (2004) and Spencer (2000).)

linguistic tropes. Divination is assessed for its accuracy on an entirely *post hoc* basis; how could it be otherwise assessed? A pair of personal anecdotes will serve to illustrate this, and demonstrate how the recognition of astrological symbolism can enrich present observations and experiences as much – probably more – than it prognosticates future events. In diviners' terminology, signs and omens can be both bidden and unbidden. Jessica Adams's *Crab Royale* was a bidden omen. The next two personal examples record what might be better described as unbidden confirmatory descriptions, in astrological form, of my own life experiences. In both cases there were neither present decisions, nor future choices, to be made on the basis of the apposite symbolism that had erupted in my everyday world.

GREAT UNCLE SATURN

The first of these two incidences took place some months after I had unexpectedly acquired responsibility for my aged Great Uncle following the sudden death of my Great Aunt. All the astrologers whom I encountered around this time, whatever their individual styles of practice, told me that I should look to Saturn and its baleful influence in my chart, both natally and by progression and current transit, to account for this turn in my life. (Saturn being the astrological significator of grand/father figures, old age, responsibilities, duties, hardships and privations.) I had been living with the all-consuming responsibility for his care for around a year when, suffering from a bout of pneumonia, my Great Uncle was admitted to his local hospital in Swindon. Following diagnosis, he was allocated a bed in the ward specialising in respiratory problems. Transporting the frail old man, lying in his hospital bed, by lift to the top of the new healthcare complex, the porter explained that all the wards on the floor to which we were heading had been named after the planets. Despite the gravity of the situation, I couldn't help but chuckle; I had, of course, anticipated that the old man would be admitted to Saturn's domain, for this was surely where he properly belonged. And a passer-by might have wondered why I was laughing audibly as we pushed the ninety-five year old through the double doors of Saturn ward. A rationalist would, of course, be entirely justified in asserting that the astrological associations of this episode arose out of nothing other than a twin set of coincidences: firstly, the wards could have been differently named; secondly, given that they were named for the planets, my Uncle could have been admitted to a ward named for another planet that would have

demonstrated no pleasing astrological correspondence; in truth, rather the reverse. In either of these cases, I would have recognised no astrological association and missed out on what I can best describe as the 'chuckle factor' which accompanies the realisation that one is living in a cosmos which, symbolically perceived, is an interactive one; for, by way of incidents such as this, it appears to connive at signalling some kind of recognition or confirmation of one's own, or of a client's, family member's or friend's, petty individual experiences.

MEETING JOVE

My second example records a 'chuckle-factor' I experienced when, encountering an individual for the first time, I instinctively classified him in astrological terms which, when I subsequently drew his natal horoscope, were satisfyingly corroborated. As I remember the incident, I had been delayed on my way to an academic symposium with the result that the first speaker was already reading his paper when I walked into the seminar room. 'Oh', I remember thinking, 'there's Jove up there on the podium'. (The speaker was a man of generous proportions with a deep, mellifluous voice; a warm laugh seemed always to hover just behind his words, however serious his subject.) Later, having been introduced to him, I discovered that – in true Jovial manner – the speaker was a devotee of a colourful spiritual practice extraneous to his more rational academic pursuits. I observed that this practice was associated with two icons: one an archer mounted on a horse; the other an eagle. As the former of these images – in astrological terminology – denotes Sagittarius, of which Jupiter is the diurnal ruler, I anticipated that my initial observation that this was a Jovial individual wasn't far from the mark. But, I was at a loss as to how I might fit the eagle, dual symbol - with the scorpion – of Scorpio, into the astrological picture. When I got back home to my computer, I calculated his birthchart with the details he had readily given me, at my request, and experienced the full 'chuckle factor' when I saw that this Jovial character did indeed have Sagittarius as the rising, or ascending, sign of his horoscope; in traditional terminology, Jupiter was the 'Lord of his nativity'. Strengthening the planet's significance still further in the chart, Jupiter had just risen above the horizon as this baby was born under the fortunate beams of this, the 'greater benefic' of astrology's heavenly bodies but, the Ascendant being in the early degrees of the ninth zodiacal sign of Sagittarius, Jupiter was in the eighth sign of Scorpio, the eagle!

To get maximum enjoyment from the chuckle factors which accompany such perceived eruptions of astrological symbolism in the material world, the resultant ontological corroboration must be shared with other players of this language game. (Which might be described as a game within a game, given that a number of people trained as mainstream psychological astrologers shy away from the notion that astrological symbolism might float free from the concerns of the human psyche and erupt in the 'real' world.) For not all those who describe themselves as astrologers demonstrate either a facility – or, for that matter, an inclination – to acknowledge its symbolism beyond the confines of a horoscope. A number are fearful of extending astrology beyond the relatively comfortable relationship with the human subconscious and with the archetypes of depth psychology which their predecessors worked to achieve over the course of the twentieth century: the latter association, judged by the standards of a society obsessed with the project of individual development, allows the astrologer to retain some vestiges of respectability and even partial rationality; but, once astrology – its unruly deities and its multivalent symbolism – is celebrated by its native speakers for manifesting itself, unbidden, in the mundane, material world, then the practice becomes dangerously akin to those of a host of less intellectually and academically respectable omen readers and end-of-the-pier clairvoyants. Shorn of its connection with time, date and place, with physical astronomical data and with a resultant horoscope, astrology could not so easily present itself as a valuable counselling tool for psychotherapists which is in part empirically underwritten by the obvious physical causal effects of the Sun, the Moon and, by extension, the other planets and astrological phenomena upon our earthly phenomena. And it is, after all, with the horoscope that all students of astrology commence their relationship with the practice and start to learn its language. So, having given some consideration to language-games and the utility of Wittgenstein's metaphor for describing the poetics of astrological symbolism, I will move on to an ethnographic overview, firstly, of the ways in which these are taught and learned in practical terms and, secondly, of their treatment in the new postgraduate university programmes dedicated to the theoretical study of astrology.

CHAPTER NINE

LEARNING PRACTICAL ASTROLOGY

In the last chapters, I assessed astrology's status in relation to a range of theoretical terms which are used – for the most part by non-astrologers – to describe the subject. Arguing that it is a 'magico-religious' system of divination which can accurately, albeit with 'emic' resistance, be said to belong to the New Age, I reviewed astrology's marginal status in respect of religion and science; this problematises its categorisation and the ways in which its practitioners report their relations with it in terms of belief and/or knowledge. These relations often being likened to speaking a language, I considered, in the previous chapter, whether astrology can usefully be thought of as a language game. In this section, I will move away from the attribution of theoretical ascriptions to present a brief ethnographic overview of what goes on in the astrology classroom; reference data for the schools and courses mentioned below are listed in my earlier chapter entitled *Research Locales*. In the next section, I will report some of my experiences as an observer of the new astrology-related postgraduate university programmes.

GOING TO DAMASCUS BY WAY OF BRIGHTON PIER[145]

For the first three years of my astrological apprenticeship, my knowledge was shaped more or less exclusively by Sarah, my Hastings Adult Education Authority tutor. Sarah was at that time herself studying for the Faculty of Astrological Studies Diploma (DipFAstrolS) which she was awarded a couple of years later. Her teaching was supplemented by information I acquired from a random selection of books, and from observations gleaned from the horoscopes of those of my friends and relations brave enough to give me their birth data! I know now, although it was not at the time explained to me, that I was taught the so-called psychological style of astrology. I was still very much an astrological neophyte when I attended an event run by The Company of Astrologers (CoA) at a seafront hotel in Brighton with two of my fellow students from Hastings. At that time, it was customary for the CoA to run an annual residential weekend conference in Brighton; attendance would be in the region of fifty or so

[145] With apologies to G.K. Chesterton, who went to Bannockburn by way of Brighton Pier before – ultimately - going to Paradise by way of Kensal Green.
(06/2006: http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/G.K._Chesterton/8113)

enthusiasts for the subject. (In recent years, they have ceased to organise these events: 'thank goodness', sighed Maggie Hyde[146] and Pat Blackett[147] when I confirmed this with them recently, sharing a more positive take on the fact than I had expected them to.) I had – at best – a shaky hold of the basics of the craft as taught me by Sarah, the only teacher whom I had then encountered. My day in Brighton changed all that.

This was my first experience of being among astrologers who interacted confidently with lecturers whose material was pitched at their competent level of practice. I remember struggling to read the charts which were displayed on the overhead projectors: the graphics used by the CoA tutors were different from the ones with which I was familiar; so were certain technicalities of the charts shown and the astrological terminology in which these were couched. But participants' understanding was assumed; no general acknowledgements or explanations of different styles of horoscopic graphics, technicalities or terminology were offered for the benefit of students from different schools of astrological practice or the education of new students of the subjects such as myself. I know now that such explanations are never offered. Whatever the style used by a teacher or speaker, s/he will invariably imply that it is normative and present it as such; if references are made to other astrological methodologies or philosophies, they will more often than not be pejorative. But, I suspect the opacity of the material contributed to its magical appeal: I was entranced by the lyrical symbolism with which Pat Blackett presented the birth chart of Elizabeth Barrett Browning; I was similarly enchanted by her exposition of Vernon Wells's[148] interpretation of Vaslav Nijinsky's natal astrology.[149] My eyes were opened to the possibilities which astrology offers for expressing aspects of people's lives symbolically, in poetic and aphoristic styles, to those of its students who fuse a deep knowledge of the technicalities of its craft with a sympathy for metaphor and metonym. To someone such as myself, with a talent for discovering and remembering the inconsequential details of other people's lives, and an appreciation for the ways in

[146] See appendix A.
[147] See appendix A.
[148] See appendix A.
[149] See appendix B.

which poetry can summarise these in insightful shortcut forms, this treatment of the subject was bound to inspire further study![150]

I realised that I had not, until that day, grasped the full capabilities of astrology: I had been taught a 'lite' (*sic*) version which had been constructed at the expense of the rich and nuanced detail of the full 'professional' programme. I was inspired to go home and start that very evening to learn how to read charts the 'proper way', as I had heard and seen these astrologers doing with such fluent symbolism. My two Hastings classmates were perplexed by my proposal: I was putting myself in the way of a deal of unnecessary work, they objected. They were content to stick with the familiar version of astrology with which they had learned to delineate their own character traits and those of their family and friends: 'why fix what wasn't broken?' they asked. And, this was another thing I learned that day: most students of the subject want to learn only as much astrology as will give them local results, among family and friends and – overarchingly – explanations about themselves as individuals; a small number are sufficiently inspired to engage with its impressive tradition and widely varying methods. For the former group, I suspect that astrology is a means to an end, a lens with which to examine the stuff of life; for the latter, it becomes an end in itself, inseparably part of the substance of the cosmos. As astrologer Bernard Eccles[151] puts it, astrology is like piano-playing: while there are any number of people who are happy to listen to the instrument being played, there are fewer who play it a bit, and only a handful of people, in comparison, who have careers as concert pianists.

The day's session ended memorably, too. As a concluding exercise, delegates were paired up to practise some astrology. I found myself coupled with a seemingly competent astrologer in her late thirties; hesitating, despite her encouragement, to make facile neophyte pronouncements about her natal chart, I asked if she would look at a friend's horoscope that I happened to have with me (name and details removed). Telling me that she would be reluctant to say much about a third party's chart, she nonetheless looked at it long enough to worry out loud about my friend's current tendency to 'hit the bottle' more than was good for him. Now, it happened that this

[150] When I checked the veracity of my recollections with Pat Blackett recently, she prompted me to cite the Company of Astrologers' *Locating Significance* method of chart interpretation which she and Vernon Wells had used.

[151] See appendix A.

remark hit the nail squarely on the head: I was just then more than a little concerned about my friend's alcohol consumption, but would not have had the astrological expertise to discover a horoscopic significator for it in the current transits to his natal chart. And, here was this unknown practitioner unhesitatingly keying into the aspect of my friend's life uppermost in my mind at that time. When this kind of thing happens, it is impossible not to walk away wonderingly.

COLLECTING OCN CREDITS

Enthused by my Damascene experience, I pursued my astrological education at evening classes in Hastings with Sarah. Although the content of her courses was far from radical in astrological terms, Sarah – a newly re-married ex-single mother and tax inspector in her mid forties – had been innovative when it came to their design and structure. Having written a prospectus for a three-year programme of study, she had approached the University of Brighton with a proposal that they ratify it for inclusion in the Open College Network (OCN) scheme of qualifications which fell under its jurisdiction. She was successful in obtaining accreditation for her courses, subject to the external moderation of its astrological content by a FAS tutor. We, her first students, (numbering around ten, of whom only two were men and all but one were middle-aged), worked hard on our homework assignments and collected a clutch of OCN credits apiece, although it has to be said that we were more enthusiastic to support Sarah's educational initiative on behalf of astrology than ever we were to obtain formal qualifications for their own sake.

But her personal triumph on behalf of astrology proved to be short-lived: she had reckoned without the fact that her courses would attract insufficient interest from potential students and, after a few years, persistently low enrolment figures resulted in astrology's being removed from the Hastings Area Adult Education Authority prospectus. It has never been reinstated. Of those few people who wanted to learn astrology sufficiently to sign up and pay for courses in the subject, it turned out that the majority were not interested in working on coursework assignments at home, still less in collecting OCN credits. The fate of Sarah's courses was the first intimation I had that astrology, in the guise of a serious subject of study rather than a frivolous consumer commodity, was – contrary to popular opinion – actually in serious decline.

My second teacher was Jed, a newly professional astrologer in his late thirties, who had - coincidentally and independently of Sarah's working simultaneously towards the same goal - adapted the format of the courses he had been teaching for some time in the Adult Education sector (at Goldsmiths College in South London and in Brighton and Hove) in a bid to obtain OCN accreditation for a new programme of astrology classes at Eastbourne College of Arts and Technology. As it happened, his courses were granted OCN status at the same time as Sarah's. One would have thought that these two innovative astrological educators could have liaised with each other; indeed, the University of Brighton suggested that they moderate each other's courses and was probably puzzled by the negative manner in which Jed reacted to this idea being, from the outset, critical of Sarah's prospectus. Then, I was disappointed by the pair's failure to interrelate amicably. Now, I know that this is standard behaviour among astrological educators who, whether as individuals or as representatives of different schools of tradition, seldom see eye to eye on astrological matters.

The nature of astrological education exacerbates this phenomenon: students play apprentices to their tutors, who pass down their knowledge to them authoritatively; if the latter are well versed in the tradition of horoscopy and consummate astrologers, then they will command their students' respect. For astrology is difficult to do and, as neophytes begin to appreciate just *how* difficult, so their appreciation of their teachers' skills increases commensurately and relationships of considerable personal loyalty are engendered. This was first demonstrated to me when I expressed my intention of driving to Eastbourne each week, with a few of my original Hastings classmates, to join Jed's class. Our action threatened to split the original group of Sarah's students who had formed a small local society of astrological enthusiasts. Despite the fact that Sarah's classes were no longer running in Hastings, and that she had herself encouraged us to explore other astrology teachers' ways of doing things, we were treated as renegades who had crossed the lines to join the opposing forces. I was saddened by this early demonstration of the partisan nature of astrological tutelage that assumes apprenticeship to a single tutor or school of thought.

Over in Eastbourne, Jed's style proved to be very different from Sarah's, with which I had become accustomed. Whereas the latter's empathetic approach relied upon the

formation of a group trust which facilitated the articulation of the personal life experiences of individual class members, Jed's classroom manner was 'hip' and flippant. Unlike Sarah, he shared few personal details with us, and we only acquired his natal chart details clandestinely. He avoided the deep and meaningful in favour of the jokey and irreverent, but he was deadly serious about the way we should do things astrologically. He brooked no questioning of his choices of technique or judgement; he drilled his class of ten or so exclusively middle-aged, female students along the lines of methodological stages and formulae which he had developed specifically as aids to learning and practice. We were trained to interpret charts in terms of strict procedural steps. Questions concerning the philosophy which underpinned his practice were invariably dismissed with variations of the remark that the astrology which he was at pains to teach us 'just worked'. He mightn't be able to prove it for us, but he could demonstrate it in much the same way as he could demonstrate gravity despite being unequipped to prove its existence in formal terms. If pressed further, he would quote the adage from the Emerald Tablet of the *Hermetica* so beloved of astrologers, much translated but cited here in Madame Blavatsky's version as:

> What is below is like that which is above, and what is above is similar to that which is below to accomplish the wonders of the one thing. (Blavatsky 1976: 507).[152]

In fact, exchanges of this type are rarely heard in astrology classrooms. I might once have wondered how teachers of a contentious subject such as this would fend off sceptical students. But, it wasn't long before I realised that learning astrology is a hands-on, practical enterprise rather than an excuse for a prolonged theoretical debate: students who have paid their money and made their way to the classroom on a cold winter's evening want to learn practical astrology or they would have saved their cash and stayed at home in front of the telly; any who change their minds during the course will quietly drop away rather than attempt the futile exercise of dissuading the rest of the group from continuing their studies. There was a time when mathematically

---

[152] The writings attributed to *Hermes Trismegistus* and known collectively as the *Corpus Hermeticum* were believed, when they came to light in the middle ages, to date back to the days of Moses. But the classical scholar Isaac Casaubon demonstrated, in his *De Rebus sacris et ecclesiaticis exercitiones XVI* (1614), that the character of the Greek in which they were written dated most of the philosophical texts to around 300 CE. Nonetheless, they remained influential in alchemical and esoteric literature (Dobbs 1988: 183-184).

challenged students would have been among those who gave up in despair but, in this respect, things are different now.

DOING THE MATHS

Students who studied astrology before the advent of home computers and dedicated software programmes invariably report, as did an acquaintance of mine and sometime student of FAS founder Margaret Hone, 'taking for ever to learn how to calculate a chart, drawing it, and only then tackling the astrology necessary to attempt its interpretation'. For, the production of a chart had been an exercise in itself and the first task to be tackled by neophytes. Now that there are programmes that calculate charts instantly and interpret them too - albeit only on a basic, non-specific level known in the trade as cook-book style - things have changed.[153] I have heard experienced teachers such as Bernard Eccles, among many others, pointing out that the whole of what would have been the first year's astrology syllabus was now obsolete and tutors accustomed to starting with the technical, mathematical exercise of chart calculation were having instead to launch into symbolism from week one of their beginners' courses. On the positive side, the move away from maths has been fortuitous for it is generally agreed that today's students, frequently unequipped with the mathematical skills required for chart delineation, are put off learning astrology by the prospect of number-crunching. But, looked at realistically, the free availability of personal horoscopes to anyone with Internet access and a printer has coincided with a marked diminution in the numbers of students willing to invest their resources in learning how to calculate and draw charts for themselves. Although it would be simplistic to attribute any noteworthy decline in astrological education to just one single factor, I have heard Bernard Eccles and others regret that the advent of astrology programmes for home computers killed the popularity of astrology classes at a stroke just as astrologers' enthusiasm for operating

[153] The so-called cook-book style is common to all attempts to streamline and mass produce the art of chart interpretation by circumventing the necessity of involving synthesising human judgement. The astrological publicist, Alan Leo, pioneered a style of astrology which he hoped would be readily marketed and rapidly produced; more recently, computer programmers have built upon his early twentieth century mercantilist model. Breaking down horoscopic phenomena in much the same way teachers do for beginner level students, cook-book writers isolate the positions of Planets and chart angles in terms of the zodiac, the houses, and each other before writing a script for each variation. These separate interpretations will then be combined to suit a particular chart which might have, for example, the Sun in Aries (1), in the first house (2), conjunct the Ascendant (3), in trine aspect (4) with the Moon in Leo (5), in the fifth house (6). It is small wonder that this style of chart delineation can produce pages of bafflingly self-contradictory script.

Internet websites redirected much of the previous demand for personal consultations. Certainly, the traditions of astrological pedagogy have been altered for all time by the removal of the mathematical exercises which had constituted its primary learning stage since time immemorial.

Course rubrics have been altered accordingly but most schools require their students to demonstrate competency in chart calculation, (seemingly for tradition's sake only), because they otherwise accept and indeed recommend the use of computer software in everyday practice. When submitting my OCN assignments, I was required to prove that I could calculate a chart *without* recourse to computer software; the FAS will not pass its examination students from Modules Four to Five of its Diploma course before they have submitted an interpretative exercise based upon a manually calculated chart. But computer software has had a more subtle effect upon astrological practice than the simple removal of the need to do maths: when it took a few hours' thoughtful concentration to calculate and draw one, no astrological map would have been produced lightly; now, an astrologer can generate and print a wide range of possible charts, and technical reports of their constitutive elements, at the press of a button. The symbolism of each of these charts, however, remains as tantalisingly elusive as ever, although the temptation now is to look for its key in one after another variation upon the original conundrum, toggling between multiple astrological combinations displayed on the computer screen in preference to wringing the full potential from one primary image.

Kate raised the subject at the start of a Company of Astrologers Diploma Course I followed. Despite the fact that D1, *In-Depth Chart Interpretation*, had been advertised extensively in the astrological press, only four of us reported to the Philadelphia Association's Hampstead premises on a cold January evening for our first lesson. Making the best of the poor turnout, Kate welcomed her middle-aged female students and invited us to join her around the table of the first floor library; photographs of R D Laing looked benignly down upon our little group from the otherwise book-lined walls. 'How did we set about preparing our charts?', Kate had asked us. One student apologised that she '*just* printed her charts off', and Kate questioned why she should think that this procedure was somehow substandard. She recommended that we use computers to do our chart calculation, but then make hand-drawn copies and write up

their salient characteristics as brief reports along the lines of the CoA proformas designed for the purpose. I have heard a number of teachers advocating this pragmatic compromise between old and new methodologies as a means both of focusing attention upon a map's planetary imagery as it takes shape under the hand and of overcoming the temptation to produce multiple chart variations.[154] But astrologers having proved themselves to be so particularly technologically adept that it is now taken for granted that their traditional practices should be electronically assisted.

TELLING THE TIME

The marriage of astrology and the home computer, aside from proving the prescience of Arthur C. Clarke's (1973) Third Law (cited earlier) concerning advanced technology and magic, was graphically demonstrated to me when I sat in a lecture theatre at the University of York as a delegate of the annual conference of the Astrological Association of Great Britain. Its President, Roy Gillett,[155] was opening the proceedings from the rostrum while, behind him, an image of the astrological chart of the moment was projected from his laptop computer onto an overhead screen. The Ascending horoscopic zodiac sign clicked forwards with the passing seconds in reflection of 'real' time as Roy prevaricated, unwilling to declare the weekend event to have started ahead of his favoured chart for its inception. This was a public demonstration of astrologers' embrace of technological assistance, in this instance for the tricky business of election which, offering accuracy to the second at the touch of a keyboard, would not, I feel sure, have been sneezed at by a pre-modern astrologer working to provide his clients with this once most popular service. As with the calculation of individual charts, so with election: astrologers' computers have gone beyond relieving them of basic mathematical chores to enable them to indulge in horoscopic practices which they would not so lightly have attempted in pre-technological days.

---

[154] Sitting in the pub with a group of astrologers following an MA seminar at Bath Spa University, I told Bernard Eccles that a close friend of mine had died unexpectedly just two days earlier. Bernard, a professional astrologer who carries a palm-top computer loaded with astrological software, told me to sit down when I got home and draw my friend's natal chart, adding his last transits and progressions. 'The paper will be wet with your tears,' he said, 'as you see all the patterns coming together. Then, you will be able to say goodbye'.

[155] See appendix A.

The first evening class of the Faculty of Astrological Studies (FAS) Diploma Module Four programme I had enrolled on was scheduled to start at seven o'clock; accordingly, fifteen students assembled in the pleasant meeting room suite of St James's Church, Piccadilly. The class comprised four men and eleven women, seven of whom were aged under forty or so; only two of them seemed already to know each other, although I recognised a friend of a friend whom I had met socially. Our tutor, Liz, introduced herself: her style of astrology was exclusively psychological; she never did any horary work; she was one of the few astrologers who always used the Equal, as opposed to the Placidus, house system; oh, and her Moon was in Cancer.[156] As Liz checked off the names of her new students in the register, she kept one eye on the wall-clock; this first class must start at three and a half minutes past seven, she explained, and not at seven o'clock as scheduled. Waiting those few minutes would result in us having an altogether better chart for the initial meeting of our course. She projected this map and we saw that its Ascendant was 0.03 degrees of Virgo; the seven o'clock chart would have had 29 degrees of Leo rising, Liz told us, and this, she explained, was a degree which she particularly disliked.[157] Having procrastinated for three and a half minutes beyond its advertised starting time, Liz declared the first lesson to have begun.

I remember being puzzled when I first encountered the astrological practice of election. But, there are sufficient people in today's Western society who deem it important to initiate projects at auspicious astrological times to keep a number of professional electional practitioners in the business of choosing felicitous times for clients' weddings, business launches, book publications and the like. Being called upon to deliver a conference lecture, astrologers will often check the astrology of the proposed timetable before deciding whether to accept the invitation. When a selection of dates and/or times is offered to astrological lecturers, those with more favourable astrology will be taken first, so certain are astrologers that the quality of an enterprise will be reflected in the astrology of its initiation. But, by now, I have fully assimilated the doctrine of election and have been taught the rudiments of this tricky astrological skill

[156] The Moon is dignified in the sign of Cancer, which it rules. Were someone to have a Moon placed natally in Capricorn, the sign of its detriment, or in Scorpio, the sign of its fall, she would be unlikely, in my opinion, to broadcast the fact at first meeting with quite such panache.

[157] The twenty-ninth degree of each thirty-degree zodiacal section, being the last one of the sign, is sometimes called 'the dying degree' and is considered by some astrologers to be an inauspicious placement for a planet or an horoscopic angle.

by professional practitioners who, offering the service to their clients, assume both the fact of its useful existence and students' acceptance of this fact.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

The second FAS lesson started as scheduled, it being only the first session of a course which bears the significance for the entire programme, and Liz introduced a favourite exercise of astrologers: matching world events and current affairs – physical and political – with their astrology. This goes beyond the astrology of the personalities of politicians and individuals in the news and introduces the charts of things that happen in the world and the countries or nation states in which they occur. Known as mundane astrology, this branch of the practice uses commonly – though, this being astrology after all, not invariably – agreed horoscopes calculated for the time and place of the political unit's or institution's inception. Having been assessed - in some cases - by generations of practitioners, the charts of nations and organisations serve as constants for comparison with the astrology of relevant current events and the nativities of individuals pertinent to them. Beginners are not generally familiarised with mundane astrology until their teachers judge them to be fairly comfortable with the basics of natal chart interpretation. When first showing the chart of an institution or nation, tutors will sometimes invite students to comment on it in the assumption that it is a person's horoscope to get the group thinking and discussing before introducing them to the notion that entities other than human individuals also have horoscopes. I was in a class of Jed's when he put the United Kingdom's chart on the overhead projector and, thinking it was the horoscope of an historical person, we pooled our nascent interpretation skills and concluded that this was not someone with whom we would happily share a railway carriage! Now, it could be argued that the concept that a nation has a chart in just the same way as do each of its citizens is one which takes some getting used to, even for a group of dedicated astrology students. But, in my experience and observation of the astrology classroom, the shift from personal to mundane astrology is not made much of; as with all other aspects of the practice, its pre-existent *raison d'être* is taken for granted by teachers who confine themselves to passing on the technicalities of the craft.

Having first outlined her advocated technique for judging mundane maps, Liz had us looking at some topical ones. This being the time of the run-up to the US led invasion of Iraq, she showed charts for George W. Bush and the USA, Tony Blair and the UK, Saddam Hussein and Iraq.[158] Throughout the course, Liz was forthright in expressing her disdain for Bush's imperialist foreign policy and for Blair's support of it. Her adoption of a generally anti-establishment, leftist stance was in no way surprising; nor was her assumption that her class would share her political opinions. Astrologers seem naturally to identify politically with the radical minority as far, at least, as their public pronouncements go and with the one (irritating for this seemingly sole republican in *any* astrology class of which I have been a member) exception that they are inordinately fond of showing the charts of the British royal family. And, as it happens, a member of Liz's Faculty class was the only student whom I have ever heard object to this anti-establishment bias. And Joanna, currently between jobs and following a course in psychosynthesis having given up EFL teaching following a hinted-at life crisis, complained only privately to a few of her fellow students in the pub after classes and never broached the subject directly with Liz. A couple of weeks later Mike, a young male volunteer outreach worker in a drugs rehabilitation centre, came to class with a presentation he had prepared on the astrology of the London anti-war demonstration that he had attended the previous weekend. He had calculated three event charts which he displayed on the projector, and expressed their astrology eloquently, although the handout he circulated among us displayed errors of grammar, spelling and style.[159] As Liz had, he assumed that all of his classmates shared his horror at the proposed military campaign against Iraq.

---

[158] See appendix B.
Liz's chart for Saddam Hussein was not the same as his purported horoscope which I had recently been studying as a member of Jed's Hove class. When I queried the accuracy of the Iraqi leader's reported birth time, Liz was far from adamant that her map was correct. In fact, she referred later to 'Alie's correct chart' for Hussein. An article by Claire Chandler (née Simms) which was published at around this time in the Astrological Lodge of London's Journal acknowledges the impossibility of astrologers' acquiring accurate birth data for leaders born in rural areas where record keeping was never a priority, even had it been possible (Simms 2003: 18). Using the same chart as Liz's, which Chandler defends on the grounds that it 'has been in circulation for some time and has yielded good results', she nevertheless reports rumours that the birth data upon which it was based were purloined by Saddam Hussein from a friend of his to mask the fact that there were no records whatever of his own birth. She goes on to remark:

> Once more we seem to have the phenomenon of a chart which 'works' but which has little factual evidence which begs the question, what are we doing? (Simms 2003: 18)

[159] See appendix B.

Class members speculated about the effects of planetary transits to all the charts shown, for nations and individuals alike. (These were like weather fronts which could be spotted from quite a way off, Liz told us.) But, we weren't good at staying within the tight technical parameters for judgement that Liz had drawn for us. Pat, who had given up a career in television to embark upon a three-year training in body psychotherapy, worried that we were stretching the rules, if not disregarding them altogether. Liz countered that we must realise that 'theory was one thing, practice quite another'. This remark reminded me of a conversation I'd had with an astrologer whose student experience spanned psychological and traditional schools of thought, and included Faculty classes. It was her opinion that the FAS had always had problems matching theory with practice. Which, to be fair, is not a phenomenon confined to this astrological institution although it is more evident in the classrooms of those educational bodies – of which the Faculty is exemplary – that are founded upon a modern, rationalised astrological philosophy shorn of all vestiges of magical divination.

One is reminded here of medieval alchemy, astrology's one-time close associate, whose practitioners' theories and practices apparently never really complemented one another, despite their perpetual efforts to render their subject respectable enough to infiltrate mainstream knowledge systems (Obrist 2003). In my experience, tutors invariably lay out their theories in the same authoritative way that they teach the incontrovertible astronomical components of their curricula. But, as discussed in earlier chapters, the practice of astrology requires those who do it to focus intuitively and imaginatively in order to make value judgements which cannot be accounted for in purely theoretical, non-contextual and quasi-astronomical terms. The more pragmatic of astrology's teachers will admit this to be the case. The less realistic tutors cling to the notion that all is rational and logical in the world of astrological symbolism, and insist that their students take each and every horoscopic phenomenon into account, assigning it a meaning and weighing it, before amalgamating the lot in one full and final synthesis of a chart's singular, 'true' meaning. The latter approach fails to mind the gaps between the theory and the practice of astrological prognostication, between heliocentric astronomical data and geocentric astrological lore, between engineering and *bricolage*.

THE SCIENCE OF THE CONCRETE

The final opposing pair was the subject of the first lesson of the Company of Astrologers F3 Foundation Programme I attended. Six of us gathered in the main meeting room of the Hampstead premises used each fortnight by the CoA; we were four women and two men ranging upwards from mid-thirties in age. Kate explained to the class that it was some time since any Foundation Course modules had been taught. Nonetheless, she trusted that our understanding of basic astrological techniques was already established, for she wanted to concentrate on our astrological *attitude* rather than our astrological *methodology*. 'What, precisely', she asked us, 'were we aiming for? We should be realistic about what we could do with our astrology.'

Giving each of us a handout which summarised the 1950s 'industry standard' Margaret Hone method of chart interpretation still taught by the FAS, Kate questioned the validity of the pre-suppositions concerning the nature, purpose and philosophy of astrology which had underpinned Hone's rationalised horoscopy. This had proposed *every* individual factor in a chart as bearing a meaning which should be identified and considered separately before being synthesised into one single interpretation. Many students of the subject had been driven to give up in despair, Kate objected, so daunting was the prospect of undertaking this exhaustive task. It could not be denied, Kate admitted, that Hone's notion that the horoscope mirrors an individual's personality in its entirety was 'an easy model for us to think'; but, beyond that, what did this kind of astrology offer the client? The answer was reams and reams of reports outlining a host of possible - and often contradictory - meanings which she dubbed 'speculative interpretations'.

Kate impressed upon us that any one symbol could yield a host of different images and allusions. In preference to speculating meanings for all the symbols contained within a single chart, we should confine ourselves to the realms of what she termed 'realised meanings' based initially upon only some of them. Developing this theme, Kate suggested that it was inappropriate for astrologers to apply modern engineering methods to their craft; they were – not so much engineers – as odd-job *bricoleurs* who crafted and re-crafted new-for-old meanings from their multivocal horoscopic symbols in response to the ever-changing circumstances of the daily lives of their clients. She

contrasted the pre-modern handyman diviner with the rationalised modern psychotherapeutic practitioner with whom astrological reformer and educator Margaret Hone had sought to replace him. Hone had set out in her 1951 *Modern Textbook of Astrology* to codify and organise – to *hone* quipped Kate – the craft in the manner of the *modern* engineer with whom Lévi-Strauss had contrasted the pre-modern *bricoleur*.

But astrology was not a phenomenon that was susceptible to modernist codification; it was better by far, Kate asserted, that practitioners of the craft should embrace the role of *bricoleur,* which more aptly described what it was that astrologers did best. We should understand that astrology could not help but reflect the culture and context of its practitioners: the modernising tendency of Margaret Hone and her colleagues of the 1950s had now been overtaken by what might be described as a postmodern or relativist acceptance of other ways of doing things; this reflected a general societal loss of respect for the grand project of metropolitan modernity. In presenting the astrology as the science of the concrete, Kate had unwittingly touched upon material which I had earlier that day been preparing for a talk. To the bemusement of class-members who were not big readers of French structuralist anthropology, we chuckled together as we drew out the symbolism of *bricoleur* astrologers and discovered contrary modernising allusions within the methodology propagated by Hone. As astrologers do, Kate spontaneously looked at her watch and noted the time of what would, when we got home to our computers that evening, take the form of a chart for the '*Bricolage* Moment' we had shared.[160]

At the start of the second lesson of the course, Kate reminded her six students that we should already be sure-footed in our astrological craft or we would have difficulty in 'pulling the symbolism through'. We needed to develop what she called astro-logic; clairvoyance was all very well, but it wasn't a shared language in the way that astrology was. The class considered Richard Branson's natal chart.[161] Having invited our comments, Kate told us that we had 'stuck' at the level of speculation, having made a series of guesses about Branson's personal psychology which we had no hope of corroborating. For homework, she suggested that we 'match his planets to his world'

[160] See appendix B. I am grateful to Geoffrey Cornelius for his perceptive judgement of this map.
[161] See appendix B.

and, using timing measures, try to recognise the astrological symbols as 'indicators of actual physical manifestations in his life' rather than psychological tendencies: we should look particularly for events which coincided with, and reflected the symbolism of, the Jupiter returns in his natal chart; to assist us in this task, she handed out photocopies of Branson's entry in *Who's Who*.

The following lesson, we reported on our homework assignment to discover astrological mirrors for significant events in Richard Branson's life; we had been happy to practise our *bricolage* on his horoscope, confident of finding excellent symbolism in it, given that it had - after all – been chosen as teaching material. And sure enough, in the third return of transiting Jupiter to its place in his nativity, we found what Kate called 'fantastic symbolism' to reflect Branson's winning the Blue Riband award (for achieving the fastest ship crossing of the Atlantic) in June 1986, as Captain of the Atlantic Challenger II (*Who's Who* 2000: 239). Traditionally referred to as the 'Great Benefic', Jupiter signals an abundance (sometimes an over-abundance) of good things. Branson's natal Jupiter is in his eighth house, on the cusp of the ninth house (using Placidus cusps), in the sign of Pisces, its traditional nocturnal ruler. The third return of Jupiter to its natal place in his chart occurred in March 1986. When he completed the fastest-ever Atlantic crossing on 29th June of the same year, transiting Jupiter was within three degrees of the cusp of his natal ninth house. Pisces is symbolic of water. The ninth house is commonly held to signify either overseas travel, higher education, philosophy or religious matters.

Now, it so happens – he and I being born only a few weeks apart and not far from each other geographically – that my own natal chart is not dissimilar to Branson's. Which fact prompted me to have an engineering moment and object out loud that the equivalent Jupiter return in my own chart had decidedly *not* signalled my winning any seafaring awards; which was no surprise, given that I only had to *look* at a boat to feel seasick! My remark was greeted with shocked silence. When she had recovered herself, Kate enquired incredulously of me 'you don't really believe what you're saying, do you? Surely you know by now that symbolism isn't universal?' I apologised for being curmudgeonly. Kate was, in fact, quite correct to doubt that I believed symbolism to be universal, for I appreciate that one cannot isolate metaphorical imagery from its

all-important informing context. As to my own Jupiter returns, however similar they might be, horoscopically, to Branson's, they could not but symbolise very different events and might symbolise nothing significant at all, she told me sternly.

My own natal Jupiter is in my tenth house (using Placidus cusps) and in Pisces, traditionally the sign of its rulership, where it conjoins both my Moon (the ruling planet of my horoscope) and my Midheaven. Given its key natal placement, Jupiter returns in my chart would be expected to herald major public changes in life direction: signals of 'going out and coming in again' as someone very different. And I have to concede that the astrological kaleidoscope, when shaken with a view to my (rather more prosaic than Branson's) existence, generally fulfils its promise in a satisfying manner in this respect. The third return of Jupiter to its natal place in my horoscope was followed soon afterwards by my enrolling at college and embarking on an entirely different career cycle which turned out to have an astrologically satisfying twelve-year duration. The initiation of the next Jupiter cycle, signalled by its fourth return, coincided to the very day with my being called for interview in support of my application to the University of Sussex as first move in my plan to resign my job and become a full-time undergraduate student. I still remember the utter confidence with which my then astrology tutor, Sarah, had assured me that I was astrologically bound to be given a university place and to embark, thereafter, upon a new twelve year cycle of my life. At the time of writing, I am coming to the end of my eighth consecutive year as a full-time student and wondering if it would be tempting providence to start planning what to do with my next Jupiter cycle!

At the end of our Branson lesson, we were each asked to prepare a report on a set of charts of our choice, using natal data and progressing them in time, to present to a future class. As I had recently been reading a biography of the disc-jockey John Peel, who had died only a couple of months earlier, I decided to do a bit of work on his astrology. At the time of his unexpected death there had been some discussion about his given birthtime on an astrological e-mail forum of which I am a member. I smiled when I saw that John Peel, whose radio persona had been a favourite of mine since my first encounter with it at the impressionable age of sixteen, had a Virgo Sun/Pisces Moon opposition natally which closely matched my own. I drew up a succession of charts to

coincide with key events in his life and included a chart for Peel's favourite pop song, the Undertones' *Teenage Kicks*.[162] I was pleased to note that there was serendipitous synastry between Peel's natal horoscope and the map for the release of the record, albeit that the latter was correct only in terms of date and place and was drawn for noon in the absence of a more correct time.

When I showed my set of 'Peel' charts to the group and demonstrated the close contact I had discovered between Peel's natal Venus and Saturn in the *Teenage Kicks* map, Kate expressed surprise. For, although Venus is an obvious symbol of love, Saturn - traditionally known as the 'Greater Malefic' and signifier of age, structure and stricture – was not so obviously fitted for this role. But, when I reminded the class that Peel's relationship with this supposedly transient pop song had lasted for over twenty years, during which period he had repeatedly expressed his wish to have its lyrics carved on his tombstone, all agreed that the Venus/Saturn conjunction was entirely apposite. So John Peel proved to be an entirely satisfactory, if unwitting, subject for a little astrological *bricolage*; but however analogous astrologers may be to Lévi-Strauss's pre-modern handymen, and I would contend that they are very well characterised as *bricoleurs*, it should not be forgotten that they inhabit a modern world shaped in large part by engineers and ordered by science. How, then, do today's astrologers marry their geocentrically oriented practices with the hegemonic heliocentric worldview?

CONCRETE AND NON-CONCRETE SCIENCE: THE MISSING LINK

I remember wondering, as I entered my first-ever astrology class, how the tutor would explain away the body of empirically verified astronomical knowledge which had accumulated since astronomy split with astrology and seemingly left the latter behind in the dark ages. As I was shortly to discover, the answer was that she didn't even try. With a few years' experience, I now know that, far from ignoring it, classes generally *start* with astronomy. Tutors will demonstrate planetary movements and positions with models and diagrams of the heliocentric solar system. Then, they will move directly to astrology's geocentric cosmological model and, having explained in astronomical terms – for example – Pluto's immense distance from Earth and its relatively small size as a

[162] See appendix B.

planet, demoted or otherwise, circling the Sun, they will continue by detailing the range of its powerful astrological significance, by zodiacal sign and horoscopic house. (That is, if they're not dyed-in-the-wool traditionalists who take no account of the trans-Saturnians.) The link between the two seemingly incommensurable sets of data – describing firstly the distant physical planet in outer space and secondly the significance of its glyph in a horoscope – is founded eponymously in the mythology associated with the characters for whom the heavenly bodies are named. Those teachers who know and love the folklore which peoples our skies with unruly Greek deities will obviously make more of it in their classes than those of their fellows whose imaginations are mythologically challenged. But there is sufficient astrological tradition and technical procedure for students to learn the symbolism of the planets and zodiac signs as an exercise in itself without much consideration of the myths on which that symbolism is founded.

As discussed in previous chapters, astrology and its practitioners defy top-down classification. It follows that the teaching of astrology is carried out at the margins of category descriptions such as religious and scientific, mythological and factual, magical and mundane. If some new students of the subject are happy to imagine themselves to be recapturing the ancient neo-religious, magical consciousness of a holistic cosmos, there will always be more who will defend the notion that astrology is just a matter of so-far unexplained physical causation and that what they are studying is a proto-science. And members of the former set will not be averse to adopting the latter group's position as a means of claiming a comparatively rational superiority over enthusiasts for a range of popular New Age cosmologies considered largely loony by serious astrologers, or as a justification of their exploration of astrological divinatory practices in the face of general societal disapproval.

I remember being made particularly aware of what I term the missing link when I was taught about Chiron. Jed had set his class of relative beginners in Hove to consult their ephemerides[163] for the positions of transiting Chiron in relation to their own charts at

[163] An astrological ephemeris used by a Western astrologer tracks the positions, and daily rates and directions of movement, of celestial bodies and astrological phenomena, viewed geocentrically and in relation to the tropical zodiac. This zodiac, used by the Western system of astrology, does not take account of precession; consequently, the planetary positions in relation to it are wholly notional. The

times of key life events. He established that Chiron's natal placement would denote the area of life in which the native could be expected to be a maverick, to suffer as a result of going her own way in life; he did this by extrapolating from the mythology of its namesake, Chiron the centaur and wounded healer, the astrological symbolism of Chiron, the superlunary body. He had previously acquainted his students with the rudiments of the myth which told how Chiron had overcome his early rejection as the son of Cronus (Saturn) and the nymph Philyra to become a wise man, a healer and tutor to such heroes as Asclepius, Theseus, Achilles, Jason and Heracles.[164] Next, he spent some time outlining the range of practical manifestations we should expect to accompany Chiron's position in each of the twelve houses and zodiacal signs.

But, seemingly in contradiction of his intention of teaching us the astrological significance of Chiron, Jed had, in earlier lessons and workshops, been at pains to impress upon his students its astronomical *in*significance. He was determined that we should be clear that Chiron, (otherwise known as Comet 95P/Chiron or minor planet (2060) Chiron), is neither a planet nor an asteroid. First identified in 1977 as an icy sub-dwarf orbiting the sun in 50.7 years between Saturn and Uranus, it was observed by 1988 to have grown a tail and was re-classified as a short-orbit comet body, probably originating in the Kuiper Belt, that had become trapped within the solar system. We should realise, he told us, that Chiron is tiny in comparison with the planets and had come to astrologers' attention only because it was the first discovered of the eight comets now known as Centaurs and on account of its having been given a name redolent of mythological symbolism. And yet, unlike a number of the more traditional practitioners who will not use the trans-Saturnian planets, let alone even newer kids on the block such as Chiron, Jed did not suggest that we match its astrological influence to its astronomical insignificance. Very much the reverse. His exposition of its faint astronomical footprint on the earth in no way deterred Jed from recommending that we be aware of its discernable imprint upon the horoscope.

---

sidereal zodiac preferred by Indian astrology is adjusted for precession and offers more accurate zodiacal planetary positions as a result.

[164] As a centaur, Chiron was represented in Greek mythology as a man from the head to the loins, while the remainder of his body was that of a horse. The wisest and most just of the centaurs, he had been instructed by Apollo and Diana, and was renowned for his skill in hunting, medicine, music and the art of prophecy. Having been accidentally shot with a poisonous arrow by Heracles, Chiron willingly gave up his immortality to escape the perpetual pain of the wound, and was placed in the sky by Jupiter as the constellation Sagittarius. (Bulfinch 1993:156-157; 03/2005: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiron)

He had explained the astronomy and the astrology of Chiron, outlining the mythology associated with its given name to back up his suggestions for its range of astrological meanings. He had pointed up rather than glossed over their disproportionate comparative significance. But, Jed had failed to explore in any detail the nature of the link between the recently discovered and apparently arbitrarily named physical body called Chiron and its newly minted astrological symbolism. Had its discovery and naming been cosmologically ordained as a gift to astrologers attempting to grapple a new world order with outdated divinatory tools? To which of the astrological bodies had practitioners attributed the range of phenomena recently allocated to Chiron's influence before its existence was recognised and appositely named? These questions were not posed. The link was missing. Or was it? Lévi-Strauss associates mythical thought with *bricoleur* practice and counter-poses both to engineering and science: what links the two poles of his schema is artistic creation; 'art', he tells us, 'lies half-way between scientific knowledge and mythical or magical thought' (Lévi-Strauss 1972: 22 & 30).

It is at this threshold, betwixt-and-between place that the artisan *bricoleur* applies her mythological imagination to discern multiple pre-modern meanings embedded in the phenomena of the world in which she lives. Science extends the bounds of that world, delivering fresh raw materials for her meaning-making, artistic enterprise but, as Lévi-Strauss points out, this creative endeavour is a two-way process:

> Mythical thought for its part is imprisoned in the events and experiences which it never tires of ordering and re-ordering in its search to find them a meaning. But it also acts as a liberator by its protest against the idea that anything can be meaningless with which science at first resigned itself to a compromise. (Lévi-Strauss 1972: 22)

Viewed in these terms, astronomy can be seen to offer astrology new 'events and experiences', of which Chiron is but a recent example, to widen its 'ordering and re-ordering' practices; so, why would astrologers deny it? The link which I missed is the liminal process of artistic creation, the making of meaning, the application of the philosophy of *As If* to *all* available data, including newly discovered celestial bodies such as Chiron. And these are practical processes, which do not lend themselves to rational, theoretical exposition, for the *bricoleur* philosophises by thinking mythologically rather than scientifically (Lévi-Strauss 1972: 21). Not, it must be said,

that my fellow students seemed at all interested in Chiron's astronomical data, in the mythology of its namesake, or in the links between them, missing or otherwise. What they wanted to do was to get on with some practical astrology and, content to accept Jed's delineation of Chiron's horoscopic significance, discover its significance in their own natal charts.

GETTING TO KNOW OURSELVES ASTROLOGICALLY

When Jed set his class to discovering whether Chiron's transits of our natal charts mirrored any major events in our lives, I happened to be sitting between fellow students Tom and Charmaine. Working together, we spent the first fifteen minutes or so looking with Tom for significant horoscopic transits – of Chiron or other planetary bodies – which would have coincided with the significant life-changing experience he related to Charmaine and myself when, one year at the Glastonbury festival weekend he had first taken 'acid' and 'tripped for a whole week'. Then we searched with Charmaine, a quietly spoken, conventionally dressed hairdresser in her late fifties, to discover the astrology of the day, back in the 1960s, on which she had become engaged to her current husband. If either of these two of my fellow students had been at all surprised or disapproving of the other's way of life, they never showed it; both were captivated to discover astrological signatures for their very different behaviours and life styles. This curiosity, which is shared by all students, renders the astrology classroom a tolerant and mutually accepting forum where students with very different histories and outlooks work amicably together under the firm tutelage of an authoritative teacher to learn about themselves and each other in novel horoscopic terms.

Tom and Charmaine were fellow classmates of mine on Jed's final recreational astrology course at the Connaught Centre in Hove. The average age of the group was somewhat younger than is usual, in my experience, for an astrology class and numbered just short of twenty; with the exception of Tom, all were women. Being invited by Jed, on the first evening of the course, to introduce ourselves in turn to the rest of the class and explain our interest in astrology, each of the women expressed a desire to come to a better understanding of her own, and her loved ones', characters and life choices with its help. Between them, they listed a selection of problems and dysfunctional relationships with which they were struggling to deal from a wider litany commonly voiced by

female students of astrology. When it came to Tom's turn, he explained – in stark contrast to his female classmates – that it was his aim to become a professional astrologer and 'earn loads of money'! And it has to be said that, from that day to this, he has applied himself to learning astrology and making himself known in the community, presumably in pursuit of his ambition.

Whatever their material ambitions, students of psychological astrology can be relied upon to be totally absorbed by the process of learning to recognise and express the symbolism encapsulated by a horoscope: always their own but also other people's. Once they have acquired sufficient vocabulary to do so, they will begin tentatively to play this particular language-game. Away from the classroom, given the scarcity of its native speakers, this is of necessity a private enterprise whereas, among fellow students and with other astrologers, a proper match can be enjoyed with others who communicate in the same linguistic terminology. As they progress beyond beginner level, students will invariably include their Sun, Moon and Ascendant signs when called upon to introduce themselves to new classes; and teachers will interact with them in relation to what they know of their nativities. I remember the FAS moderator of my first OCN course asking to see my horoscope before looking at my completed assignment: 'Ah, you've got Uranus rising, I see!', she said, rather disturbingly, although it made a change from the 'well, it's easy to tell you're a Virgo' variety of comment which my work usually attracts. 'Being a Virgo' doesn't generally, of itself, endear me to my fellow students; the sign is associated with a tendency to be nit-pickingly critical though, fortunately, my horoscope has redeeming features. Jane, for example, had been quite frosty in her manner towards me until the week when, sitting next to her in Jed's Hove class, I saw her snatching glances at my birthchart which lay between us on the desk. As we filed out of the room at the end of the session, Jane was suddenly more friendly and asked if I wanted the contact details of an astrologer from whom she was getting some extra tuition. Passing these to me, she said 'we both have our Moons in Pisces, don't we', before asking 'oh, don't you also have a Cancer Ascendant?'.[165] Jane was indulging here in a little rudimentary synastry, a term which

[165] As students of the subject build up an understanding of astrological symbolism, they invariably begin to evaluate other people in its terms, particularly those whose horoscopes they know or can find out about. They will fancy they can get a flavour of the other person from the zodiacal positions of her natal

describes the art of comparing two or more charts and assessing their astrological compatibility, a subject to which students are not generally introduced until they have attained competency at interpreting a single horoscope.

Synastry was the subject of one of the full-day Saturday workshops run on an occasional basis by Southeast Astrology, my local interest group, before it ceased operations following the dispersal of its founding members. Thirteen of us (of whom one was male) gathered in the meeting room we hired for our monthly meetings in a local community association premises to be taught the craft of synastry by Sally, a Company of Astrologers' trained tutor. Sally started out be explaining what she thought to be the prime differences between our predominantly modern, psychological 'takes' on astrology and her methodology, which she described as pre-Enlightenment in its philosophical foundation. We should be prepared for the planets in a chart to manifest themselves as people in the world, she told us; it was to impoverish the scope of astrology's influence to see them only as aspects of the native's personality. She had already warned the group that she would be using Placidus house cusps rather than the Equal house system which we had been taught. That having been said, she proceeded to outline her preferred method of chart comparison with the aid of example horoscopes including those of The Queen, Prince Charles, Princess Diana and Camilla Parker Bowles; George W. Bush, Tony Blair and Saddam Hussein; Bill and Hilary Clinton.[166] Then, for the greater part of the day, she set us - fellow members of Southeast Astrology who had been friends from the start our astrological studies - to work in twos and threes and assess the synastry between our natal charts. This was a new exercise for us, for although we knew each other's individual nativities very well, we had never formally or publicly assessed our relationships in terms of their compatibility.

As we reported our findings, Sally repeatedly responded to our tentative explorations of the group's interrelationships by asking 'where are you getting that from, astrologically?'. One participant said, later, that she had appreciated these reminders that we should stay close to the astrology: as she put it: 'if we're not careful we all get

---

Sun, Moon and Ascendant alone, building a fuller picture as other planetary considerations are taken into account.

[166] See appendix B.

carried away and speak from intuition, rather than astrology'. The workshop was judged by all present to have been a great success. Sally's approach had been more traditionally oriented than this group was used to, but her subject had been a new one for most participants who went home eagerly to check out the synastry between their nearest and dearest. They had glimpsed a whole new world of astrological theorising but, given that they had no great curiosity to extend their philosophical horizons, they were happy that they had not been overburdened with 'dry' astrological theory, as they put it; instead, they had acquired new and – to their minds – useful, practical techniques to enrich the astrology they did everyday for themselves, their families and friends. Which practice is invariably grounded in an exhaustive knowledge of all relevant birthcharts.

WHATEVER NEXT?

Liz commenced the first lesson of the Faculty course referred to above by insisting – superfluously, I suspect - that we all memorise our natal charts;[167] that way, she told us, we could be considering the effects of current planetary transits upon them as we were walking along the street. She wanted us to be aware, not simply of our own astrological 'seed moment' birth signatures, but also of the astrological life cycles which subjected the latter to a perpetual process of flux, and she suggested – as a first step to reconciling ourselves with these cycles - that we keep Moon diaries for one month from the dates of our next Lunar Returns.[168] Thus armed, we would be fully prepared to go out and meet our fate, which we should believe to be ultimately benevolent in nature: Liz was beckoning us beyond an astrological appreciation of the here-and-now to project our prognostications into future time; but, she was careful to warn us, astrological forecasting could never be specific in a manner she described as 'in your face and in your future'. This was an expression of FAS modernist ideology, which strives to

---

[167] I confess to having a problem remembering the fine details of my own horoscope, and was unable to answer immediately when recently asked, during a seemingly unconnected conversation with my neighbour at a restaurant gathering of astrologers, 'at what degree of Scorpio is your Mars?'.

[168] The transiting Moon completes a circle of the birth chart each month. The FAS course document informs us that the planet firstly:

> Affects our day-to-day emotions and changes of mood, depending on the house and sign it is moving through and the aspects it makes to our natal chart. Secondly, the transiting Moon conjuncts our natal Moon every month, at which point it begins a new personal Moon cycle. Thirdly, there are the lunar phases themselves, which are the same for all of us, but can affect each one of us very differently.
> (06/2002: FAS Module Four Course Document: About Time 1)

distance itself from the more fated approaches of pre-modern, neo-traditionalist practitioners who will not hesitate to answer yes/no questions of the 'will he marry me?' variety that seemingly laugh in the face of free will. I have attended workshops run by specialist horary astrologers, such as Sue Ward,[169] who teach the rudiments of their craft with example charts drawn for clients' questions which have included 'Is he stealing from us again?', 'Have I passed my exam?', 'When will my client pay me?'. But, as students of the Faculty, we were learning only to recognise movements in prevailing conditions and trends; for, Liz reminded us, individuals acted as they decided or desired and this made a nonsense of claims to foretell future events. 'How could astrology hope to be any different from meteorology?', Liz asked, which - for all of its equipment and mathematical modelling methods - was only able to forecast general weather trends; 'it could hardly tell you whether you would be rained on when you stepped out of your front door in Hull next Tuesday afternoon'.

A few weeks later, Liz used the last lesson of the module to sum up her thoughts about astrological forecasting and give us some final practical advice. She had, she confessed, been 'unhappy about doing it' when she had herself first started practising. But clients had invariably wanted her to forecast, so she had put her inhibitions to one side and got on with it. We would, similarly, be expected to make astrological predictions, she warned us. When doing so, we should remember what we had just been taught and study our clients' transits, their progressions and current and future transits to them, their Solar and Lunar Returns, their New and Full Moon charts. Despite the fact that more than one of our lessons – not taught by Liz - had been devoted to the effects of transiting Chiron, and that our accompanying CD-Rom of course material included an article covering its astronomy, mythology, symbolism and suggestions for its interpretation, Liz explained that she didn't work with this 'new' astral body much, if at all. Having reminded us of the astrological processes involved in the forecasting enterprise, Liz was at pains to remind us once more that 'you can't tell anyone what's going to happen'. 'When I do that and get it right, I'm more freaked out about it than the client is', she told us. A good astrological reading should never aim to make hard and fast predictions but merely encourage a subject to 'go out and be what they want to be anyway'.

[169] See appendix A.

The thorny astrological subject of prediction was considered from a more theoretical perspective at one of the occasional full-day workshops I attended run, in addition to their weekly programme of lectures and classes, by the Astrological Lodge of London (ALL). Its President, Claire Chandler,[170] introduced the so-called *Prediction Day* by bemoaning the fact that the words *prediction* and *forecasting* are used interchangeably by astrologers. 'Unsurprisingly for someone with my bucketful of Virgo', she told the thirty or so astrological enthusiasts who had gathered in the conference room of the London headquarters of the Theosophical Society used by the ALL for its meetings, 'I would like astrologers to tighten up on their use of these two terms and think about differentiating their meanings' to match specific styles of astrological practice. On her view, traditional astrology supplied its practitioners with tools for *predicting* specific events; psychological methods were, on the other hand, more suited to the *forecasting* of behavioural trends based upon character delineation. Astrologers should decide whether they were prepared to attempt both of these different exercises; and they should consider carefully what, precisely, their clients wanted.

She, personally, aimed both to forecast *and* to predict, but she knew that not all astrologers were happy to extend the former practice into the latter exercise. In so saying, she realised that she was identifying herself as one of the considerable number of psychological-style astrologers who, trained in the mainstream practices of the 1970s and 1980s, had recently been attracted by the philosophies and techniques of pre-modern astrologers. Claire told us that she had now in fact – and much to her own surprise – moved away from psychological astrology towards more traditional practices. She described the impetus which had initiated this redirection: as a holder of the DipFAstrolS, she had been disconcerted to observe the growing number of her fellow astrologers who had abandoned what might be termed a mainstream FAS philosophy in favour of attempting to capture earlier astrological ways of thought and learn their accompanying horoscopy; she had decided, she told us, to learn something of these earlier practices, if only as a means of qualifying herself to do battle with the growing band of neo-traditionalists to be found in any astrological gathering. But, she admitted to having been so impressed by what she discovered of pre-psychological astrology that

[170] See appendix A.

she had now given up all thought of beating the neo-traditionalists in favour of joining them.

Returning to her theme, Claire warned us that – whether we sought to predict and/or to forecast for ourselves, our families, friends and clients, or for national and international events – we should be aware that we lived and practised in the *here and now*. All astrology, of whichever style, had the ability to extend our awareness, she reminded us, of this the *present* moment, which was the inescapable vantage point for our contemplation of both past and future, and additionally the place in which we interacted with our fate. To explore different social and historical approaches to the concept of fate would, she assured us, require a workshop all of its own, but she recommended that we take the time to read Patrick Curry's recent considerations of the subject which she outlined briefly.[171] Members of the audience were less than totally absorbed by this theoretical material; they seemed anxious to move Claire away from her abstracted consideration of prediction and forecasting, of free will and determinism, towards a bit of practical astrology. How did a negotiation with fate, if such a thing were possible, manifest itself in astrological symbolism, they wanted to know? How – if at all – could the negative effects of so-called hard transits to a natal chart be avoided? Or were the possessors of temporarily afflicted horoscopes better advised by their astrologers simply to batten down the hatches and prepare for the storm ahead?

Princess Diana – her life, her death and her astrology - were cited in illustration of these practical considerations. Claire explained that, at the time of her death, 'Diana's number had definitely been up' astrologically in the terms of a range of different predictive techniques; there had been absolutely no doubt about that, she declared. (She omitted to mention that Diana had kept astrologers guessing for all of her brief life between charts based upon two different birth times.) 'Did anyone actually predict her death, then?' asked a member of the audience bolder than I. 'No', answered Claire,

[171] Then Senior Lecturer at the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University, Patrick Curry (see appendix A) had outlined his thoughts on the nature of fate when delivering the annual Carter Memorial Lecture at the 2004 Astrological Association conference. Entitling it *Re-enchanting Astrology*, Curry had used his talk to broach the problematic interrelations between free will, determinism and prediction, stating it as his view that 'the fate of astrology is bound up with how astrologers come to view fate. A predictive view will close down options and present a boon to your enemies' (Curry 2004b: 8). Astrologers' realm was the present, he asserted, and their task was that of advisor; they should not think of themselves as engaged in entering pre-ordained future states of consciousness to make predictions about tomorrow's events.

without so much as an ironic pause.[172] No one seemed to find this the slightest bit surprising or disappointing. Claire herself is a proponent of what she terms 'reverse astrological engineering': astrologers should be constantly honing their craft, on her view, by working retrospectively through the astral cycles of individuals such as Diana, after the tragic events of her life had been concluded, to match events with their precise astrological patterns. But we should not forget, she warned, that no chart was ever the exclusive property of any one individual: any number of entities could share one horoscope, (people or creatures being born, questions being asked, real and ritual events taking place by accident or astrological design, institutions and endeavours being incorporated, foundation stones being laid); all would express the same astrological map differently, in line with their capabilities and contextual attributes.

If anyone in the audience had been worried by astrology's apparent failure to come to the aid of Diana, one of the most illustrious of its contemporary public clients, then the pair of speakers who followed on from Claire supplied a neat defence of the art. Failures in prediction, Helena Avelar[173] and Luis Ribeiro[174] assured us, should be laid at the doors of astrologers who were inexpert at applying their techniques, or who had insufficient understanding of the context in which the lives of their subjects were led. Astrology itself was not to be held culpable for predictive failures; only its practitioners. Which was a classical display of the modernist twentieth-century engineering of astrological thought which aimed to mimic scientific method and erect a universal horoscopic ideal to which practitioners should aim. In sharp contrast to the notion that each and every chart encapsulates a meaningful, if elusive, message, I remembered Kate's recommendation to her CoA students that we should be prepared to allow astrology to 'show', or not to 'show', resisting the temptation to loosen our astrology in the attempt to get a good result, every time, from each chart we worked with. Kate had regretted what was for her the reality of the matter, namely that astrology didn't always reveal itself in the form of powerful and/or relevant symbolism: singling out one disappointing example of astrology's fickleness, Geoffrey Cornelius[175] and Maggie

[172] *Observer* Sun-sign astrologer, Neil Spencer, who says that he forecasts rather than predicts, has a better answer to 'why didn't you predict … ?' type questions: 'because you didn't ask!', he quips.
[173] See appendix A.
[174] See appendix A.
[175] See appendix A.

Hyde had, she told us, been able to discover no significant astrological symbolism to match or mirror Bob Dylan's serious motor-cycle accident, despite the fact that they had used Dylan's natal and progressed charts as illustrations of astrology's ability accurately to reflect a number of key life events in their *Astrology for Beginners* guide (Cornelius, Hyde & Webster 1995: 110).

If the above illustrates some of the ways in which hands-on astrology tutors approach their subject, it also hints at a more theoretical approach, encompassing broader philosophical implications for the practice of the craft and citing the concepts of mainstream social theorists, demonstrated by individuals involved with the new university programmes. The project to introduce astrology-related courses into mainstream universities has not sought to question or alter individual styles of practice which are merely a recommended - though not an obligatory - qualification for its theoretical considerations; but it has reified the divide between astrologers happy to theorise about what they do and practitioners who just want to get on and do it. As is the nature of these things, it has been, for the most part, astrological elders and educators who have jumped on this latest of the practice's bandwagons; from this vantage, they are proselytising an academic approach to their subject which goes over the heads of numbers of their students who merely wish to learn the rudiments of practical horoscopy.

A year or so after my experience as a FAS student, I had the chance to talk to its President, Clare Martin,[176] during a visit she was making to UKC to audit the Sophia Trust MA modules being run there. Sitting outside the campus café drinking coffee at the end of a day spent in *Cosmology and Divination* seminars, Clare told me that she aimed to encourage Faculty students to *think* more about their astrology; hence a new course component which introduced the works of mainstream philosophers with a view to encouraging a more rigorous standard of scholarship than was currently found in astrological journals. There was general agreement around the table that the intellectual status of the latter was risible; a number said they no longer even attempted to read them. Clare referred to the recently completed re-modelling of the Faculty's courses which she had overseen, a daunting task prompted by the near collapse of the institution

[176] See appendix A.

just prior to the initiation of the Sophia project's programme to reintroduce astrology to universities. Its new courses had been designed with the programme in mind, initially as primary stages along the way of acquiring the new Masters degrees, but with a view eventually to obtaining ratification from a British university which would confer Bachelor Degree status upon the highest level FAS course.

I could not help but contrast the tenor of this conversation with the sentiments I had heard voiced by numbers of astrologers, Faculty practitioners among them, that the craft would *not* be furthered by its reinstatement to the academy where no practical astrology could be taught and those involved would do nothing other than 'dress astrology up as something it isn't'. As I will relate in the next chapter, I interacted for much of my fieldwork with astrologers involved with the new university courses. I do so now from inclination. As a consequence, it occasionally slips my mind that there are, in the wider astrological community, numbers of practitioners who, in so far as it interests them at all, instinctively mistrust the academic project.

CHAPTER TEN

ASTROLOGY GOES TO UNIVERSITY

In the previous chapter, I presented a brief ethnographic overview of the astrology classroom and outlined some commonly occurring issues in the teaching and learning of practical horoscopy. In what follows, I will chart the beginnings of the newly instituted astrology-related postgraduate university programmes which study the subject theoretically, and record some of my experiences as an observer of two of them; relevant reference details are listed in my chapter entitled *Research Locales.* I will go on to consider the relationship between contemporary British universities and Western astrology in more general terms, and to report some reactions I encountered, as an anthropologist of astrology, in mainstream academic milieus.

STUDYING ASTROLOGY THEORETICALLY

Astrologers make their judgements on the basis of astronomical phenomena recorded in their ephemeredes that record the daily positions of the planets for past, present and future time. It is the empirical verifiability of astrology's primary data, and the consequent obviation of the necessity for its subjects' involvement with the prognostications informed by these data, that has tempted those few of its scientifically inclined practitioners who have a working knowledge of, and an affection for, statistics to attempt to 'prove' a mechanistic relationship between a range of astronomical factors and the phenomena with which they are associated in astrological lore. The provenance that astrology shares with pre-modern astronomy has bequeathed it its seriously-minded tradition and differentiated it as a divination system from – say – the Tarot; it can be argued that, in their continued attempts to corroborate its tenets empirically, the small numbers of astrologers with sufficient interest and methodological capability to do so are harking back to the proto-scientific motivation of astrology's medieval researchers who were motivated to extend empirical knowledge of the cosmos.

But the pursuit of a statistical corroboration for astrological hypotheses is not the only area of theoretical research in which practitioners can involve themselves, and even work equitably beside sceptical researchers who are motivated primarily to blow astrological tenets out of the water. Astrologers wishing to establish a respectable academic foundation for their practice can join historians, philosophers of science and

sociologists of religion to study and debate the development of astrology's theory and practical application down as many centuries as have recorded human endeavour, so deep is the subject's tradition. As with the statistical studies mentioned above, there need be no dispute between scholarly astrological practitioners and their supposedly more rationalist colleagues, at least so long as the latter bow to the superior knowledge of the former when it comes to decoding the meanings of technical astrological documents which have generally been glossed by scholars with neither the expertise to read them nor the realisation that, properly deciphered, they constitute as yet untapped repositories of knowledge.[177] For astrology can, after all, be said to have influenced the historical trajectory of metropolitan thought: science's origins in Hermetic magic, neoplatonic philosophy, alchemy - and astrology - have lately been more widely acknowledged than they once were as a result of the work of scholars such as Frances Yates;[178] additionally, there is currently a more realistic acknowledgement that modern science does not now – any more than it ever did – float free from the cultures in which it operates. Whether or not all of Yates's arguments are accepted, it is certainly the case that a number of the pioneering scientists whose names every schoolchild is encouraged to learn combined the practices of astronomy and astrology, a fact which in itself bears informed scholarly consideration.

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a developing acknowledgement, celebration and exploitation of the history and recorded tradition of Western astrology by numbers of its more erudite and intellectually oriented practitioners who moved to codify and professionalise their craft and, by playing up the provenance it shares with astronomy, to distance it from – say – Tarot or tea leaf reading on the end of the pier. In this respect, it could be said that they were merely complying with more generalised societal trends: firstly, to formalise membership of their community in a bid to attain

---

[177] Cf. *Galileo's Astrology* (Campion & Kollerstrom 2003) which, edited by two academic astrologers, gathers together articles on Galileo's practice of, and attitude to, astrology, some of which examine the technicalities of his horoscopy for, as stated:

> What was distinctive about [Galileo] was not that he believed or practised astrology, but that, like Kepler, he combined this with his belief in the new, heliocentric universe. (Kollerstrom in Campion & Kollerstrom 2003: 3)

[178] Historian Dame Frances Yates, who taught at the Warburg Institute, wrote extensively on the neoplatonist philosophies of the Renaissance period. Her books (e.g. 1991, 1992, 2002) drew attention to the key role played by magic in early modern science and philosophy before scholars such as Keith Thomas brought this topic into the historiographical mainstream. Some of her contentions have been challenged by later scholars (07/2006: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frances_Yates).

comparative respectability for its practitioners working within an increasingly codified and potentially litigious marketplace of 'alternative' therapists and counsellors; secondly, to underwrite the appeal of astrology's practice and legitimise its products by drawing consciously upon a prestigious recaptured historical tradition. Tamsyn Barton, whose *Ancient Astrology* was published in 1994 in a series entitled *Sciences of Antiquity*, comments upon the then current moves by practitioners of what she calls the 'learned version of astrology', (to differentiate it from what she refers to as popular 'newspaper astrology'), to institutionalise their subject with academic conferences, examinations and serious journals (Barton 1994: 3).

Back in 1970, a London based educational charity, the Urania Trust, had been founded to:

> Further the advancement of education by the teaching of the relationship between man's knowledge of beliefs about the heavens and every aspect of his art, science, philosophy and religion. (06/2005: http://www.uraniatrust.org/)[179]

But, no matter how serious an approach they developed towards their art, British astrologers had to be content with the fact that astrology remained very much beyond the pale of serious intellectual endeavour. As Barton puts it:

> However great the efforts of 'serious' modern astrologers to appropriate full academic status, they could never attain the enviable position of ancient classical astrology, which was in tune with contemporary intellectual disciplines. It fitted in with ancient cosmology, it drew on the data of astronomy, it offered an extra dimension to medicine, it shared the convictions of philosophers, and it fitted in with much religious understanding of the divine. Not everyone believed in astrologers, but hardly anyone was willing to deny the stars some effect on human life. (Barton 1994: 3)

ASTROLOGY AND THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ACADEMY: A TRUCE?

But towards the end of the twentieth century and with a new millennium in view, a private individual benefactor considerably strengthened astrology's apparently weak

---

[179] The Urania Trust outlines its purposes and philosophy in the following terms:

> In Greek mythology *Urania* was the muse of those arts and sciences which involve a knowledge of the heavens and of man's relationship with them. Historically, man's knowledge of the heavens has been embodied in the twin sciences of astronomy and astrology. In so far as these have been regarded as separate and distinct subjects, astronomy has concerned itself with the knowledge of the physical constitution of the universe whereas astrology has studied the effects of cosmic forces upon terrestrial life.
> (06/2005: http://www.uraniatrust.org/History.htm)

academic cause by bequeathing a considerable sum of money to the Urania Trust with the stipulation that the fund be used to 'further the study of real astrology in higher education in Britain' (Gunzburg & Campion 2003: 18, Curry 06/2005: http://www.uraniatrust.org/articles.htm+charles+harvey+latimer&hl=en).

The monies were used to establish the Sophia Project with the aim of realising the generous astrologer's dream of establishing astrology as a serious university subject. Clearly, so ambitious an endeavour required careful consideration and planning and, to initiate this process, fifty or so representatives of leading British astrological organisations and other members of the community, some of them academics, foregathered at Latimer House, in March 1998, for a weekend conference to debate how these astrological educators should best proceed to implement the donor's proposal. Originally, this had mooted the funding of a chair in astrology at a British university (Gunzburg & Campion 2003: 18); but this suggestion had been deemed impractical, given the fact that there was no obviously suitable pre-existent academic department upon which to settle such a bequest, and at that time only one person suitably qualified (both academically and astrologically) to pursue this new field of study in what would - presumably – have been splendid isolation. This was Dr Patrick Curry,[180] both a published academic with an interest in the history of British astrology and a practical astrologer, who was instead appointed academic coordinator and advisor to the Project's steering committee.

In this capacity, Patrick Curry commented that the desirability of encouraging the study of '*real* astrology in higher education' was indisputable, provided that the '*real*' was ensured through the active involvement of astrologers and with the proviso that the astrologers would need also to be 'reasonably knowledgeable about the academic discipline involved'; however, individuals with this dual expertise would be few and far between, he warned, at least until the Sophia Project had born fruit in the astrological community (Curry 06/2005: http://www.uraniatrust.org/articles.htm+charles+harvey+latimer&hl=en).

As he saw it, back in 1998, the nascent project faced a double goal:

1. To enable practising astrologers to study astrology academically, and

[180] See appendix A.

> 2. To enable non-astrologers to study astrology academically in a way that also respects its integrity.
>
> (Curry 06/2005: http://www.uraniatrust.org/articles.htm+charles+harvey+latimer&hl=en)

It was not the Sophia Project's purpose, on Curry's view, to enable non-astrologers to study 'non-real' astrology academically, nor to facilitate astrologers to study other subjects.

Curry identified a range of academic disciplines whose traditions and methods would be useful to an academic study of astrology: primary among these were history, anthropology and sociology (the latter two being good models, Curry suggested, as their practitioners were 'well-used to "bracketing" questions pertaining to the scientific "truth-value" of their subject matter'); after these came religious studies, philosophy, social and/or cognitive psychology, astronomy and cosmology; included after these were the broad range of commentaries upon the human condition dealt with under such headings as religious experience, literature, art, humour and even science itself (Curry 06/2005: http://www.uraniatrust.org/articles.htm+charles+harvey+latimer&hl=en).
But Curry took care to caution the largely academically naïve gathering of astrologers (at least in terms of current mainstream university attitudes and procedures) that:

> A relationship between discourses – e.g. astrology and the academy – always involves considerations of power; so the former cannot affect the latter without being, at least to some extent, changed by it. (Conversely, the price of purity is having negligible effects on the larger world. I am not saying this is necessarily wrong; that depends on what the goal is.) … What must be avoided is a relationship for which we pay a higher price (of whatever kind) than the benefits we obtain (of whatever kind).
>
> (Curry 06/2005: http://www.uraniatrust.org/articles.htm#Patrick%20Curry)

In his post conference report, Patrick Curry alluded to the fact that the establishment of a bachelor level degree in astrology as a professional training, managed and conferred by a single registering body, had been the subject of some contention at the Latimer House gathering. There had, however, been general support for the idea that the existent individual schools of astrology should build up their courses to BA level, with assistance from the Sophia Project, before approaching universities of their choice to seek academic accreditation. It must be imagined that the contention demonstrated the understandable reluctance of the organisers of the main astrological teaching bodies to

meld their different styles of astrology and rationalise the separate management, personnel and financial structures of their existent organisations into one single degree awarding body. But, however it was done, it would take time to develop any private horoscopy course to potential BA level; finding sufficient staff to teach it competently would not be easy and it would, in any case, take some persuasion to get any British university to ratify such a programme. Clearly, this was not a goal to be achieved within a couple of years. To use the Trust's funds to subsidise postgraduate studies, as opposed to undergraduate degrees, in astrology presumably seemed altogether more feasible a plan to those managing its distribution. Leaving the private teaching bodies to upgrade their courses in their own time with a view to eventually converting them to first degree level, the Sophia Project moved immediately to sponsor postgraduate courses pursuing what its literature described as 'the scholarly study of astrology, cultural astronomy and the heavens' human significance' within existent British university departments (06/2005: http://www.sophia-project.org.uk/).

And the Project's guiding personnel were - in modern rationalist terms - unbelievably successful in implementing this strategy. The trust's publicity literature lately states its purpose to be the advance of education 'through teaching the relationship between knowledge and beliefs about the heavens and every aspect of art, science and philosophy'. Its mission statement declares that:

> We seek to make it possible to study any aspect, past or present, of the heavens' human significance – whether social, intellectual, cultural, religious or psychological – and to do so in accordance with the best academic standards. Funds for this purpose are administered by the Sophia Trust, which is advised by a steering committee comprised of trustees and elected representatives from the astrological community.
> (06/2005: http://www.sophia-project.org.uk/ &
> http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/historical-and-cultural-studies/sophia/)

By 2003, the Sophia Project was associated with the running or planning of astrology-related research at five academic institutions: the Warburg Institute;[181] the University of

[181] The Warburg Institute, mentioned above for its connection with historian Frances Yates, is a graduate school within London university which specialises in the history of ideas up to 1700; it has a reputation for encouraging studies of the histories of magic, esoteric beliefs and astrology in the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods (Gunzburg & Campion 2003: 19). The Project has funded three-month fellowships to fund astrologically related research, although these were not necessarily awarded to astrologers.

Southampton;[182] Leicester University;[183] the University of Kent at Canterbury; and Bath Spa University College (as it was then known). It was not by chance that the last two of these establishments became hosts to the Trust's principal pair of initiatives: two of the 'elders' of British astrology had pre-existent connections with these institutions; Nicholas Campion[184] and Geoffrey Cornelius[185] were doctoral research students, the former at BSUC, the latter at UKC.[186] As community elders and long-term astrological educators, both were closely involved with the Sophia Project from its inception: practising very different styles of astrology, the university programmes with which they are associated reflect in large part their separate personal approaches to their subject. I audited classes in both programmes, travelling between Bath and Canterbury, during 2003 and 2004 at the kind invitation of the courses' convenors and faculty members and will try, below, to convey something of their ambiance as I experienced it, beginning with the flagship enterprise of astrology's academic ambitions at Bath Spa University.

ASTROLOGY, SOCIOLOGY AND FOOTBALL

The Sophia Centre's inaugural staff and students were proselytising vanguard members of the Trust's privately funded initiative to recover academic respectability for astrology in contemporary British society. As many of the group expressed it, enrolling in Autumn 2002 on its first course was without doubt an undertaking worthy of personal effort and sacrifice; a number had relocated to the Bath area to be within reach of the campus while others commuted considerable distances to attend seminars. How shocking and disrupting therefore, for these academically enthusiastic astrologers, was the notice served on the Sophia Centre and its courses by the University Administrators, in April 2006, to take effect from the end of the current academic year: after this date it was ordered to admit no further students to its MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology. The knowledge that its life at Bath was to be so brief, despite its healthy

---

[182] The Research Group for the Critical Study of Astrology (RGCSA) was established in the Social Studies Department of Southampton University (Gunzburg & Campion 2003: 19). It aims to study the validity of astrology using statistics and is administered by Pat Harris, a qualified astrologer, who is testing the significance of astrological factors in the successful outcomes of courses of fertility treatment.

[183] The Trust's 2004 literature advertised its sponsorship of two Masters courses, to be entitled 'World Archaeo-astronomy' and 'Astronomy: Theory, Methods and Practice', and developed by Professor Clive Ruggles within the School of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Leicester for introduction in 2006/2007 (*Astrology for the University Student* 2004: 68).

[184] See appendix A.

[185] See appendix A.

[186] Nicholas Campion acknowledges that all five Sophia funded university initiatives have been set up as a result of personal contacts within the institutions concerned (Gunzburg & Campion 2003: 20).

admission rolls, cannot but temper any review of the activities of its short existence and raise larger questions as to whether astrologers can realistically expect to carve – even a self-subsidised – niche for themselves within the walls of the modern academy.

In 2002, the Sophia Centre's first class lists were a veritable *Who's Who* of Astrology, as Darrelyn Gunzburg,[187] (herself a prominent member of the community who left her native Australia to make a new life in England driven by the enthusiasm of her partner to study at the Centre), remembered when she reviewed the first full year of its operation:

> Liz Greene[188] moved back to England from Switzerland to teach part of the Psychology Module; this is a huge imprimatur for the course. Bernadette Brady[189] moved here from Australia to be a student of the MA course. Well-known astrologers such as Darby Costello[190] (a current MA student) and Bernard Eccles[191], former President of the Astrological Lodge, and Wendy Stacey[192], current Chair of the Astrological Association (both MA graduates) now commute or have commuted each week from London. Other astrologers like Faye Cossar[193], now also an MA graduate, commuted from Amsterdam, and current MA student José Prudencio[194] commutes from Portugal. The support and commitment are phenomenal.
> (09/2005: http://www.skyscript.co.uk/gpip.html)

The prestigious status of this group – in astrological terms - did not, however, deter a number of the community's more cynical members from describing it as a collection of old astrologers who wanted to 'come in out of the cold'.

Whatever their motives for joining the programme, nearly all of the Sophia Centre's first students were unarguably more than competent astrologers. Representing a wide range of approaches to the subject, many were professional practitioners; some had written the standard educational texts for vocational students of the subject; a number of them occupied positions of responsibility on the boards and decision-making bodies of astrology's major governing and regulatory institutions; one of them sat on the steering committee of the Sophia Trust itself and, in this capacity, had in a sense employed the

---

[187] See appendix A.
[188] See appendix A.
[189] See appendix A.
[190] See appendix A.
[191] See appendix A.
[192] See appendix A.
[193] See appendix A.
[194] See appendix A.

MA course tutors. Between them, this group could speak authoritatively on an impressive range of loosely astrologically-related subjects in which they were for the most part self-educated: I have heard them, with no preparation, contest the meanings of specific Egyptian hieroglyphics; debate alternative translations of Hermetic texts; discuss the correspondences between Vedic and Western astrological traditions; consider current thought on stellar influences upon architecture; assess the efficacy of an application of Jungian conceptions of the human psyche to astrological theory; consider the historical roots and traditions of popular astrological perceptions and practices. Given all of this it was perhaps not surprising that, despite their determination to support the Sophia Centre, individual members of this student body – big fishes in astrology's small pond – were to greater or lesser extents frustrated by their initial experiences as neophyte members of the academy. While few of them agreed with each other on technical astrological methods, they were accustomed to interacting more or less amiably as fellow members of astrology's international lecture and conference circuits; now, however, pressures were different and there were novel tutor/student and student/student relationships to be negotiated as well as a whole lot more work to be fitted into the already busy schedules of these self-employed practitioners, lecturers, authors and teachers.

This should not be made too much of: during my own recent years of being a 'mature' student I have heard litanies of complaints from numbers of my peers; largely in common with the latter, Sophia Centre students' dissatisfaction was both personal and curricular. On the former level, for example, a number of the Centre's first intake reported finding it strange to be in subservient positions to their current tutors who were long-standing colleagues in the astrological community. The metamorphosis of at least one tutor from fellow astrologer to authoritative academic demonstrated a new higher level of possible attainment: how far did they want/would they be able to follow this lead and balance the seemingly mutually antipathetic activities of professional astrological practitioner and academic astrological theorist? As far as the curriculum of the MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology was concerned, most criticism was directed towards its compulsory *Research Methods* module, whose guest lecturers recommended the benefits of sociological, anthropological, phenomenological, etc., approaches to the group while universally failing – on my observation - to acknowledge

the *insider* status of its members *vis à vis* their research subject. (Neither, for that matter, did these tutors generally take into account the average age and professional expertise of this unusual class of students, sometimes with fairly toe-curling consequences.) As the students fruitlessly described the positions from which they were attempting to represent their astrological worldviews to the academy: 'we are on the *inside* studying you, on the *outside*; we are not on the *outside*, with you, studying people like us, on the *inside'*. For they were the 'other'; and would remain so, they fully appreciated, even after absorbing a smattering of sociological research methodology from these assorted visiting lecturers.

Acknowledging that 'everyone hates [the methodology module] and jumps up and down kicking and screaming' about it, Dr Liz Greene stressed its value in training astrologers to 'communicate with people who are coming from a different mind-set' by discovering how to meet them half-way. As she saw it:

> The academic world is not merely a monolith of intolerance. There are some extremely interesting and intelligent people who would like to know more, but because we can't articulate astrology in language other than our own jargon, they don't grasp what we're on about. Yet, if ideas from the astrological world can be communicated in a language academics can understand, they're extremely interested. *This has been our failing, not theirs*. (Greene in Gunzburg & Greene 2005: 47 my emphasis)

The last sentence is telling. The Sophia Centre students were seemingly expected to lose no time in making up the academic ground lost over astrologers' few hundred years' absence from the university. But this emphasis downplayed their astrological expertise and it is not surprising that the first students felt that the opportunities which they had anticipated that the course would give them to present astrology *to* the academy, were – sadly - sidestepped.

The unpopular *Research Methods* course reflected the Sophia Centre's predominantly sociological approach: its compulsory practical assignments generally required students to collect primary research data by means of questionnaires and/or formal interviews; but within this (to my mind excessively structured) frame, considerations of the definitions of the key terms and concepts included in these questionnaires were largely elided: the fact that, as a term, *astrology* is a catch-all description for a range of

practices, from predictive to psychotherapeutic, seemed hardly to be raised. Given the differences in the individual practices of this group of students, and their eminence within their own areas of the astrological field, it was perhaps hardly surprising that their course convenors seemingly preferred to gloss the question as to what astrology, actually, *is*, in favour of offering training in how it – as a generalised and undifferentiated phenomenon – should be researched sociologically and considered historically from an academic vantage point. At no time that I was present were larger issues addressed, such as the nature and quality of astrology or the relative merits of the ways in which its products are propagated and sold by professionals in today's market places; neither, to my knowledge, was an all-encompassing definition of the phenomenon ever canvassed. In place of the incisive academic consideration of astrology – its theory and its practice - which the new courses could have attempted, the seminars I attended, aside from those of the *Research Methods* module outlined above, tended to be fairly pedestrian studies of astrology's historical and social development in cultural contexts; these last were defined in terms of their major social theorists, to whose work students were briefly introduced. The *Sacred Geography* course had virtually no astrological content and – on the few occasions that I was present during its seminars – not much academic substance either; but it was nevertheless universally popular.

It must be remembered that the Centre and its courses were brand new; its staff members were negotiating its – and their - places within the pre-existent institutional structure and attempting to maintain harmonious relations with the university authorities, the Sophia Trust steering committee, and their astrologically prestigious students. The first Director of Centre, Dr Michael York, evaded the students' calls for him publicly to discuss and justify the content of the courses while maintaining a personally conciliatory and friendly manner; he was quoted as instructing one student not to mention astrology in his term paper if he could help it, at least not until the final paragraph! All three faculty members were watchful that their courses should be seen to cut the academic mustard and – a matter of some concern – at all costs avoid infringing the terms of their licence from the university authorities which prohibited the teaching of any type of practical astrology. For, it was a key condition of astrology's reintroduction to the academy that the subject should be studied in an exclusively

theoretical manner: practical, craft horoscopy was not to be conducted in the seminar rooms of the Sophia Centre, any more than others of the study of religion classes would normally comprise scripture lessons, prayer services or hands-on ritual performances. It being accepted by all concerned that an exclusively theoretical approach to their subject be rigidly maintained, the normal astrology-talk this group would have indulged in was mostly reserved for the kitchen and the corridor, only occasionally erupting into the teaching sessions where all matters horoscopic were invariably referred to in a theatrically conspiratorial manner and spoken of in hushed tones.

It was only on regrettably rare occasions, therefore, that I glimpsed the combined astrological expertise of this group of practitioners in action. I was with them one day in Corsham Court, the annexe which housed the bulk of the Sophia library, as a member of a party of students who had volunteered to help sort the books for cataloguing. As we sat on boxes with the volumes piled around us eating our lunchtime sandwiches, some visitors came looking for a late relative's astrology documents which had been donated to the library and were now apparently lost. After they had departed, empty-handed and disappointed, the group on the boxes suggested erecting a horary chart for the question 'Where are the Documents?'. As no one had a palmtop computer loaded with astrology software, those present had no option but to guess the chart with the benefit of their collective knowledge of the current planetary and zodiacal positions. Some jocularity ensued from their suspicion that the chart's Ascendant would be in the late degrees of Capricorn putting Saturn – then in Cancer - in the seventh house: here, immediately, were two strictures, or considerations, against judging a horary figure such as this. (In the tradition, such manifestations signal fundamental problems with the chart, the question and/or the astrologers' judgement: some horary practitioners will 'read through' the strictures while others will abandon the chart immediately; but, as with all things astrological, opinions vary on this subject.) The documents did not really exist, they speculated, they were a spoof! Someone thought there would be a preponderance of water in the chart: maybe the papers had been damaged by water?

A day later, Garry Phillipson[195] e-mailed members of the group with the properly calculated chart and his judgement of it: 'after all', he wrote, 'this is the kind of thing we're supposed to do' (09/2003: e-mail correspondence).[196] In the event, it transpired that Saturn was in the eighth, not the seventh, house; but the fact that the Ascendant was indeed in a late degree, coupled with the map's having a void-of-course Moon,[197] confirmed the group's initial guess that the map would be unlikely to yield a satisfactory answer. Having discussed the technical reasons for his choice of signifiers for the protagonists involved, Garry concluded that, if he were to judge the chart despite its inherent strictures, then he would have to say that the documents (which he suspected might have been surprisingly good) were lost, and gone for good. During these weeks, Bernadette Brady had been analysing the day-to-day progress of the US coalition invasion of Iraq, the so-called 'war against terror', which was then being reported extensively each day in the media. She was doing this in line with Guido Bonatti's thirteenth century astrological methodology for predicting the outcome of a castle besiegement. Having previously collaborated with Dr Lee Lehman, traditional astrologer and Academic Dean of Kepler College, Seattle, in applying Bonatti's rules to cricket in an attempt to determine the winner of The Ashes (Brady & Lehman 1997), Bernadette would deliver regular potted updates of this, her current work-in-progress, as we hovered over the kettle in the Sophia Centre kitchen before the start of seminars.[198]

---

[195] See appendix A.

[196] See appendix B.

[197] It is rumoured, according to horary practitioner John Frawley, (see appendix A), that Quentin Tarantino was inspired to make *Reservoir Dogs* after hearing some astrologers discussing the meaning of *void of course* (Frawley 2005: 65). Frawley reassures us that the phenomenon need not involve bloodshed, the Moon being so described if it 'does not perfect another aspect before leaving its present sign'.

[198] As early as March 2003, an astrologer named Steven Birchfield published a similar study of the US/Iraq conflict entitled *A War Perspective as seen from Guido Bonnati's Treatise 'On War'* on his *Divine Astrology* website. Bonnati, who died circa 1300, was reputedly a Professor of Astrology in Bologna and was most noted for his contribution to the successful defence of the city of Forli against the armies of Pope Martin IV in 1282. Applying Bonnati's astrological counsel in the judgement of questions of war, Birchfield concluded his analysis of the invasion and its outcome as follows:

> The military might of the US is unquestionable. And just judging it by strength of military might, equipment, leadership, etc. then there should be no real question as to who wins this conflict. So why doesn't this chart show more plainly a one-sided victory? The principle significators are all in some affliction and impeded, and there are many questions as to the 'righteousness' of the causes on both sides. I can't help but feel after examining this chart that this is a war which offers no satisfactory conclusion. It is not going to 'end' anything. In fact this may only be the beginning. In war there are no winners only losers. (03/2006: http://home.online.no/~stebi/usiraq.htm)

As well as demonstrating the covert nature of astrological practice within the Sophia Centre, these incidents exemplify the practical, almost prosaic, uses to which these experts put their astrology: pragmatic, material matters prompt them to reach for their ephemeredes rather than a quest for the finer qualities of people's personalities or psyches as might be imagined. A fair few are, I suspect, a little fatigued by the latter type of enquiries that can take up much of their professional lives as astrological consultants. Some have switched to teaching astrology, running astrology and/or researching astrology in addition to writing Sun sign copy for newspapers and magazines to get away from doing natal chart interpretations as a means of earning money, for not all are suited to the intense personal interactions which these can involve; others worry about the fundamental power imbalance upon which such encounters are based. In their separate and different ways, the ill-assorted group of hard working individualists who were involved with the Sophia Centre's opening wanted above all to contribute to its successful establishment. So united were these highly motivated students in wanting to advance the fortunes of astrology within the university system that they struggled to learn the rules of this new game and take their allotted places on its field. Those of their number who have grown up and older together in the small world of professional astrology are as familiar with each other's stances within the community as they are with their own; disagreeing with one another vehemently on matters astrological, they are nonetheless accustomed to co-existing more or less equitably at public, institutional and social events. So it was not surprising that the Sophia Centre lunchtime and evening conversations, conducted for the most part in the local pub, should link the students' general sense of dissatisfaction with talk of prominent personalities and political factions within the astrological community. Football was discussed almost as avidly. The tenor of these interactions was predominantly down-to-earth, blokey and jokey; and this was as different as it could be from the atmosphere which predominated at the second of the Sophia Project's initiatives in Canterbury.

ASTROLOGY, METAPHYSICS AND PRAYER

The University of Kent seminars in *Cosmology and Divination* which I attended were very different from the Bath Spa University sessions described above: if the latter were steadfastly down-to-earth and sociological, then the former were other-worldly and

metaphysical in orientation. At Canterbury, neither lecturers nor students were shy of addressing cosmological questions in an atmosphere that fitted well within a programme that might be defined as loosely philosophical, even 'religious' in a broad sense of that term. During their lunchtime refectory conversations, the *Virtual Mystics*, (their collective name is a play on the title of the *Study of Mysticism and Religious Experience* programme within which the astrology related modules then ran), unselfconsciously and routinely debated subjects such as synchronicity and prayer. In sharp contrast to the Sophia Centre students, most of the UKC intake had no astrological expertise, nor indeed any prior knowledge of the subject. This necessarily precluded any technical debates about the phenomenon in terms of the specifics of its methodology or practical application although, as noted above, I was never party to any such interactions at BSU. However, students' lack of basic knowledge of the core subject matter of the modules was obviously hampering to their progress and - to address this - private, extracurricular classes entitled *Astrology for Mystics* were offered to MA students choosing the *Cosmology and Divination* option. These were taught by Geoffrey Cornelius who, in addition to his postgraduate lecturing at UKC, was – and remains still – a PhD student within the same programme.

The *Astrology for Mystics* lessons were free for students, being apparently funded by an anonymous benefactor other than the Sophia Trust. The group also convened for 'practical divination' sessions, which encompassed applied astrology, Tarot and the *I Ching*, in accordance with Geoffrey's belief that the nature of the phenomenon of divination cannot be fully grasped in the absence of practical, personal and hands-on experience of actually doing it. In my opinion, Geoffrey Cornelius is among the most informed and creative teachers of horoscopy from whom a current British student of astrology could hope to learn, but the postgraduates at UKC were for the most part as unaware of this as they were of his role in shaping the political and epistemological topography within which today's astrologers live and work.[199] With his partner Maggie

[199] Students of practical astrology are, in effect, apprenticed to their tutor and the school (of tuition and thought) which dictates the style of horoscopy she advocates. Within the astrological community, due deference is paid, by novices, to their elders. But outsiders do not, of course, necessarily recognise this social pecking order. I remember once, in the pub after a meeting of the Astrological Lodge, asking Mike Edwards, (see appendix A), if he would give me his opinion of a horary chart I had in my bag. As I listened intently to his judgement of it, requesting clarification of his application of techniques I did not understand, I was irritated by an American astrologer who kept interjecting his own, uninvited views

Hyde[200] and some associates, Geoffrey Cornelius had, in the 1980s, founded The Company of Astrologers which is the chief British, probably the foremost Western, proponent of the 'astrology is divination' school of thought. To this day, for a practitioner within the community to suggest that astrology is divination is to (albeit sometimes unwittingly) signal her allegiance to the Company of Astrologers' 'camp', as I noted in my chapter entitled *Astrology as a Divination System*.

A typical session of *Astrology for Mystics* which I attended started with Geoffrey Cornelius encouraging his students to think like a sixteenth century astrologer, or more particularly like Dr John Dee, while studying the latter's elective chart for Elizabeth I's 1559 coronation in tandem with her natal horoscope.[201] As he often did, Geoffrey urged us to consider the human relations between astrological practices such as these and theoretical notions of free will and agency. It was suggested that we read Iamblichus and Ficino for enlightening accounts of the possibilities that exist for negotiating a rapprochement across the fate/free will divide; and for recognising that humans have agency with which they might choose – among other things – to employ the services of diviners. But Tudor choices gave way to more immediate concerns as someone confessed to having been in a state of negative anticipation since she had realised that her natal chart would soon be subjected to some hard transits.[202]

All astrologers are familiar with this syndrome: waiting anxiously for the materialisation of the effects of difficult transits or progressions that they know (from their ephemerides or their astrological computer software) are soon to beleaguer their own natal charts, or those of their family, friends and clients. To what positive use, I have often heard fellow students of astrology ponder, could they put this foreknowledge of (possibly) difficult days ahead? Should they attempt to meet the planets halfway by consciously acting out their symbolism? [203] Geoffrey did not deny the anxiety which

---

without any recognition of the fact that – as far as I was concerned - we were in the presence of one of the magi. Afterwards, he confirmed his outsider status when, after Mike had said his goodbyes, he asked 'who was that bloke?'.

[200] See appendix A.

[201] See appendix B.

[202] A transit is said to occur whenever a planet, moving in its orbit, forms an aspect to a planet, the Sun, Moon or any of the house cusps in a given horoscope (Hand 1976: 3).

[203] An astrologer of my acquaintance, by profession a primary school teacher who did a fair amount of chart-work for paying clients, anxiously anticipated the potentially disruption to her life signalled by

naturally accompanied the knowledge that there were – in astrological terms – hard times to come; surprisingly, to those who had not appreciated his divinatory 'take' on his subject, he first denied the validity of practising this type of astrological projection, before warning us of its potentially negative consequences. Astrology fell down completely, he asserted, in its anticipation of the future effects of what he termed astronomical data, (i.e. the planetary positions printed in an ephemeris). What is more, he told us, this falling down went completely unacknowledged by the standard approach to the subject which prevailed in the majority of astrology classrooms and symposia nowadays.

Asserting his own view of astrological timing, which he backed up with liberal references to the thought of classical scholars shaken together with that of Heidegger and Ricoeur, Geoffrey insisted that, as it was with the Tarot, so it was with astrology: the practices of both were of and for the present moment (cf. *The Moment of Astrology* (2003) for a full exposition of his thesis). Practitioners should take care lest their fearful attitudes when anticipating future problems on the basis of upcoming astronomical phenomena actually manifested the negative astrological omens they had visualised. And this, the effect upon their knowledge products of the attitudes with which astrologers approached their practices, was another phenomenon that went unmentioned in standard astrological discourse, he told the class. But, given his insistence that astrology was inseparable from the present moment, then *when* and *where*, I asked

---

Pluto transiting her natal Ascendant in the year that an annular solar eclipse exactly conjoined, by transit, her natal Sun. She worried that astrological portents such as these might signify her imminent death. At her request, I showed her chart, (with name removed and no explanatory comment from me), to one of the astrological magi with whom I was mixing; 'assure her that she isn't going to die', he told me, picking up immediately on the powerful (and potentially negative) astrological configurations it exhibited. 'But her life *will* change dramatically during the course of the year to come,' he added. When I relayed this message to my friend, I remember thinking it most unlikely that the settled routine of her apparently orderly life would be much disrupted. However, by the end of the year, she had broken her twenty-five year marriage, leaving her husband, her home and her responsibilities of care for her five small grandchildren, to move some six hundred miles away and start a new life with a lover whose existence she had concealed from everyone. Pondering her radical action during a subsequent visit to her old home town, she admitted to me that she may well have timed it to match the astrology she knew she was experiencing; but she insisted that she hadn't been a helpless subject of the stars, for she would at some time have made the break with or without her knowledge of them.

On the same theme, a consultant astrologer told me that her marriage had broken up when Uranus transited her natal Descendent. It was most unlikely, she told me, that any long-term relationship would survive this transit without being subjected to serious and testing pressure. But, spotting it coming up in the chart of a client, it was difficult, she told me, to decide what was the best thing to say to her. And what she ended up saying would, in her experience, very much depend both on the attitude of the client, revealed during the session and by her natal chart as a whole.

Geoffrey, did the astrology actually happen? Did it occur in the sky irrespective of its being witnessed by a suitably educated astrological interpreter, (as the printed ephemeredes of source data would seem to imply), or did it reflect the present qualities of the situation in which a horoscope was cast, no matter that this might be drawn for a past, or a future, date in time and for a distant geographical location? 'Be careful, Alie', joked Geoffrey in reply, 'you will get thrown out of astrology classrooms if you start asking questions like that, you know!'. For Geoffrey was acknowledging that the fact that I had asked the question was in itself to allow the possibility that the reading of astrological symbols was not so different from the interpretation of Tarot card spreads, or the reading of tea leaves at the bottom of a cup; our interchange betrayed a recognition that the hermeneutical astrological enterprise comprises a search for currently relevant symbolism among figures formed by notional planetary positions which, by reason of their intrinsic nature, come with dates and times – past, present and future – and locations – near and far – attached.

Now, most astrologers will not entertain the notion that theirs is a practice of the here-and-now. Astrology is held to be different from divination systems such as the Tarot because it happens up there in the sky all the time, regardless of whether or not there are any astrologers around to interpret it; 'don't traffic lights carry on changing throughout the night', practitioners will ask you, 'despite there being no passing motorists to stop, wait and go at their turning?'. But this majority 'astronomical' take on astrology, which follows logically from Ptolemy's re-direction of the astrological endeavour, from a casting of present omens to an interpretation of a lifetime's potential from a seed moment of inception, raises serious questions regarding the extent to which an individual may exercise free will and agency throughout her lifetime. Grappling simultaneously with both the practical methodology of astrology and with the theoretical implications of its practice, the would-be *Astrological Mystics* ran out of time: the former would, after all, have been sufficient subject matter for the hour's lesson; introducing the latter was a courageous complication which few teachers of astrology would have attempted and, as such, it was a typical move of the innovative Cornelius and one entirely fitting to these particular circumstances.

Presenting their *Cosmology and Divination* MA module to students who were largely non-astrologers, and did not necessarily attend the private *Astrology for Mystics* classes with a view to becoming conversant with astrology's main tenets, Dr Angela Voss[204] and Geoffrey Cornelius had commenced the first class of the UKC term by asking their students to consider the following three questions:

1 What is the 'truth' of divination, in relation to knowledge (e.g. epistemological, psychological, theological, scientific)?

2 What is the relationship of divination to the sacred? For example, is it an initiatory path?

3 What is the relationship of astrology to divination?
Astrology is the most enduring form both of cosmological speculation and of divination in Western culture, but not all of its features fit the usual definition of divination. (06/2003: UKC handout)

In advance of the final seminar of the course, the class had been e-mailed Henri Corbin's *Mundus Imaginalis* (1964) to read in preparation for what was planned as a reconsideration of the 'key questions' with which the term's studies had started. Their attention had been drawn to Corbin's invocation of the classical hierarchy of cognition which, applied to the reading of Christian scripture by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas to name but two, identified four levels of understanding described as *literal*, *allegorical*, *tropological* and *anagogical*.[205] Corbin's notion of the imaginal realm, derived from his study of Sufi mysticism, was considered and debated by the group. In Corbin's schema, which I discussed in my earlier chapter entitled *Astrology as a Divination System,* this revelatory realm is the symbolic locus of the anagogical level of understanding; it is the repository of ultimate knowledge and, as such, it is the sacred place of god's creation. 'Isn't this a bit blasphemous?', some members of the group asked. No, they were reassured, it need not be; not, at any rate, if the imaginal realm was conceived as a shared and sacred site from which all creation and, for that matter, all 'real' art too, was

---

[204] See appendix A.

[205] Over the course of the middle ages there had evolved a formal division of the 'senses' of scripture: known as the *quadriga*, it extended Origen's three senses of scripture - body, soul, and spirit - to four. These were literal, allegorical, tropological (or moral) and anagogical, as explained in the medieval verse:

> *Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, Moralis quid agas, quid speres anagogia*.
> (The letter teaches the deed, the allegory what you should believe, the moral what you should do, the anagogue what you should strive for.)

(Henri de Lubac 1964: I1, 23ff., cited by Peter Harrison 07/2006: http://www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/cis/Harrison/pdf/Peter%20Harrison%20-%20lecture.pdf)

derived. (You could apparently tell the latter by its ability to move those who encountered it. Shakespeare, Dante and Botticelli were mentioned as examples of its creators; I contemplated throwing in Tracy Emin's name for consideration, but decided against it.[206]) Corbin's account of all of this, which could be read as a re-visitation of the Plotinus/Iamblichus divide, was particularly successful, it was suggested, because he wrote about the imaginal realm *from* the imaginal realm: his was not simply a theoretical or descriptive account of the phenomenon; it was – literally - an inspired one. This, it was mooted, was where astrology came in, for it, too, was rooted within a spiritualised, pre-Enlightenment world which was able to accommodate the notion of anagogical understanding. For it could be argued that the knowledge that originated in realised astrological symbolism belonged at the higher levels of Corbin's hierarchy of understanding. But, we should appreciate that linking astrological divination with notions of enlightenment was to exceed by far its modern manifestation as a psychotherapeutic counselling device. 'This is dangerous material', it was agreed.

The Students were challenged to come up with their own, or alternative, explanations of divinatory practices and experiences. But no one in the group appeared to object to the notion that divination was a potentially enlightening and religious – or at least a neo-religious – phenomenon which invokes a level of understanding 'higher' than that which can be come by, or explained, literally; nor did anyone present demur at its being taken for granted that astrology is a divinatory device. The discussion ranged, rather, around the means and methods whereby knowledge derived from this higher-level understanding of symbolism could be reported and examined within today's academy. It was agreed that 'artists', as well as some religious practitioners, such as Tantric Buddhists, shared with certain types of astrologer an anagogical understanding which resulted, among other things, in their having fewer problems than most in accepting the existence of such a phenomenon. Knowing better than to criticise this argument on the grounds of its circularity, I objected instead that 'artists' and Tantric Buddhists do not work – in this capacity at any rate – within the academy; critics and theoreticians of art

[206] Classical, representational, pre-modern art and literature seemingly go hand-in-hand with this material; non-representational, modern creative expressionism is not generally considered to be 'real' art; neither is postmodern eclectic pastiche. I heard a practitioner sigh audibly as an academic astrologer displayed a Lucas Cranach Senior illustration on the overhead projector to represent an horoscopic symbol. 'Not *another* bloody woodcut!' he muttered, raising his eyes to the ceiling despairingly.

and religion do. The academy was home to codifiers of art and religion, and could be said to be parasitic upon the producers of the first-order phenomena upon which it practised its second-order scholarship.

But, however difficult it might be to achieve, all those involved with the *Cosmology and Divination* programme welcomed the development of a critical astrological discourse within the academy. Once re-established as a *bona fide* university subject, they hoped that astrologers would feel secure enough to reflect critically upon their practices and begin to establish a tradition of theoretical debate. As I have heard the currently sorry state of formal interchange within the community excused, the astrological boat has been, in recent history, so small a vessel, and pitched upon such violently inhospitable seas, that those who have sailed in her have dared not risk rocking her further by engaging in serious internal debates.[207] Finding a safe haven away from the marketplace will, theoretically, facilitate astrology in changing its inherited style. It would allow a truce to be declared in what one professional astrologer described to me as the 'turf war' that is currently fought by practitioners over what is after all, (and here she laughed ruefully), the very small territory that astrology commands. Although, the solitary nature of the divinatory enterprise, coupled with astrology's individualistically oriented provenance, (reported by Tamsyn Barton (1994: 209) and noted in an earlier chapter), would seem to militate against such a rapprochement.

Cosmology and Divination has created a micro-cosmos of its own at UKC. More correctly, it has been shaped in large part by the combined skills and interests of its founding faculty members who maintain an almost naïve approach to colleagues and authorities. They were seemingly unprepared for orthodox academic reactions to their heterodox subject matter, such as that of a fellow tutor in the School of European Culture and Languages who asked if the words *Cosmology and Divination* displayed on their office door constituted some kind of a Harry Potter joke, or for the university's request that links to the MA course be removed from personal websites which

[207] Astrologers unarguably sail a small boat across stormy waters, but their practices have been continually, and successfully, adapted over the centuries in line with current social and cultural milieus, and with fluctuating market demand for their products. There has never, however, been a forum for theoretical debate which floats free from the day-to-day pressures and rivalries that dominate relations between jobbing astrologers. It could be argued that the universities might provide such an environment.

advertised faculty's activities as professional astrologers. Their attitude has actually turned out to be an effective political *modus operandi;* and, whatever their other considerable accomplishments in and out of the academy, these individuals remain astrologers whose practice is central to the ways they live their lives and teach their courses. Which is something they will seemingly be doing more of in the future, when UKC takes over from BSU as the primary site for The Sophia Project's sponsored programmes: the dedicated *Cosmology and Divination* MA course enrols its first students in Autumn 2006.

FRANCE IS A FOREIGN COUNTRY: THEY DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY THERE[208]

The disparate styles of the BSU and UKC programmes outlined above might surprise an astrologically uninformed observer, especially given the fact that their different approaches are not alluded to as such by the pioneer astrologer academics who steer them. In fact, the courses exactly mirror these individuals' own views of astrology and, in this respect, they resemble the practical schools of horoscopy which advertise their course rubrics in normative terms with no reference to alternative styles of astrological practice. This becomes less surprising if it is appreciated that one cannot, after all, congruently transmit someone else's esoteric knowledge: an astrologer resolved, for example, to explore possible statistical evidence for astrology's social functions could never enthuse her students with a neo-platonist's metaphysical worldview; nor would the latter be likely to inspire her students with – say - sociological or statistical astrological data. As a primarily practical craft, astrology doesn't actually bear too much intellectual analysis over and above a close study of its technical method. It may - and obviously does - inspire theoretical consideration to the extent that certain of its practitioners are naturally inclined to this kind of mental activity. But, informed initially by experiential practice, astrology is a predominantly subjective phenomenon that, lacking the benefit of state sponsored scholarship for some centuries, has had to promote itself in a competitive market place without the luxury of systems for comparative analysis, peer review, citation and reference. This being the case, for as long as the study of astrology in higher education remains *real* in Patrick Curry's definition cited above, (the qualification being protected by the continued active involvement of astrologers), then its learning programmes are likely to reflect the

[208] With apologies to L.P.Hartley (1958).

personal astrological practices of the educators responsible for shaping and propagating them who, having lately been bold enough to set their sights on the ivory towers, are for the most part additionally successful individual operators in the competitive market culture of astrology.

While the Sophia Project was working to introduce the serious study of astrology into the British university system, news came from France that a professional astrologer had submitted a nine hundred page PhD thesis proposing the scientific qualities of astrology to the Sorbonne. Germaine Elizabeth Hanselmann, also known as Elizabeth Teissier, is a colourful media personality in France, a popular Sun-sign columnist in the Netherlands, and the author of a number of astrology books who boasts ex-President Mitterrand as one of her sometime clients.[209] In April 2001, having completed her doctoral research with the guidance of her supervisor, sociologist Professor Maffesoli, she successfully defended her thesis entitled *La Situation Épistémologique de L'astrologie à travers L'ambivalence Fascination/Rejet dans les Sociétés Postmodernes*.[210] It might have been thought that this was the natural era for astrology's reintroduction to the academy, moves in Britain being a reflection of more general European trends and changes further afield in the United States and India, but the award attracted vociferous criticism which was directed at Teissier herself, at her supervisor and at so august an institution as the Sorbonne for entertaining her – and her inappropriate project – in the first place. A number of scientists, including four French Nobel Prizewinners, wrote letters of protest to their then Minister for Education (03/2006: http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Élizabeth_Teissier). The antagonism was not confined to academic circles, nor to France; critics outside the university walls rallied to

[209] I was amused to find a copy of Elizabeth Teissier's book, entitled *Sous Le Signe de Mitterrand* (1997), in the University of Sussex library, shelved with works on contemporary French political history. In it, Teissier describes her close working relationship with President Mitterrand, who was apparently not the first French President to have consulted an astrologer. General Charles De Gaulle is alleged to have sought the advice of astrologer and sometime Free French Major Maurice Vasset on a regular basis from 1940 until his resignation in 1969 following his defeat in the previous year's referendum. Vasset claims that he tried unsuccessfully to dissuade De Gaulle from calling the referendum, telling him that – should he go ahead with his plans – he would undoubtedly lose his mandate (Bell 2000).

[210] Michel Maffesoli (1996 & cf. Stronge 2006) has argued for a re-espousal of Durkheim's notion of the basic connection between religion, emotion and society, and a re-introduction of a broadly defined 'religiosity' to the processes whereby social life is theorised. This would facilitate a recognition of what Maffesoli sees as contemporary 'passional' and neo-tribal orders of social re-composition. He posits these multiple real and ephemeral groupings as being instrumental in postmodern individuals' re-enchantment and recovery of a social dynamic.

defend these supposed bastions of rationality. Writing in *The Times,* Magnus Linklater complained that:

> 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)

Teissier's doctorate had, nevertheless, to be a sign of changing astrological times and one which I had naively assumed, at the start of my research among the first postgraduate students of astrology to be enrolled at modern British universities, would be as welcome in astrological circles as it was unwelcome in academic ones. Imagine my surprise when I found that this was decidedly *not* the case. I was sorting astrology books for the library at Bath Spa University with a number of the Sophia Centre's inaugural MA students who were also seasoned astrological practitioners, authors and/or educators when someone unearthed a pile of books by Elizabeth Teissier; there was a general groan of displeasure that titles such as these should be given shelf space in a serious library. Wondering at their response, I asked if they weren't pleased at the success of a fellow professional astrologer who had found her way through the labyrinths of the most prestigious of French academic institutions and emerged with the glittering prize of a doctorate for a scholarly consideration of her own subject of astrology. 'Why should we be interested in her achievements?', they responded disdainfully; 'she might call herself an astrologer, but that doesn't mean she is one'. 'She may well now be the proud possessor of a Sociology doctorate from the Sorbonne', they said, 'but whatever else she is, she isn't a serious astrologer!'.

The intonation was ironic. The astrologers in the library were indulging in a little of the *ad hominen* in-crowd criticism practised by groups such as this the world over. I took them to be signalling their objection to Elizabeth Teissier's style and approach to astrology: her colourful media image and her insistence that astrology was a science were not likely to recommend her to members of this group as an ideal ambassador for astrology in the prestigious academy; a certain amount of competitive resentment probably came into it, too. But, this exchange amusingly illustrates some problems fundamental to the qualitative judgements which attend any theoretical consideration of astrology:

- Firstly, how can a non-astrologer hope to judge the relative merits of a self-styled astrologer in terms of her methodology, her style of practice, the 'correctness' of her prognostications, or assess her qualifications for adopting the epithet 'astrologer' in the first place;

- Secondly, given the partisan and competitive nature of the astrological community and the disparate styles of its intuitively and commercially informed practices, are astrologers themselves any better qualified to deliver equitable judgements upon their fellow practitioners?

Despite moves to institutionalise and professionalise astrology, there remains a vast variation in content, level and approach between its separate educational bodies; and, there are numbers of self-styled astrologers who are largely, or completely, self-taught and fit within no one particular school of astrological practice other than their own. It should not be overlooked that the elders of the community, who formed the institutions and wrote the course rubrics, are of a generation which preceded the taking of astrology exams and therefore often lack relevant qualifications save those awarded as honoraria. (In this respect they resemble the first drivers of motorcars in Britain who never actually took a driving test despite driving competently all their lives; the original codification of driving skills would in all probability have been shaped and implemented by members of this early group of technically unqualified motorists.) The competition between the private educational bodies serves only to exacerbate the mutual hostilities between them as they jostle for those students who are prepared to do the requisite work and pay the substantial fees demanded of anyone setting out to obtain formal astrological qualifications.

The recorded tradition of astrological methodology is sufficiently wide-ranging to accommodate a variety of very different styles and modes of philosophy and practice and, as has been noted, there is no forum for debating their relative merits, even were such formal comparisons appropriate in relation to a divinatory discourse such as astrology. So, Elizabeth Teissier describes herself as an astrologer, publishes books on the subject and boasts at least one impressive client; in this guise, she enrages the traditional academy by purporting to conduct doctoral research in astrology from her viewpoint as a professional practitioner of the art. Non-astrologers have no choice but to accept her at her word: she is an astrologer because she says she is, and she can offer plausible evidence to support her claim. And, given that evidence, it would appear that

she has every right to make that claim. But it takes her fellow astrologers to comment authoritatively on the quality of her knowledge, method, practice and professional attitude towards astrology. How could anyone else possibly do so? And problematically, for reasons given above, her fellow astrologers are actually the people one would least trust to deliver a judgement concerning the expertise of one of their fellow practitioners who is - at base - a rival in their market place.

In addition to the problems of judging astrological qualifications and practices, and assessing the justifications of self-styled astrologers for adopting the epithet, there remains the worry which Patrick Curry voiced at the outset of the Sophia Project's initiative, cited above: it was never the Trust's purpose, as he put it, to enable non-astrologers to study 'non-real' astrology academically, nor to facilitate astrologers to study other subjects. But, the pressure of keeping seminar rooms full, coupled with the difficulty in assessing a prospective student's practical commitment to astrology and the lack of any formal astrological standard requirement for university entrance, is bound to result in the Sophia Trust's educating non-astrologers. The fact that the Trust has recently sponsored the regular publication by an umbrella body known as the Advisory Panel on Astrological Education (APAE) of a booklet entitled *Astrology for the University Student* would seem to indicate that it is cognisant of this fact. The pamphlet lists the prospectuses (and inception charts) of the institutions it represents for those students of the new astrology-related university courses who want to 'expand their understanding of astrology beyond academic level' via the classes, seminars and workshops operated by the astrological community. Acknowledging that students on the Sophia funded courses will be considering astrology theoretically – studying its history, philosophy and sociology – the APAE suggests that it is not 'really possible to grasp how important a role it has played throughout history without some comprehension of how it actually works and is applied' (2004: 1).

Publications such as this, circulated at conferences and other gatherings, serve to confirm the majority opinion of the British astrological community that the bastion of the rational academy has been tentatively breached. The recent and surprising news that the Sophia Centre at BSU is to be closed by the authorities has curbed previous enthusiasm, but UKC is initiating a stand-alone *Cosmology and Divination* MA, so the

future of academic astrology remains bright-ish. The community's more aspiring members are now presented with a new tier of possible achievement, and a number have already invested time, effort and money to attain it. The first of the astrological elders to support the Sophia initiative by joining the new astrology courses have completed their Masters degrees; some have already embarked upon doctoral research projects and are enrolled, not only in the Sophia funded establishments which double as enclaves of astrological tolerance, but also in mainstream university departments where they have secured places on their own, and their subject's, merits. I know of at least three current students of British universities who, openly describing themselves as astrologers, are conducting doctoral research into classical, historical and judicial aspects of astrology.

As a long term student of astrology myself, my own DPhil research project at the University of Sussex has been seen by astrologers as further corroboration of the recent acceptance of their subject as a valid topic for academic consideration. These factors have had a recognisable effect upon the self-esteem of the community as a whole: the tenor of debate at conferences and symposia is (albeit slowly) becoming more rigorous and intellectually demanding as material and practices learned in the academy are brought back to astrology forums by the subject's first dedicated graduates. It is arguable whether these disciplinary crossovers have always been intellectually justifiable, and it is debatable, on my view, whether its move towards the academy will serve astrology well in the future. Nor, for that matter, have the latest developments been universally welcomed in astrological circles: a number of practitioners resent the resources invested in what will always be a minority interest pursuit; some cynically anticipate a reinforcement of the existent hierarchy of authority and influence within the community and the introduction of a new marketing category.[211] But, as far as most astrologers in Britain today are concerned, astrology is at long last coming in out of the academic cold for good or ill. How correct are they in making this assumption? My

[211] I note that one of the BSU graduates has recorded achieving an MA with distinction in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* alongside her practical astrology diplomas and certificates in the short CV with which each astrologer advertises themselves on one of the web-based 'live astrology readings' credit card phone-line services; reading it, I realised that this was, on my non-commercially involved view, a wholly inappropriate use of an academic qualification of this type. But, as operators in a commercial market, it is after all to be expected that practitioners will capitalise, as any university graduate would, on their investment.

own experience as an ethnographer of astrology is somewhat at odds with this cosy view, as will become clear.

THE GO-BETWEEN[212]

Most self-respecting ethnographers embark upon new research projects with a view to finding out as much as they can about their research subjects. Social anthropologists are after all supposed to believe, as Clifford Geertz puts it, that:

> The answers to our most general questions – why? how? what? whither? – to the degree they have answers, are to be found in the fine detail of lived life. (Geertz 2000: xi)

This curiosity about the minutia of other people's lives is a way of life which does not necessarily confine itself, for practising ethnographers, to firmly demarcated groups of research subjects. The habit of focussing upon the detail of what people say and do can become a way of interacting with the world in which one finds oneself, even when one is not officially on duty as a social researcher. Participant observers studying 'at home' differ from their colleagues who have gone away to do fieldwork in being simultaneously and very obviously involved with - minimally - two cultures: their research communities and their academies. So it happens that, when they aren't observing the 'fine detail of lived life' in the former they will – almost as a matter of course – be conducting the same exercise in the latter. Remaining for the duration of my fieldwork within reach of my university, and continuing to visit its campus on as regular a basis as my fieldwork programme allowed, I had ample opportunity to experience the academy, not only from my customary position as one of its student members, but additionally - and confusingly - from the novel viewpoint of an ethnographer of Western astrology. This last exercise proved almost as interesting to me as did the interactions with members of the astrological community which were taking up most of my time; the more so because I was somewhat taken aback by its nature.

When planning my project, I had been delighted, though unsurprised, to discover that – as far as I could tell - the British astrological community remained ethnographically unexplored; I had put this down to the fact that it takes time – and inclination - to attain

[212] With more apologies to L.P.Hartley (1958).

fluency in its language. While I was aware that the academy had traditionally upheld the modernist intellectual view that manifestations of pre- or non-rational belief systems within the metropolitan states were an abomination best ignored in the hope that they would die a natural death, I had naively imagined contemporary attitudes to have softened in this regard, given that it is – after all – central to the nature of the discipline of social anthropology that its practitioners could, without censure, and furthermore *should* observe and study anything and everything that manifests itself within human societies. So I was unprepared for the critical responses I received from academics once I had embarked upon my research project, the more so because I had experienced absolutely the opposite at the outset of my venture, when I had encountered nothing but enthusiastic support from all concerned.

The negative reactions with which I quite suddenly found myself having to deal can be summarised into two categories, which incorporated:

i) Ridicule and disbelief ranging to horror that I should be attempting a serious anthropological study of a subject such as Western astrology;

ii) A tacit assumption by some of my fellow research students that the nature of my subject rendered me one of them, a fellow – albeit a less covert - 'flake', with whom they could share, unsolicited, the details of their own privately held, non-rational beliefs and ritual practices with equanimity, apparently confident of the fact that I would neither object on rational grounds to any of their activities nor be indiscreet enough to blow their cover in public.

I admit that the first of these reactions surprised me. The numerous negative responses that I experienced, ranging from ridicule to animosity, reflected a degree of outrage that a practice such as Western astrology should be taken seriously as a subject for academic comment that I had not expected. And, the knowledge I acquired about the private beliefs of a number of my fellow research students, as a result of the second category of reactions I experienced, informed me that universities are peopled by more people who are personally and privately involved – to greater or lesser extents – with a range of non-rational discourses from astrology itself, through alternative healing practices and magical rituals to more mainstream religious beliefs, than I would previously have imagined.

YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE ALL THAT STUFF DO YOU?

'What is your research subject?' is a question which invariably crops up early in any encounter within a university situation, when one is introduced as a research student within a Social Anthropology department. As a response to this enquiry, the words 'Western astrology' have prompted reactions ranging from amused puzzlement to enraged hostility from students, faculty members and even some professors of a range of disciplines. Academics who have not immediately offered me their (unsolicited) opinion that 'astrology is a load of bollocks', and bemoaned the fact that social anthropology should have fallen so low as to be accepting subjects such as mine, have tended to wait for a quiet moment before taking me to one side and asking in a conciliatory tone 'now tell me, you don't really believe all that stuff, do you?'. In one – admittedly extreme - case the enquirer abandoned his previously convivially social interaction, forgot that he had asked me for my e-mail address with a view to keeping in touch, and quite literally ran backwards from the room never to be seen or heard from again. 'Oh, I thought you said you were an anthropologist?' has been a more common response to the words, whereby the other party has feigned disbelief together with poor hearing. 'I'm very surprised that *they* allowed you to study a subject like that' was a notable follow-up remark to this opening gambit. Upon my assuring this university administrator – working, not for one of the 'hard' sciences, but within social anthropology – that *they* had not only allowed me to study Western astrology, but had additionally been generous enough to fund my research, she remained suspicious: 'I once had a student who wanted to study *myth,* (she spat the word contemptuously across her office in my direction), but *they* wouldn't hear of it'. Well, I chuckled to myself as I walked away, studying *myth* never did Lévi-Strauss any harm.

These, at best, incredulous and, at worst, hostile reactions to my consideration of Western astrology in education can be summed by the nickname which I discovered I had acquired among members of my university needing to describe me to their friends but not knowing my name: 'oh you know', they were reported to have said, 'that woman who believes in the stars'. Now, I can chuckle at this description and continue so to do; but not without recognising its design subtly to undermine both my status as a serious research student of the social sciences and Western astrology as an area of study worthy of such a student's attention. Never, I suspect, would a researcher in an area

such as – say – migration studies be treated with this type of humorous contempt; nor would an anthropologist fresh home from gathering data on the belief systems of the inhabitants of some 'exotic' island location ever be so summarily dismissed. Travel seemingly continues today – as it did in the discipline's pioneering days - to establish some real geographical, and/or notional temporal but, most importantly, a *safe* distance between the anthropologist and her 'other'.

Among the ethnographers who have stayed at home and reviewed their encounters with university colleagues while engaged upon their fieldwork down the road, so to speak, Judith Okely (1992: 15) has discussed the vicarious experience of being, of a sudden, the 'other', and treated as an exotic campus visitor by those with whom she had until then been 'at home'. This afforded her a novel perspective from which to view her academic fellows while demonstrating, on a personal level, the stereotypical public responses which shaped the lives of her research subjects. Okely's Gypsy research subjects were seemingly brought altogether too close for comfort, as far as her university was concerned, by her journeying to and fro between field and academy. To my mind, my astrological research subjects were as unwelcome on my campus as Okely's Gypsies had been on hers. Both being seemingly as out of place as 'the gardening tools and the row of gumboots' whose presence in a 1960s converted bathroom so far destroyed Mary Douglas's repose as to prompt her to construct a universal explanation for societal demarcations of pollution and purity (Douglas 1966: 2ff.). Without wishing to labour the point, I would suggest that my subject matter was, quite literally, matter out of place in a mainstream university; its presence there threatened to introduce a little 'inherently untidy experience' into its time honoured semblance of intellectual order (Douglas 1966: 4).

In their recently co-authored book, *Astrology, Science and Culture*, academic astrologer Patrick Curry and anthropologist Roy Willis review and contrast the current social significance of astrology with its present academic status. Citing the first century BCE aphorism of Terence's – 'nothing human is alien to me' – in defence of a serious and theoretical study of astrology, (words I have myself been tempted on occasion to recite ponderously to my critics), they assert that:

> It is a safe assumption that human beings have always found the heavens a source of wonder, meaning and guidance. The particular tradition of doing so that we know as astrology originated in ancient Mesopotamia about four thousand years ago, but is now virtually global. Notwithstanding all the subsequent changes and refinements, most recently computerization and mass marketing, its ancient intuitions, and the craft of their explication, seem to have lost none of their compelling attraction in the twenty-first century CE. Having survived sweeping indictments by various political and intellectual authorities of the day, from the Christian Church to secular scientists, there is no reason to think astrology will not continue to exist, perhaps even flourish, in the future. … Yet in the academy the partisan intentions of its critics have largely succeeded, because even when astrology has been addressed, all too often it has been as merely a failed version of something else: a primitive or incomplete magical religion, or else a pitiable or contemptible pseudo-science. (Willis & Curry 2004: 3)

Curry and Willis go on to criticise intellectuals, including the anthropologists among them who, they believe, should know better, for seemingly accepting without a second thought Theodor Adorno's (1994) contention that belief in astrology is a pathological indicator of authoritarian irrationalism and, as such, hardly worthy of serious consideration. They decry the fact that, as a result of this predominant attitude, astrology's potential as 'an enormous resource for human self- understanding' has been overlooked. For, they remind their readers, astrology's practitioners are to be found in ancient Babylon, on the Internet and in all of the centuries between, while its enemies range from Cicero right through to Richard Dawkins (Willis & Curry 2004: 3-4).

ASTROLOGY AND 'McUNIVERSITY'[213]

As has been reviewed in earlier chapters, astrology's unique position as an esoteric discourse doubling as a sometime science, and its practitioners' equivocal relationships with religion and science, and belief and knowledge, serve to place it and them in the firing line for criticism both from the academic mainstream, from science and from the religious establishment. The results of its recent attempts to broker a rapprochement with the first of these are not easily evaluated at this early date. The fact that a very few British university administrations have accepted Sophia Trust sponsored postgraduate programmes in astrology related topics probably says more about the current economic climate in which the academy operates than it does about the comparative respectability of astrology as a university discipline. The inception – and the seemingly imminent

[213] George Ritzer (1998: 151 ff.).

demise - of the Sophia Centre at BSU demonstrate that today's university administrations operate primarily along mercantalist lines.

In so far as any conclusions may be drawn at this stage, I would suggest that astrology remains largely beyond the academic pale. I have stressed that practical horoscopy is off-limits as far as any of the current university courses are concerned. But, even as an exclusively theoretical subject of study, there seems to be a common consent that the titles of the astrology courses which appear in college rubrics should be covertly encoded: slipped in behind *Cultural Astronomy* at Bath Spa university, *Astrology* does not rate a mention of any kind in the name of the new *Cosmology and Divination* MA at the University of Kent; on checking the latter's website just prior to going to press, I note that the programme's title has acquired a qualification, currently being advertised as the *Cultural Study of Cosmology and Divination.*
(09/2006: http://www.kent.ac.uk/secl/thrs/postgrad/MACosDiv/ma-cosdiv.htm)
While this naming tactic may have headed off astrology's opponents for the time being, it has not avoided censure from scientists who are proprietorial towards the terms astronomy and cosmology; (hence the qualification, one assumes). The double standard hinted at by this covert naming convention is corroborated by the following reported anecdote for which, it must be said, I have no confirmatory evidence.

It concerns the Faculty of Astrological Studies' annual summer school that is currently held at Brasenose College, Oxford, a town advertised on the FAS website as 'the City of Dreaming Spires' and 'one of the oldest and most prestigious educational centres in the world'. As an establishment, Brasenose has an historical connection with astrology: Elias Ashmole was a member of the college in 1645. In the twenty-first century, it is apparently content to rent its premises during the summer vacation to the FAS for the purposes of practical horoscopy tuition; but it reputedly stipulates that the word *astrology* must not appear on any public notices displayed by the Faculty during its brief summer lease for fear – so I was told – 'of upsetting the tourists'. The summer school has something of a history of moving between the Oxford colleges: when, in an earlier era, it was forced to decamp from Winchester to Jesus because of the former's objections to astrology, then Faculty Vice-President Charles Harvey was reputed to have quipped 'we have been thrown out of Winchester into the arms of Jesus'.

(07/2006: http://www.astrology.org.uk/pages/learn_astrology/summer_school.htm & http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/rhatch/pages/03-Sci-Rev/SCI-REV-Home/resource-ref-read/major-minor-ind/westfall-dsb/SAM-P.htm &
06/2005: Hyde at www.uraniatrust.org/news.htm+charles+harvey+astrology&hl=en)

Over twenty years ago, Jean-François Lyotard (1984) forecast the increasing mercantilisation of knowledge in societies prone to the postmodern condition, (defined as a cultural mode demonstrated by a growing incredulity towards the metanarratives that once legitimated scientific reason and underpinned societal values); certainly, astrology's recent relations with academia would seem to confirm his prediction. Lyotard warned that the increasing obsolescence of the Enlightenment's organising narratives would bring about a crisis, not only in metaphysical philosophy, but concomitantly in the modern university institutions founded upon its principles and legitimated by a belief in scientific progress: questions of truth, the stock-in-trade of the modern academy, would accordingly be replaced by pragmatic queries concerning the uses and saleability of knowledge as 'the capacity to deliver outputs at the lowest cost replaces truth as the yardstick of knowledge'; skills would be taught where once ideals had been instilled (Bloland 2004: 109, Crook et al. 1992: 31 & Lyotard 1984: xxiv & 51). Postmodern societies are additionally characterised by being predominantly oriented towards consumption rather than production; advanced metropolitan economies having replaced production, once central to their historic capitalist enterprise, with consumption of the goods that are increasingly manufactured in peripheral states.

George Ritzer has extrapolated his McDonaldization thesis from this centrality of consumption, following Lyotard in employing modernism and postmodernism as different modes of analysis rather than epochs that follow one another (Ritzer 1998: 117-118); he expects that universities, re-invented as sites of educational consumption, will become ever more similar to the fast food restaurants that double as the loci of notionally nutritional consumption and models for postmodern societal development (Ritzer 1998: 153). In Ritzer's schema, the institution he terms 'McUniversity' should expect to grapple simultaneously with the increasingly exacting demands of its consumer-students and the relative decline in its state funding. Accordingly, he expects it to attempt, while cutting its operational costs, both to discover novel funding sources

and to attract paying customers by offering them 'excitement, color and fun'; potential students, *qua* increasingly jaded customers, will be offered whatever they say they want, as part of a market driven impetus to re-enchant this academic 'cathedral of consumption' and replace its inherited knowledge canon of metanarratives with which its clients have become thoroughly disenchanted (Ritzer 2004 & 1998: 151 ff., 155 & 158. Cf. Hayes & Wynyard (2002) *The McDonaldization of Higher Education*).

Theorists, such as Lyotard and Ritzer, describe current trends in university education which, I would argue, are aptly illustrated by astrology's latest manifestation as a respectable academic subject. For the Sophia Trust's initiative to sponsor academic courses in astrology has been remarkable in fulfilling so exactly what commentators of the current academic scene have identified as the current requirements that university administrations:

1. Identify sources from which to acquire non-governmental financial support;

2. Attract new students, if not precisely with the 'excitement, color and fun' advocated above, then by appealing to their nostalgia for pre-modern, romantic discourses rooted in 'a time that seems in retrospect enchanted, more stable, more predictable, and safer' (Bloland 2004: 117);

3. 'Redouble their efforts to bring marginal persons and ideologies into an expanded modernist college and university' with a view, firstly, to increasing their student rolls and, secondly, to socialising these minorities into the academic *modus operandi* without directly challenging the truth values of their knowledge systems (Bloland 2004: 123);

4. Accept only those marginal persons and ideologies that are amenable to adaptation in line with the requirements of the technological and computerised systems of higher education for knowledge comparability and modular transferability, and are sufficiently academically respectable to preserve inherited semblances of epistemological propriety.

Given that astrology's recaptured academic acceptability can be so closely tied to the predicted trajectories of the higher education establishments of postindustrial metropolitan cultures, it would appear that its future is bright as a university discipline; however, the immanent closure of the Sophia Centre at BSU would seem to temper this conclusion. It would take a braver, and a more imaginative, astrological diviner than I to make any hard and fast prognostications as to the likely ending to this latest chapter

in Western astrology's protracted biography. Leaving its academic fate hanging, I will conclude my study of Western astrology in education, in the next section, by summarising the observations and arguments of earlier chapters that have, I hope, given my readers a picture of the current epistemological status of *real* astrology in Britain. I hope, at the very least, to have demonstrated that it is not so surprising that people living in today's metropolitan societies should avail themselves of the knowledge products of diviners of all types, including astrologers, for this – after all - is what people have always and ever done. Astrologers having lost no time in adapting their craft in line with computer technology, astrology is now cheaply, indeed often freely, available in cyberspace; the future for its serious practitioners and educators is less sanguine, however, following the reduction in state subsidies for so-called recreational classes run by Adult Education Authorities, which has done away with the local and affordable astrological tuition which students such as myself were happy, not so long ago, to take advantage of.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSION

This has been a survey of Western astrology in education informed by participant observation I conducted, from Autumn 2002 until the present, as a student of the subject in Britain. I started my review of astrology by introducing myself as an enthusiast for the subject and a learner of its language for the past ten years and more. My project having been planned to give an ethnographic account of the astrological community at the time of its recent campaign to re-establish the subject's long-lost academic credibility, my 'multilocale' (Marcus and Fischer 1986) classroom ethnography was in part conducted in the seminar rooms of the new university postgraduate degree programmes that had enrolled numbers of Britain's academically inclined astrologers who were eager to be in at the beginning of this, Western astrology's latest cultural manifestation. Accordingly, as an apprentice ethnographer and a humble evening-class student of astrology, I found myself of a sudden – almost in Renato Rosaldo's phraseology – 'hanging out deeply' with astrology's magi. These were published authors, (well-thumbed copies of whose reference books had pride of place on my astrology bookshelf back home), professional lecturers and regular contributors to astrological journals. Some doubled as Sun-sign astrologers writing for the popular press; others had their own websites that served both as market places for their services and products, and as debating forums for philosophically minded astrologers. As a consequence of these, perhaps unusual, ethnographic circumstances, I signalled the fact that I had elected to cite the published texts of those astrologers I encountered who fell within this category rather than risk misrepresenting their opinions by copying snippets of involved debates from my field notebooks. I argued that the theoretical focus of my project, and the literary orientation of my subject, lent themselves to a more academic and referential style of reporting than would be appropriate for many anthropological studies.

In addition to its academic focus, my ethnographic research covered a range of more practically oriented astrology learning forums, from local interest clubs and adult education classes, to the diploma courses designed by private teaching establishments to train future professionals. I noted that I had used my accumulated knowledge of the field to substantiate my more recent observations as its full-time ethnographer, my

familiarity with astrological styles of pedagogy having predated my period of research; additionally, it was acknowledged that my fieldwork interactions had been shaped by my informants' perceptions of my personal relationship with the subject, albeit that I tried as a rule not to make much of this beyond demonstrating that I was conversant with its language. The fact that my fieldwork was conducted in familiar territory, in all senses of that term, led me to consider the phenomenon of studying at home: this is still a fairly novel one for social anthropology, whose inherited structural binaries, (home/away, insider/outsider, native/non-native), have been problematised by ethnographers such as Kirin Narayan (1993: 24), who has sought to demonstrate how supposedly 'native' researchers actually 'belong to several communities simultaneously'. I suggested that researchers studying their home communities would, however problematic the undertaking in terms of identity negotiation, be more likely to practise what I described as 'ecological ethnography' than those who were only passing through: stepping lightly across their fields to protect the environment both for those who live there and for future generations of participant observers who wish to learn from them.

Having listed my main research sites with their relevant data, I went on to define my subject in some detail. It was necessary to demarcate this - labelled *real* as opposed to popular astrology for ease of reference - as the subject which is taught to, and learned by, all astrology students. For the public's confidently *un*informed view of what astrology is and does looks no further than the popular listings of Sun-sign prognostications which appear regularly in most newspapers and probably all magazines designed for predominantly female readerships. Having outlined *real* astrology as the infinitely more complex, horoscopically-derived knowledge system of which Sun-sign astrology is merely a derivative adapted for mass production, it was demonstrated that astrology – of whatever type - is alone in divining knowledge regarding an individual or an entity from the positions of planetary and stellar bodies which can be determined and empirically corroborated for the past, the present and tracked into the future in relation to any location on earth. The astronomical nature of astrology's primary data serves as a perpetual reminder of the subject's pre-Enlightenment scientific provenance which dates back to the eras before the two split and went their separate ways. Marcel Mauss (2001: 177) acknowledged that

astrologers, along with alchemists and doctors – all of whom he described as practitioners of magic – were the founders and exponents of astronomy, physics and natural history in Greece, India and elsewhere. What he called the 'treasury of ideas' amassed by these multiple magi was a capital store exploited by science in earlier periods of our history when, as Mauss phrased it, 'magic served science and magicians served scholars'. The few contemporary social theorists who have regarded astrologers at all have generally followed Mauss in categorising them as practitioners of magic, but today this invokes a connection with religion rather than science, it being justifiably assumed that astrology's nature is primarily divinatory and therefore invocative of metaphysical forces.

Accordingly, I considered how astrology fares when it is mapped onto some broadly construed working descriptions of religion and magic, starting with Clifford Geertz's (1993) proposition that religion is a cultural system before looking back to Émile Durkheim's (1966) classically functionalist definitions of religion and magic and to Marcel Mauss's (2001) description of the magic of which he set about constructing a general theory. This exercise confirmed my prior opinion that, given its peculiarly hybrid nature when measured against modern conceptions of science and religion, there seems little point in attempting to confine contemporary Western astrology – *real* astrology – within the bounds of one of the numerous definitions of religion or magic to be found in the classical sociological literature of that age. But, this having been said, I was content, upon reflection, to assign astrology to an inclusive category termed 'magico-religious' by Arnold Van Gennep (1960: 13) which - though frighteningly sweeping in its scale in the manner of much sociology of its time – turns out to be a very good catch-all term for astrology, especially so because Van Gennep's definition acknowledges a factor central to its makeup, namely that the theories and practices of systems described as 'magico-religious' are inseparable: on his view, the theory without the practice being better defined as metaphysics; and the practice on the basis of a different theory becoming science.

Described as *real* – as opposed to popular - astrology and categorised as 'magico-religious' in Van Gennep's terminology, I next considered the accuracy of demarcating the practice, thus defined, as a system of divination. I established that astrology

complies with the characteristics expected of systems portrayed as such by two social anthropologists with an interest in the subject, Philip Peek (2005) and Barbara Tedlock (2005), both of whom had delivered keynote addresses at an interdisciplinary conference on divination, hosted by the University of Copenhagen, which I attended with a group of academic astrologers. But this was not to say, I was careful to note, that many contemporary Western astrologers would necessarily be happy to have their practice described as divination by anthropological chroniclers. Divination is, I suggested, an ascription generally bestowed by an external commentator upon sets of practices with multiple indigenous purposes, hazily arcane methodology and justifications which – on the theorist's view - defy empirical corroboration. It is a term from the analytical observer's lexicon which people involved practically with the systems so described will seldom use, unprompted and without a measure of self-consciousness, to define their own activities. As far as astrology is concerned, it was noted that some of its practitioners are dissuaded from labelling what they do as divination for fear of external societal censure, others by factionalism within their community; in addition, it was observed that the peculiar status of astrology as a one-time science leads many of its practitioners to cling to the vestiges of its past respectability, eliding the esotericism at its core and focussing upon the rational procedures of its methodology.

The majority of hands-on astrologers do not in truth spend much – if any - time assessing the nature of their practice from an exterior perspective as a social commentator might do; except when its practitioners are bothered by the presence of an ethnographer such as myself, astrology is a closed knowledge system governed by its own, inherently cogent, theory of practice (cf. Bourdieu 2000 & 1990). It was decided, nevertheless, that astrology patently *is* a divination system, even if the label is 'etic' in origin. This being the case, the horoscope's role as what I termed astrology's intermediary divinatory device was discussed and compared, in the light of my ethnographic observation in the classrooms of both practices, with a Tarot reader's pack of cards. I concluded that, whether or not it is 'emically' conceived as such, astrology is, without doubt, the thinking woman of today's divination system of choice: its rich history and learned tradition being sufficiently challenging to capture and keep the attention of the serious scholar and stretch her linguistic (and still to some extent) her

mathematical capabilities beyond the expectations of comparable systems, such as the Tarot. But, in demonstration of its hybridity *vis à vis* modern taxonomies, astrology was no sooner defined as a natural subject for serious scholarship than it was discovered to share many of the characteristics that Marcel Mauss (2003) attributed to the phenomenon of prayer: those who pray seeming to share with astrologers the primary medium of language which, as an instrument of action, gives rise of itself to belief; for, as Mauss observed, every prayer is 'always to some extent a *Credo*' (Mauss 2003: 22) and the same could certainly be said of every attempt at horoscopic judgement made by an astrologer.

Having established something of the multi-faceted nature of the astrological enterprise, I considered the interpretation of an astrological chart as an activity which involves intellectual and sensory types of knowledge, but additionally requires an engagement with creative symbolism of the type described by Henri Corbin (1964) as emanating from what he called the *Mundus Imaginalis*. This assessment was qualified by the observation that, in much the same way as its divinatory capacities and religious qualities are downplayed in favour of its scientific characteristics, the convention within astrological education glosses over what Corbin termed the imaginal, and for that matter also the sensory, components of its practice in favour of adherence to an intellectually oriented application of formal technique learned more or less by rote. This tendency was recognised by Marcel Mauss among magicians, (a term which in his usage included astrologers), of what he termed the last period of Greek magic, whom he recorded as attempting to:

> Systematize their knowledge and, by doing so, derive principles. When such theories are elaborated in magician colleges, it is done by rational and individual procedures. In their doctrinal studies magicians tried to discard as many mystical elements as they could, and thus it was that magic took on the character of a genuine science. … 'I wish to give you an idea of the mind of the ancients', said Olympiodore the alchemist, 'to tell you, as philosophers, they spoke the language of philosophers and applied the tenets of philosophy to their art by means of science'. (Mauss 2001: 177)

Astrology's practitioners, educated in much the same way today as Mauss's ancient Greek magicians, concede personal agency and responsibility for their practice and prognostications to its hard-learned, historically validated methodology: claiming traditional lore as an incontrovertible knowledge source allows them to distance

themselves from notions of belief in 'magico-religious' divinatory practices which are less than respectable in modern terms and certainly not at all well suited to formal pedagogy and its associated examination routines; and, thus framed, the uneven quality of their knowledge products can be explained away as resulting from contingent applications, by less than proficient operators, of an ideal proto-scientific technique.

In part the result of their craft's unique provenance, as a rejected science that is not quite a religion, and underwritten by their formal, intellectually oriented learning procedures, post-Enlightenment astrologers' initially surprising acceptance of the superiority of scientific knowledge over religious belief led me to question the accuracy of the modern taxonomy that opposes science and knowledge to religion and belief. Given the increasing sophistication of contemporary scientific technology, which has rendered most lay-persons unable rationally to judge the sense of much of what the experts tell them, I suggested that belief and its correlates in fact play a larger role in the everyday lives of today's non-scientists than is generally credited. Even more rarely acknowledged is the possibility that scientifically corroborated knowledge may itself be rooted in belief: Hans Vaihinger (1925) developed the philosophy of *As If* to demonstrate his contention that all knowledge, including that defined as science, is based on originating hypotheses and fictions. Arnold Van Gennep (1937) applied Vaihinger's ideas ethnographically after observing that his research field of folklore was 'bathed in the world-as-if'.

Operating within technologically driven, so-called advanced societies, and notionally informed by Vaihinger's thesis and Van Gennep's application of it, I suggested that today's astrologers may take comfort from two facts:

- Firstly, that the public's relations with their pronouncements is qualitatively not all that different from their responses to the messages of mainstream scientists, which are too abstruse to be intellectually appreciated by laypersons; and

- Secondly, in a 'world-as-if' recognised as such, astrologers' products can claim an epistemological provenance every bit as respectable as those of scientists, for both begin with, and develop from, hypotheses and fictions, albeit that, (as Van Gennep said of folklore), there is undoubtedly a heavy dose of '*As If*' fiction in astrological knowledge.

Not that this need detract from astrology's *gravitas*, for there are distinguished social commentators who assert that fictions of various sorts are woven into the fabric of our

lives, along with other '*As If*' type hypotheses concerning our relationships with place and time. Of these, Lawrence Durrell – explaining the innovative plot construction of his four novels collectively entitled *The Alexandria Quartet* – suggested that:

> We live lives based upon selected fictions. Our view of reality is conditioned by our position in space and time – not by our personalities as we like to think. Thus every interpretation of reality is based upon a quite unique position. Two paces east or west and the whole picture is changed. (Durrell 1988: 210)

Of late, as a side effect of the multi-media saturation of the globe, the boundary between categories once confidently demarcated as fact and fiction is becoming increasingly blurred (Botella 2000: 11); Vaihinger's '*As Ifs*' could be said to have an even wider reach now that reality itself is acknowledged to come in actual and virtual versions.

This being the case, some theorists today allow what I suspect most lay-persons have always comprehended: that knowledge is partial, situated and pragmatic, (or neopragmatic in that it is based on the predictive usefulness of a particular proposition (Polkinghorne 1992)); the neopragmatic would-be knower no longer asks whether or not a given proposition is true but, updating Vaihinger's central concept however unwittingly, enquires rather whether accepting it *as if* it were true will lead her to the anticipated outcome.[214] Which precisely describes the divinatory attitude of mind, as expressed, for example, by Geoffrey Cornelius[215] (2003: 289) when he suggests that the astrological exercise hinges upon an *as if*, (acknowledged as such but not as the central tenet of Vaihinger's philosophy), from which hypothetical starting point the astrologer, he tells us, will follow the conventions of her method and see where her speculations lead her. Irrespective of her destination, it would seem inevitable to conclude that, whether astrologers like it or not and however the category boundaries are blurred, there is more of what would generally be taken for divination, magic and religion in astrology than there is of mainstream, empirically oriented science. Indeed it seems, following a review of the purposeful redevelopment of Western astrology for modern times by predominantly twentieth century Theosophists, that there is a good case to be made for its being 'etically' labelled as a New Religious Movement within the New Age founded upon what I have called, in deference to its considerable longevity in various contextual

[214] Neopragmatism differs, apparently, from pragmatism in that the former does not hold that knowledge claims can be accumulated and progress toward a final state; such a proposition would, after all, be inconsistent with postmodern foundationlessness, fragmentariness, and constructivism (Botella 2000: 14-15).

[215] See appendix A.

guises, a *re*invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1983). Such an ascription must, however, be qualified with a note to the effect that astrologers themselves are mostly disdainful of the characteristics demonstrated by the kinds of movement that vaunt a New Age affiliation.

It will by now be evident that astrologers are wont to express seemingly counter-intuitive opinions about the epistemic status of their craft: most of them are reluctant to describe what they do as divination; numbers assert that their practice is more scientific than religious; it should come as no surprise, then, that many practitioners demonstrate somewhat contradictory public and private engagements with their craft in relation to their proclamations of knowledge and belief. On the one hand, the subject is presented by accomplished astrologers to their students as intellectual knowledge which can be learned and applied in formal educational terms; on the other hand, it is acknowledged at higher levels of the craft, and in other circumstances by these same teachers, that astrological practice is contingent upon intuition and is additionally dependent both upon the active participation and the belief (or one of its variants, such as faith, commitment, engagement and so on) of – ideally - all parties to its enterprise.

A tendency to qualify and problematise the term belief and its correlates, demonstrated by theoretically-minded practising astrologers in the course of formal debates about their subject's epistemology, put me in mind of Wilfred Cantwell Smith's (1998, & etc.) attempts to recover the pre-Enlightenment, Old English senses of the word and contrast them with today's. Smith's contention that belief was, in earlier times, rendered as what we would now call 'beloving', 'holding dear' or 'cherishing' was suggested to offer a pleasing resolution to astrologers' descriptive impasse. I argued that Smith's recovery of an earlier meaning of belief had given us a term historically suited to describe the ways in which today's astrologers relate to astrology, which are qualitatively no different from the ways in which pre-modern astrologers related to astrology, namely as something precious and beloved; the practice being naturally attuned, after all, to a pre-Enlightenment and astrologically coherent worldview that had not yet separated and opposed science and religion, or knowledge and belief, in the current senses of these terms.

That astrologers should believe in astrology, in a pre-modern sense of the term, that they should fall in love with it as an exercise in and for itself, explains what sceptical scientists and non-astrologers perpetually rail against: namely that astrologers continue to learn, practise and relish their art in the face both of science's rational disproof of its worldview and the patchy accuracy of its prognostications. As, to a lesser extent but still at the risk of rationalist ridicule, do their clients. Once their investment of affection in their craft is acknowledged, it follows that astrologers should practise it in anticipation of metaphorical repayment: a self-perpetuating and interdependent cycle of practice and concomitantly developing theory can be traced around the core phenomenon of spiralling personal investment in response to the realisation of anticipation (cf. Bourdieu 2000 & 1990); in 'emic' terminology, the commitment with which astrologers relate to their craft is demonstrated, in a society that values knowledge over belief in the modern sense of those terms, by their assertions that they know, rather than believe, in its efficacy.

Whether described as science or religion, and related to in terms of knowledge or belief, the primary medium of astrology's expression is, unarguably, a linguistic one. For it involves the translation of symbolism, read in a map, into words which do it justice; the glyphs of a horoscope, representing physical planets and stellar phenomena, are interpreted symbolically and incorporated ritually (Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 113). This *modus operandi* closely matches Michel Foucault's (1989) exposition of the general role of language in the formation of the sixteenth century episteme, which he describes as having been predominantly hermeneutic and semiological in nature. The proper function of that era's knowledge was, he tells us, interpreting rather than seeing or demonstrating: understanding consisted then in relating one form of language to another form of language; it was concerned to give voice to its founding resemblances, similitudes and signatures in words which were themselves every bit as much the signs of things as were the visible, material phenomena which they sought to interpret. In the course of modelling the epistemological framework which informed sixteenth century knowers, Foucault introduces a concept familiar to contemporary astrologers as the founding principle, outlined in the Emerald Tablet of the *Hermetica*, of their craft: that of the macrocosm. On his view, the macrocosm and – presumably – the microcosm which its existence presupposes, had originated as models of the 'general configuration

of nature', posited by neo-Platonists, that served the practical purpose of structuring and limiting what would otherwise have been an 'indefatigable to-and-fro of similitudes' (Foucault 1989: 31 ff.).

Focussing upon the astrology of today as a linguistic system or discourse raised the question in my mind as to whether it could usefully be judged, in more contemporary terms than that of a Foucauldian sixteenth century episteme, as a Wittgensteinian language-game. (Indeed, this analogy has already been drawn and developed in some detail by Mike Harding,[216] a contemporary British astrologer.) Accordingly, I examined his thesis (2004) in some detail after briefly describing Wittgenstein's (1974 & 1963) original language-game trope and its subsequent development by Jean-François Lyotard (1988 & 1984) as an analytical device with which to assess the changing nature of knowledge in postmodern societies. The astrologer Geoffrey Cornelius has drawn an analogy between astrology and games, in so far as they are both formal, rule-bound exercises, although he stops short of developing this image along Wittgensteinian lines:

> The rules of astrology are in some ways like the rules of chess; they are cultural creations that cannot be found anywhere in nature and they exist in the domain of human significance. By playing the game a certain result is achieved, just as by applying the precepts of astrology a certain interpretation is attained. Within the agreed conventions of what a bishop can do and what checkmate means there are countless possibilities of gambit and strategy, masterly moves and pedestrian moves. All of these can also be followed and communicated in the community of chess-players, just as the fine points of craft can be debated in the community of astrologers. (Cornelius 2003: 289)

Cornelius conjures a more harmonious image of game-playing than Lyotard did; unfortunately, it must be said that the latter's observations about the incommensurability of separate language-games, and the naturally agonistic interactions of their players, are probably more accurate descriptions of the epistemic relations, both within the astrological community and between its members and their enthusiastically scientific and scientistic opponents. In any case, the Wittgenstein-Lyotard social schema was deemed so broad as to be of little utility to anyone attempting to weigh the comparative qualities of a range of astrological knowledge products. I also judged it to be too philosophically relativistic to appeal to the majority of practitioners, who are concerned with the difficult task of identifying and expressing symbolism in

[216] See appendix A.

metaphorical terminology that makes sense to their clients while remaining true to the tenets of one or other of the various, (all of them supposedly absolute, none of them the slightest bit relative), astrological truth standards.

This, their central task, involves astrologers in poetics, whether or not they use this word to describe what it is that they do with language. While first-year students would be unlikely to be burdened by their tutors with the technicalities of poetic expression, for fear they might take fright and quit the class, accomplished symbolists and their more advanced apprentices acknowledge this central aspect of their practice. Astrology is 'a poetics of the cosmos' as Maggie Hyde[217] memorably expresses it (Hyde, cited by Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 113). To unpack Hyde's image, I consulted Aristotle's comments on the technicalities of the subject and discovered him to have asserted that, for a poet:

> By far the most important thing is to be good at metaphor. This is the only part of the job that cannot be learned from others; on the contrary it is a token of high native gifts, for making good metaphors depends on perceiving the likenesses in things. … The poet's job is not to report what has happened but what is likely to happen: that is, what is capable of happening according to the rule of probability or necessity. (Aristotle 1986: 60-61, 32)

Living with the symbolism of poetic imagery, as practised astrologers do, has a dynamism all of its own which was noted by Gaston Bachelard (1969: xii ff.) as being referable to nothing so much as 'a direct ontology'. Which phrase accurately describes the interaction of those practitioners, for whom it manifests materially, with the astrological symbolism which erupts, bidden and unbidden, in their everyday worlds.

However, it takes a considerable investment of time and material resources to become sufficiently fluent in the astrological language to experience what I have called the chuckle factor that is associated with a recognition of its symbols, floating free from their horoscopic origins and manifesting themselves in the world; accordingly, it was to a report of my ethnographic experiences as a student of practical horoscopy that I turned next. Harking back to my own preliminary encounters with the subject, I noted how the advent of home computers and dedicated astrological software had done away with the first tasks which students of the subject, such as myself, had traditionally been set: those of calculating and drawing a horoscope. In today's technological milieu, students

[217] See appendix A.

whose dedicated astrological software does the number-crunching for them are confusingly confronted with symbolism from lesson one of their first-year classes; struggling to interpret this, at the start of their studies more often than not within the context of the psychological-style astrology of personality, they will sooner or later be confronted with more traditional modes – with horary, electional and mundane astrology – that raise theoretical issues concerning the ethics of forecasting and prediction in relation to concepts of free will and determinism.

My participant observation followed this same trajectory, travelling from classes teaching the basics of practice to exclusively theoretical seminars which framed the subject historically, philosophically and sociologically. Moving on from horoscopy courses, I reported the background to the recent establishment of astrology-related British postgraduate university courses, before recording some of my experiences as an auditor of the two very different flagship programmes of this privately funded initiative. I noted that the reintroduction of astrology to the British academy had coincided with the Sorbonne's awarding a PhD in Sociology to professional astrologer and colourful media personality Germaine Elizabeth Hanselmann, also known as Elizabeth Teissier, for a thesis with astrology as its subject; but the ridicule heaped upon Ms Teissier, her supervisor and her university – unsurprisingly – by rationalist critics of astrology and – surprisingly – by some of her fellow practitioners, threw doubt upon the assumption of numbers of astrologers that their subject has successfully come in out of the cold, academically speaking. Meanwhile, my personal experience as a doctoral research student conducting an ethnographic study of Western astrology in education within a Social Anthropology Department served to confirm that the university establishment is still some way from making its peace with the subject. For I encountered at best incredulous and at worst hostile reactions to my project from faculty members, administrators and fellow students of mainstream universities; these both surprised and saddened me, putting me in mind of Mary Douglas's (1966) conceptualisation of pollution and dirt as being 'matter out of place'; astrology doubling here as the academy's 'other', as 'matter out of place' on its campus that serves as a negative standard with which to corroborate the comparative purity of its rationalist identity.

And yet confusingly, and contrary to the fundamental academic disdain for the subject which was frequently demonstrated in my presence, the governing bodies of a few universities have accepted privately sponsored postgraduate degree programmes in the theoretical study of astrology. I argued that this says as much and maybe more about the current condition of the British academic establishment than it does about astrology's supposedly upgraded epistemological status. Reviewing the contradictory attitudes demonstrated by universities, their staff and their students to the introduction of academic astrology led me back to Jean-François Lyotard's (1984) ideas about the changing state of knowledge in postmodern societies and thence to developments of George Ritzer's (1998) thesis concerning what he terms the 'McDonaldization' of Western society. The latter includes speculations about the future shape of 'McUniversity', whose predicted developmental trajectory in a so-called postmodern epistemological condition, equated variously to incredulity (Lyotard 1984), ambivalence (Bauman 1993) and disbelief (Anderson 1990), was briefly reviewed. The more pessimistic of the commentaries foretell the dire consequences of the seemingly inevitable overrunning of universities that have lost their founding modernist rationale by consumer-driven relativist pragmatism. Harland Bloland, for example, warns that:

> If science is a discourse equal to any other discourse, then there is no meritocratic basis for privileging science over creationism, *astrology*, or any number of noxious theories of race and gender. It means there is no rational argument for keeping any discourse from finding a place in the curricula of colleges and universities. What is left is a series of power positions and contested viewpoints vying for a place in academe with no real set of standards by which to judge their relative merits and no rules to follow that allow anyone to say yes or no to questions of inclusion and exclusion in the curriculum. (Bloland 2004: 111, my emphasis)

I would argue against Bloland here, (and not just because I take exception to his lumping astrology together with creationism and 'noxious theories of race and gender'), to propose that 'McUniversity' actually incorporates an all too 'real set of standards' for relative judgement: namely a commercial one dictated by the marketplace.[218]

---

[218] This mercantilist set of standards is not the preserve of the new 'McUniversities': the playwright, actor and diarist Alan Bennett (2005: 240, 326-327) has been publicly critical of Oxford University for allowing the establishment of The Rupert Murdoch Chair in Language and Communication. Disagreeing vehemently with Murdoch's politics and his covert editorial control over what he calls *The Morning Murdoch*, and the other one hundred and seventy-four publications owned by his companies, Bennett worries about the extent of the entrepreneur's seemingly inevitable influence upon his *alma mater* that will accompany this infiltration of academia by the market.

Astrologers are conversant with this set of standards for, despite the fact that astrology was assumed to be academically antipathetic, they recently fulfilled its criteria and successfully sponsored their subject's reintroduction to university curricula. As predominantly radical individuals and social critics, it might be said that members of the astrological community have, in pursuing their cause with the universities by mercantalist means, inadvertently supported a trend which they are unlikely entirely to approve: for I would suggest that the academy that astrologers want to rejoin is certainly not George Ritzer's (1998) dystopian 'McUniversity'. On the contrary, I suspect them of wanting to be part, (not of some postmodern cathedral of consumption that includes marginal people and ideas when it is financially expedient to do so, and/or likely to invest its campus with a little student-attracting magic (THES 2001 & Bloland 2004: 126)), but of a classically modern institution dedicated to the discovery and propagation of universal truths. Which ambition they are unlikely, in my observation, ever to achieve. Astrology's comparative academic respectability hinges rather upon the accuracy of Ritzer's projections for 'McUniversity' if it is to secure a permanent place on campus; the subject's recent, partial admission to a few academic establishments after so many years serves, in itself, to confirm that the tenor of Enlightenment university establishments is undergoing a process of radical change. Only a year ago, it appeared that astrology's future as a university discipline was bright; however, the recent, and surprising, announcement of the immanent closure of the Sophia Centre at Bath Spa University, opened only in Autumn 2002 as the flagship centre of the brave new world of academic astrology, has thrown a heavy shadow across that future.

What general conclusions should be drawn from this? Is astrology the type of knowledge which it profits the academic establishment, and current and future generations of its students, to pursue? As I hope by now to have demonstrated, astrology is indubitably a system of divination whose deep roots in pre-modern science qualify it to be considered a founding influence upon the modern worldview. In pre-Enlightenment Europe, when knowledge of things visible and invisible rested upon resemblances and the interpretation of signs, divination – on Michel Foucault's view – was a component of the main body of knowledge and not, as it is now, an optional, minority-interest supplement to it. The sixteenth century episteme was sketched by Foucault as being very much influenced by the rediscovery of classical Greek and

Roman authors and, accordingly, it afforded equal weight to the knowledge of magic and erudition; in addition, it assumed that God, or gods:

> In order to exercise our wisdom, merely sowed nature with forms for us to decipher (and it is in this sense that knowledge should be *divinatio*).[219] (Foucault 1989: 30-33)

Divination was at that time a commonplace activity of those who wished to know; and it presupposed a pluralist and animate cosmos sown with daemonic signs. In today's largely secular metropolitan society whose religious vestiges are monotheist, divination is a consciously chosen path which, as many astrologers and their clients confirm, is no longer pursued primarily for the knowledge it promises; it is equally valued for the atmosphere of cosmological inclusivity or participation, of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' (1991) writ large, that it invokes in those who approach its rituals in a spirit of commitment or belief.

By notionally returning on some level to the pagan astrological model of the cosmos which accommodates a pantheon of angelic and roguish deities, could it be said of contemporary astrological diviners that, by means of their practice, they are recapturing for themselves a measure of the alienation that Ludwig Feuerbach (1989) conceived people to suffer in direct proportion to the saintly and monotheistic qualities with which they increasingly endowed their deity? Certainly astrology's gods are tricksy, far from saintly, and, on that account, presumably comparatively less alienating on Feuerbach's view but, as I have established, few of its practitioners would so describe the planetary symbols which are their stock-in-trade.[220] Rather than analysing astrological activity as a partial recovery of Feuerbachian alienation, it could be considered instead in Max Weber's terms, as a conscious search by contemporary metropolitans for the enchantment which he believed to have been sacrificed to the processes of rationalisation and bureaucratisation that accompanied modernity's progress. In this

---

[219] One of these classical authors, the neo-Platonic philosopher and theurgist, Iamblichus (*c*.250-*c*.338), had stated that:

> The gods, employing many instruments as media, send indications to men; and that they also use the ministrant aid of demons and souls, and the whole of nature, and of everything in the world … for [divination] does not draw down the intellect of more excellent natures to sublunary concerns and to us, but this intellect being established in itself, converts to itself signs and the whole of divination, and discovers that these proceed from it.
> (Iamblichus 1999: 81 cited by Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 116 & cf. Shaw 1995)

[220] Ludwig Feuerbach (1989: 5) stated that theory began with the contemplation of the heavens, the first philosophers having been astronomers.

guise, astrologers might be described as exemplary neo-tribalists, in Michel Maffesoli's (1996) terminology, harking back with their fellow postmodernists to the organising principles of past cosmologies in the hope of addressing their sense of lost enchantment and recovering a sense of community. Re-enchantment is, on Patrick Curry's[221] view (in Willis & Curry 2004: 109 ff.), contemporary astrology's key role: its practice serving intelligently to recover a little of the pluralist wildness and what Weber (1970: 282) called the 'concrete magic' that, incorporated into pre-modern, chthonic worldviews, has been sacrificed to modernity's progress.[222]

Recovering alienation and rediscovering enchantment and/or a type of tribalism are really only different ways of expressing the same phenomenon: as social images, there is some mileage to be had from them; but they are essentially 'etic' concepts. For I cannot help but speculate that, for the average student who has paid good money to sit in contemporary astrology's versions of Mauss's 'magician colleges' referred to above, (that similarly derive principles from rational procedures and discard as many mystical elements as they can), there is not much alienation recovery, very little re-enchantment, and still less neo-tribalism going on. Not really; however much theorists such as Patrick Curry and myself, nostalgic for romanticised historical social milieus, might want there to be. The rationalisation and professionalisation procedures to which its practitioners have subjected astrology over the course of the last hundred years or so, in line with general social trends, have hamstrung the subject's once charismatic leaders and routinised their original inspirational teachings. I can vouch from personal experience that studying astrology for formal examination is hardly an enchanting experience. Rather the reverse. And practitioners who elect to extend their knowledge of its practice and research astrology's theory academically are unlikely, I would argue, to recover much in the way of alienation, or discover much in the way of neo-tribal activity going on in the virtual seminar rooms of 'McUniversity'.

Which is to suggest that, other than noting – without much surprise for their ages are

---

[221] See Appendix A.

[222] Patrick Curry asserts that Max Weber's concepts of enchantment/disenchantment, rationalisation and concrete magic seem to him to offer the best overall way of understanding astrology (Curry in Willis & Curry 2004: 13). Weber noted that the unity of the primitive world, in which everything was 'concrete magic', has tended to split, on the one hand, into rational cognition and mastery of nature and, on the other hand, into mystical experiences (Weber 1970: 282). The latter were, for Weber, the only possible ways left of interacting with a realm conceived of as 'beyond' by those who live in a world robbed of gods.

more-or-less matched - that astrological knowledge fits snugly within the pre-Enlightenment episteme sketched by Foucault (1989: 33 ff.), the activities of today's astrologers should not be judged as a remainder, a survivor from idealised former times. The astrology that is practised today is of today and can only accurately be analysed as such, albeit that it harks back to an ancient cosmology. Drawing as it does upon what I have termed a *re*invented tradition, one can easily commit a category error and view it theoretically in the light of an historical re-enactment, as an attempt by its practitioners to recover a notional quality of the past:[223] to redress alienation; to reconnect with the cosmos; to rediscover enchantment. Michael Herzfeld (2001: 215-216) suggests that processes such as Weber's disenchantment originate as often in the nostalgic eye of the beholder as they do in the lived experience of local communities. But numbers of today's individuals in the West undoubtedly hark back to a supposedly enchanted past idyll of cosmic interconnectedness that, one suspects, manages somehow to accommodate twenty-first century plumbing in its bucolic social setting. This being the case, I was not surprised to discover that at least one astrologer is currently marketing a course on his website that promises to teach those who enrol on it how to experience enchantment in their everyday lives by re-educating their imaginations.[224]

Responsibly, the programme is advertised as being formulated neither to change its students' lives nor to fix anything. Rather, it is designed as a way of stimulating their imaginations, in order that they might 'develop new and rewarding relationships with the unseen spirits or presences, which animate the world' (09/2006: http://www.kairosastrology.co.uk/modules/enchanted/). Undertaking to coach his students to develop a particular disposition, by means of understanding the symbolic

---

[223] Living as I do not far from Senlac Field, the site of the Battle of Hastings, I know from personal observation that re-enactments of past events are entirely present phenomena: each year's event is different from the one before; each bears the unmistakable marks of its own time.

[224] Advertising his programme, astrologer John Wadsworth discusses the physical geography of the primary world, the world known to us through our five senses, which is included within a wider 'mythography', rich in atmosphere and meaningful symbolism. It is through this secondary or *imaginal* world, he tells us, that:

> We come to know the gods and goddesses, ancestors, spirits and presences and come to experience how they inter-penetrate the world we know through our senses. The rich mythic symbolism of astrology can give us access to such a secondary world and we can develop our relationships to the 'beings' that populate that world through the rich resource of our imagination. Over the course of six weeks, we will work with each of the planetary beings that make up this astrologically enchanted world.
> (09/2006: http://www.kairosastrology.co.uk/modules/enchanted/, original emphasis)

keys of their astrological birthcharts, John Wadsworth[225] hopes that his students may come to recognise and interact with a secondary, imaginal world of gods and goddesses. But he adds a qualification that invokes Vaihinger and calls to mind the neo-pragmatic approach to knowledge discussed above:

> Please do not misunderstand me here. I am not asking you to *believe* in anything I have said above about this secondary world as being objectively true. I am inviting you to engage with it imaginatively, *as if* it were true. These presences may exist for you as mere figments of your imagination, and that's absolutely fine, but what I am suggesting is that you engage directly with those 'figments' and grant them 'being'. This, I would assert, lies at the heart of what it is to be a creative human being. It brings the world to life. (09/2006: http://www.kairosastrology.co.uk/modules/enchanted/, original emphasis)

As far as commentators' or metropolitan individuals' idealistic notions about society's lost relationship with an ancient cosmos are concerned, Herzfeld (2001: 192 ff.) suggests that we should resist the temptation to view cosmology as an exclusively pre-modern social formation: at any given point and in all social circumstances, he tells us, cosmology represents a contemporary, ritualised reading of a seemingly static or structural truth: its incorporation of time, which it places – as he puts it – at the service of social structure, gives cosmology a cyclical or a teleological cast.

So, I would contend that, however it is analysed, astrology must be judged as a present practice with present purposes. Its practitioners' excellent adaptation of its products for consumers of a postmodern electronic age confirms this assertion; its professionals interface with their global market via the Internet, promoting their subject and advertising their services. A range of astrology is freely available for browsers of the worldwide web who are encouraged to purchase further products by credit or debit card. Of contextual relevance here is Lyotard's (1984) model of today's consumer-oriented societies that takes account of their citizens' propensity to borrow from the past in forms described by Fredric Jameson (1984) as pastiche, and by Eric Hobsbawm (1983) as the invention of tradition, which I have been bold enough, in respect of astrology, to *re*invent. Lyotard acknowledged the plurality of conviction and style demonstrated – it might be said almost as a matter of faith - by those members of metropolitan, market driven societies who, personally defined in terms of their individual patterns of consumption, have sufficient resources to purchase products both real and virtual (such

[225] See appendix A.

as astrological ones). His model allows that people inhabit the type of spaces that Arjun Appadurai (2003: 6) has more recently pictured as 'layered places', so called because they incorporate 'a variety of levels of attachment, engagement and, if you like, reality'; among the 'image flows' which comprise Appadurai's reality, in the manner of updated, globalised language-games, must surely be included the supposedly pre-modern but in fact contemporarily-styled discourses - of which astrology is exemplary - that are excoriated by mainstream academics and scientists in demonstration of the agonistic relations which we are not surprised to discover among adherents of rival 'image flows'.

The ubiquitous availability of astrological services, coupled with their popularity, accounts for the received wisdom that astrology is currently on the up-and-up in Britain. Wherever I go, people *not* directly involved with the subject waste no time in sharing this apparent fact with me; journalists, sceptical and otherwise, corroborate it in print as do its most trenchant opponents, such as Richard Dawkins.[226] But, the undoubted popularity of its electronic products has had a detrimental effect on the numbers of new students signing up for practical horoscopy classes. Why, after all, should anyone spend their resources on the expensive and time-consuming business of learning astrology when she can order and download charts, forecasts and character delineation reports cheaply, maybe freely, from the Internet? While the market for potential students has shrunk, changes in the culture of recreational evening classes run by Adult Education Authorities around the country, and reductions in central government subsidies, have in any case called a halt to the once popular astrology programmes which supplied affordable training to students such as myself while employing numbers of astrologers as tutors.

The private astrological educational establishments which now have the monopoly on teaching are necessarily considerably more expensive than the subsidised local college courses used to be; and because there are, by comparison, fewer of them, the majority of practical astrology courses are now operated on a distance-learning basis in virtual, rather than actual, classrooms. This militates against the formation of a real community

[226] Ian Sample (2004: 3), for example, recently told *Guardian* readers: 'one of the things that remains incontrovertible about astrology is its popularity'.

of local learners which, in my personal experience, develops naturally into a larger community interest group and fosters an ongoing exploration of the subject by onetime students and their tutors. Today's online students of astrology engage very differently with the craft: they may still live their everyday lives experientially on a static earth around which the sun travels on a daily basis but, as the heliocentric model of the universe has been increasingly internalised and light pollution has robbed city dwellers of the once ubiquitous experience of looking up wonderingly at the stars, the centrality of their geocentric experience has faltered.

In response to these changes, astrology has restyled itself as a virtual creature of the computer screen. It is the norm for today's students to sit hunched over their computers – alone – learning to interpret the glyphs and graphics shining at them from their flat screens in the form of so many simulacra, shorn of their one-time centrally informing connection with now largely unseen stellar bodies viewed from the vantage of a familiar patch of earth. But they are as centrally engaged as were their predecessors in what Arjun Appadurai (2003) has called 'the work of the imagination': in today's world, he posits imagination as a social practice, as something more than an individual faculty, and something other than a mechanism for escaping the real. In the circumstances of contemporary society, imagination, on his view, is a collective tool for the transformation of the real and for the creation of multiple horizons of possibility, for it facilitates postmodernists to inhabit:

> Either multiple localities or a kind of single and complex sense of locality, in which many empirical spaces coexist. … In this sense you have a kind of creative spatial form which isn't reducible to its empirical facts. (Appadurai 2003: 6)

Within the state of social flux that accompanies multi-media saturation and globalisation, it is hardly surprising to discover that the exercise of translating astrological symbolism has changed its style somewhat; but commentaries such as Appadurai's identify that the contemporarily modelled discourse of astrology has precisely the right mix of ingredients to inspire the same levels of commitment, or belief in Smith's (1998) recovered sense of the word, as it ever did. New generations of *bricoleurs* 'speak' in much the same way as did their handyman forebears, not only with things but also 'through the medium of things' (Lévi-Strauss 1972: 21). And, the range

of accounts they can give of their worlds has been infinitely extended, thanks to the hitherto undreamed of artefacts and the novel media supplied them by computer technology.

But whether this new-style, symbolically rich astrological *bricolage* belongs at university – or even at 'McUniversity' - is another question. However powerful the work of the imagination in contemporary societies, it is likely, in academic situations, to have to play second fiddle to the work of the intellect. And, albeit that it is not always acknowledged as such by all of its practitioners, it has been established that the astrological enterprise is very much a work of the imagination. Which fact, if recognised, cannot but make for an impasse between the university ethos on the one hand, expressive of opinions and perceptions in language used in a capacity referred to by Henri Corbin (1964) as a 'legitimising function', and knowledge, on the other hands, described in his terminology as imaginal, and expressed in what he called the 'language of image (Hermes)'. As the only way adequately to study this latter type of poetic knowledge, Gaston Bachelard (1969: xiv) posited the development of a phenomenology of the imagination, which he detailed as 'a study of the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of man, apprehended in his actuality'. Explaining that, as a philosopher of science, he had at one time preferred to maintain an objective position from which to judge images and what he termed 'intuitive cosmogonies', he told his readers that he had come to recognise that his scientific prudence had constituted 'a refusal to obey the immediate dynamics of the image' (Bachelard 1969: xiv-xv). But, even after realising that, as he put it, the image has no need of scholarship, he found abandoning longstanding intellectual habits more easily said than done: for a rationalist, this process constituted what he termed 'a minor daily crisis, a sort of split in one's thinking'. Which experience will be widespread among the faculty of universities that make the decision, for whatever pragmatic reasons, to include astrology in their curricula. The astrologers – both academics and students – who oversee the re-branding of their craft as an academic product will likely suffer similar minor daily crises. For, while their practice and its deep tradition can be studied without contention from historical, philosophical, sociological and anthropological viewpoints, it must be remembered that astrologers are

barred from conducting its centrally informing divinatory rituals – the calculating and reading of horoscopes – within universities.

The irony of this restraint has not been lost on the academics who spearheaded astrology's recent advance upon the university. Warning voices have been heard; among these Geoffrey Cornelius (2004: 103), doctoral research student at the University of Kent and lecturer on its Sophia-funded Masters programme, has reminded astrologers of the fact that astrology's non-positivistic and metaphorical type of thinking has to date been academically acceptable only when analysed as a literary, poetic or imaginative enterprise; treated as a mode of knowledge it has, on the occasions that it has been taken seriously as such, been denigrated as a remnant of naïve idealism or, worse still, occultism. As he put it when addressing the inaugural conference of the Sophia Centre at (what was then) Bath Spa University College:

> There therefore exists an abyss between the prevailing epistemology and astrologers who understand that their practice concerns real knowledge of the world. Can – and should – the academy bridge the gap, or will the astrologers tumble into it? (Cornelius 2004: 103)

On Cornelius's view, it is wholly insufficient to treat astrology as a belief system that people have had in the past and sometimes have today, and investigate it by means of what he calls '*secondary* scholarship', either as an item of cultural history, or as a subject for sociological or anthropological analysis; for this misses the point that practitioners claim that astrology is a source of 'primary truth' and 'verity' and, accordingly, is worthy of being researched by what he calls '*primary* scholarship' (Cornelius 2004: 110). In the time-honoured tradition of his practice and in demonstration of the primacy of his own astrological scholarship, Geoffrey Cornelius illustrated his lecture with a horoscope for the Full Moon that almost coincided with this lecture, his judgement of which was explained and incorporated into his argument.[227]

By so doing, Cornelius demonstrated the dual incommensurability which cannot but attend the playing of astrological language-games on the sports field of the academy:

- Firstly, there is the gap to which he alluded, between academic and astrological ways of knowing. While practising astrologers can relatively easily don academic hats, existing academics have neither the expertise nor, one suspects,

[227] See appendix B.

> the inclination to trace astrological knowledge back to its experiential, divinatory core; while this remains the case, academics will - of necessity - be reliant upon astrological translators, the quality of whose work they have no means of judging, to translate astrology's symbolism into academically recognisable parlance.

- Secondly, there is a difference to which he did *not* allude, between different styles of knowing which attend the range of available language-games. I hope by now to have demonstrated that astrological knowledge is subjective, partial and pragmatic, despite the fact that it masquerades as technical know-how that is purportedly acquired by the application of a supposedly normative method and promulgated as universal truth. It is their rival claims to absolute truth that fuel the agonistic nature of the mutual relations that exist between players of different astrological language-games.

At around the time of the *Astrology and the Academy* Conference at which Geoffrey Cornelius delivered his lecture, Nicholas Campion, (then senior lecturer, now head until its immanent closure, of the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at Bath Spa University), wondered whether astrology's return to Western universities could be explained in terms of a cultural phenomenon symbolised by the entry of Pluto into the zodiacal sign of Sagittarius. He was concerned, however, to qualify his identification of this connection:

> I don't mean that Pluto in Sagittarius has made these things happen, but in astrological literature, there was talk about Pluto in Sagittarius in terms of astrology going into universities. We may be looking at a fine example of astrologers looking at something in the sky, then deciding to do something positive, and succeeding: a self-fulfilling prophecy of the best kind. (Campion in Gunzburg & Campion 2003: 22).

On the 25th August 2006, I was typing these words of Nicholas Campion's with the radio playing in the background and wondering how to conclude this ethnographic report on astrology in education. With the cursor hovering over the word Pluto on my computer screen, I heard the news bulletin which announced that it had that day finally been decided that Pluto was no longer to be classified as a planet of our solar system. As a confirmed symbolist, Pluto's altered astronomical classification will have little or no bearing upon my horoscopic employment of its metaphorical image, which is tempered by its falling outside the traditional astrological schema whose symmetry, dictated by the visible planets years before the discovery of the trans-Saturnians, appeals more to my Virgoan tidy-mindedness. (As a citizen of a secular society, I am in

any case sufficiently accustomed to the generalised trend towards the demotion and downgrading of the divine, reviewed in an earlier chapter, to be largely unmoved by it.)

But, hearing the announcement of Pluto's demotion while copying Nick Campion's words about it was generative, for me, of precisely the kind of knowledge over which astrology presides: it is partial and contextual, although it may not actually be all that different, in this regard, from knowledge produced in the process of ethnographic enquiry which, it has been suggested, is similarly situational and, hence, temporal and provisional (Cohen 1992). But, lacking anthropology's comparatively respectable epistemic tradition, it is difficult to render astrological knowledge in academically acceptable terms. As far as I am able to express this instance of it, Pluto's entry into Sagittarius was identified - among a myriad other social phenomena - with astrology's going to university, and this identification was noted and incorporated by Campion in the defences of his new academic programme at Bath Spa University. Since the time of the unexpected announcement of the immanent closure of the Sophia Centre, Pluto's classification as a planet has been under official review; on the day in question, it was stripped of its planetary status by scientists of the International Astronomical Union (IAU). Professor Iwan Williams, chair of the IAU panel that has been working over recent months to define the term 'planet', told the BBC that, despite having a slight tear in his eye:

> At the end of the day we have to describe the Solar System as it really is, not as we would like it to be.
> (08/2006: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/5282440.stm)

Having invoked Pluto's change of zodiacal position as being symbolically relevant to astrology's positive academic progress, Campion's own area of interest within this larger movement appears to be following in line with its planetary talisman: Pluto might still be in Sagittarius, but as of today it is no longer a planet. Its 'demotion', signalled on the BBC news, is, on my view, a fitting metaphor for the impending fate of the Sophia Centre: following a short dalliance with pluralism, the academic establishment could be read as having returned to its positivistic home ground from which vantage things must be described as they really are, tearfully devoid of all *As Ifs*, and not as the scientists of the IAU would like them to be. Which is to say, in a circuitous fashion

that, while the jury is still out in the case of astrology versus the academy, (and it should not be forgotten that the Sophia Project's new and dedicated *Cultural Study of Cosmology and Divination* programme at the University of Kent, whose Department of Religious Studies Patrick Curry has joined as a part-time lecturer, is just now welcoming its first students), I have reservations that relations between the two parties to the case will ever be anything other than incommensurable. On 26th January 2008, Pluto will leave Sagittarius and enter the zodiacal sign of Capricorn. Aside from being in some trepidation as to what, if any, manifestations redolent of this symbolism I am likely to experience in my own life, the Descendent of my horoscope falling, as it does, within the early degrees of Capricorn, I cannot but wonder what turns in the fate of academic astrologers will become the subjects of metaphorical allusions inspired by Pluto's slow Capricornian progress.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abell, G.O. 1981. 'Astrology' in *Science and the Paranormal: Probing the Existence of the Supernatural.* G.O. Abell & B. Singer, (eds.). (London: Junction Books).

Adorno, T.W. 1994. *The Stars Down to Earth and other Essays on the Irrational in Culture.* (London: Routledge).

Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* (London: Verso Books).

Anderson, W.T. 1990. *Reality isn't What it Used to be.* (San Francisco: Harper & Row).

Appadurai, A. 2003. *TransUrbanism: the Right to Participate in the Work of the Imagination.* Arjun Appadurai, interviewed by Arjen Mulder.
(07/2006: http://www.appadurai.com/pdf/transurbanism.pdf).

Aristotle. 1986. *Poetics.* G.F. Else, (trans.). (Michigan: Ann Arbor Paperbacks).

Asad, T. 1983. 'Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz' in *Man.* 18, pp. 237-259.

Asimov, I. 1978. 'Asimov's Corollary' in *Quasar, Quasar, Burning Bright*. (New York: Doubleday).

Astrology for the University Student. 2004. (London: The Advisory Panel on Astrological Education).

Bachelard, G. 1969. (1958). *The Poetics of Space*. The Orion Press, (trans.). (Boston: Beacon Press).

Barton, T. 1994. *Ancient Astrology.* (London: Routledge).

Bauman, Z. 1993. 'Postmodernity, or Living with Ambivalence' in *A Postmodern Reader.* J. Natoli & L. Hutcheon, (eds.). (Albany, NY.: State University of New York Press).

Beasley, C., Jr. 1990. *Sundancers and River Demons: Essays on Landscape and Ritual.* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press).

Bell, S. 2000. 'France's Destiny was shaped by De Gaulle's Personal Astrologer' in *The Independent.* 4th August.

Belmont, N. 1979. (1974). *Arnold Van Gennep: the Creator of French Ethnography.* D. Coltman, (trans). (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Bennett, A. 2005. *Untold Stories.* (London: Faber & Faber).

Bennett, C. 1996. *In Search of the Sacred: Anthropology and the Study of Religions.* (London: Cassell).

Bird, A. 2002. *The Concept of Language-Games in Social Theory.* (MA Dissertation, Social and Political Thought, University of Sussex).

Blavatsky, H.P. 1976. *Isis Unveiled.* (Two Volumes, Facsimile of 1877 Edition). (Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press).

Bloland, H.G. 2004. 'Postmodernisation and Higher Education' in *Jean-François Lyotard, Volume III.* D. Robbins, (ed.). (London: Sage Publications).

Botella, L. 2000. *Personal Construct Psychology, Constructivism, and Postmodern Thought.* (07/2006: http://www.massey.ac.nz/~alock/virtual/Construc.htm).

Bourdieu, P. 2000. (1972). *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* R. Nice, (trans.). (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Bourdieu, P. 1997. *Méditations Pascaliennes.* (Paris: Seuil).

Bourdieu, P. 1990. (1980). *The Logic of Practice.* R. Nice, (trans.). (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press).

Brady, B. & Lehman, J.L. 1997. '12th Century Castle Besiegement in Sports: the Results of a Research Project' in *Astrological Association Journal*. Volume 39, Number 3.
(07/2006: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/ashes.html).

Brau, J-L., Weaver, H. & Edmands, A. 1980 (1977). *Larousse Encyclopedia of Astrology.* (New York: New American Library).

Brockes, E. 2004. 'Star of the Stargazers' in *The Guardian.* 19th January.

Bruce, S. 1996. *Religion in the Modern World: from Cathedrals to Cults.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Bruce, S. 1995. *Religion in Modern Britain.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Bulfinch, T. 1993. *The Golden Age of Myth and Legend.* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions).

Bury, A. 1946. *John Varley of the 'Old Society'.* (Leigh-on-Sea: F. Lewis).

Campion, N. 2004. *The Book of World Horoscopes.* (Bournemouth: The Wessex Astrologer).

Campion, N. 2003. *Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement: the Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology.* Doctoral Thesis, University of the West of England, Bristol.

Campion, N. & Kollerstrom, N., (eds.). 2003. *Galileo's Astrology: Culture and Cosmos.* (Special Issue). Volume 7, Number 1, Spring/Summer.

Chihara, C.S. & Fodor, J.A. 1965. 'Operationalism and Ordinary Language: a Critique of Wittgenstein' in *American Philosophial Quarterly.* Volume 2, Number 4, pp. 281-295.

Clarke, A.C. 1973. (1962). 'Hazards of Prophecy: The Failure of Imagination' in *Profiles of the Future*. (New York: Harper & Row).

Clifford, J. 1997. 'Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and the Disciplining of Anthropology' in *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science.* A.Gupta & J. Ferguson, (eds.). (Berkeley, California: University of California Press).

Cohen, A.P. 1992. 'Post-Fieldwork Fieldwork' in *Journal of Anthropological Research.* 48, (4), pp. 339-354.

Corbin, H. 1964. *Mundus Imaginalis, or the Imaginary and the Imaginal.*
(06/2006: http://www.hermetic.com/bey/mundus_imaginalis.htm).

Cornelius, G. 2004. 'Verity and the Question of Primary and Secondary Scholarship in Astrology' in *Astrology and the Academy: Papers from the Inaugural Conference of the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University College, 13-14 June 2003.* N. Campion, P. Curry & M. York, (eds.). (Bristol: Cinnabar Books).

Cornelius, G. 2003. *The Moment of Astrology.* (Bournemouth: The Wessex Astrologer).

Cornelius, G., Hyde, M. & Webster, C. 1995. *Astrology for Beginners.* (Cambridge: Icon Books).

Crook, S., Pakulski, J. & Waters, M. 1992. *Postmodernization.* (Newbury Park, CA.: Sage).

Curry, P. 2004a. 'Foreword' in *Astrology and the Academy: Papers from the Inaugural Conference of the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University College, 13-14 June 2003.* N. Campion, P. Curry & M. York, (eds.). (Bristol: Cinnabar Books).

Curry, P. 2004b. The Carter Memorial Lecture: 'Re-enchanting Astrology' in *The Astrological Journal,* Volume 46, Number 6, November/December, pp.7-19.

Curry, P. 1999a. 'Review of The Astral Tramp' in *Culture and Cosmos.* Volume 3, number 2.

Curry, P. 1999b. 'Astrology' in *Encyclopedia of History and Historical Writing.* K. Boyd, (ed.). (London: Fitzroy Dearborn).

Curry, P. 1992. *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology.* (London: Collins & Brown).

Davidson, J. 2004. 'I told you so!' in *London Review of Books*. 2nd December.

Dawkins, R. 1995. 'The Real Romance in the Stars' in *The Independent on Sunday.* 31st December. (07/2006: http://www.simonyi.ox.ac.uk/dawkins/WorldOfDawkins-archive/Dawkins/Work/Articles/1995-12romance_in_stars.shtml).

Dean, G. 2004. 'Astrologers see Stars: Predictable Outrage in Astrology Land' in *Skeptical Inquirer.* January/February, Volume 28, Number 1, p. 7.

Dean, G. & Kelly, I. 2003. 'Is Astrology Relevant to Consciousness and Psi?' in *Journal of Consciousness Studies.* Volume 10, Number 6-7, pp. 175-198.

Dean Harte, J. 2005. 'World News' in *Transit.* Volume 7, Number 2, May/June, pp. 8-10. (London: The Astrological Association).

Dinesen, I. (a.k.a. Blixen, K.) 1992. (1937). *Out of Africa.* (New York: Random House).

Dobbs, B.J. 1988. 'Newton's Commentary on the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus' in I. Merkel & A.G. Debus, (eds.). *Hermeticism and the Renaissance*. (Washington: Folger).

Douglas, M. 1966. *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.* (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

Durant, J. & Bauer, M. 1997. 'British Public Perceptions of Astrology: an approach from the Sociology of Knowledge' in *Culture and Cosmos.* 1(1), pp. 55-71.

Durkheim, É. 1966. (1915). *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.* J. Swain, (trans.). (New York: Free Press).

Durkheim, É. & Mauss, M. 1963. *Primitive Classification.* R. Needham, (trans.). (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Durrell, L. 1988. *The Alexandria Quartet.* (Eighth Edition). (London: Faber & Faber).

Eccles, B. & Phillipson, G. 2005. 'Interview with Bernard Eccles' in *The Astrological Journal*. Volume 47, Number 5, pp. 36-45. (London: The Astrological Association).

Edwards, M. 2006. 'Risum Teneatis Amici?' in *The Astrological Journal.* Volume 48, Number 1, pp. 48-56. (London: The Astrological Association).

Eliot, T.S. 1996. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' in *The Nation's Favourite Poems.* G. Rhys Jones, (ed.). (London: BBC Worldwide Ltd).

Ertel, S. & Irving, K. 1996. *The Tenacious Mars Effect.* (London: The Urania Trust).

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1976. (1937). *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Farnell, K. Forthcoming. *Flirting with the Zodiac: A True History of Sun Sign Astrology.*

Farnell, K. 1998. *The Astral Tramp: a Biography of Sepharial.* (London: Ascella Publications).

Favret-Saada, J. 1980. *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage.* C. Cullen, (trans.). (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Feher, S. 1992. 'Who Holds the Cards? Women and New Age Astrology' in *Perspectives on the New Age.* J.R. Lewis & J.G. Melton, (eds.). (Albany: State University of New York Press).

Feuerbach, L. 1989. (1843). *The Essence of Christianity*. G. Eliot, (trans.). (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books).

Feyerabend, P. 1978. *Science in a Free Society.* (New York: Schocken).

Foucault, M. 1989. (1966). *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* Tavistock Publications Ltd., (trans.). (London: Tavistock/Routledge).

Fowler, B. 2001. 'Pierre Bourdieu' in A. Elliott & B.S. Turner, (eds.). *Profiles in Contemporary Social Theory.* (London: Sage Publications).

Frawley, J. 2005. *The Horary Textbook.* (London: Apprentice Books).

Frawley, J. 2000. *The Astrologer's Apprentice.* Number 17. (06/2006: http://www.johnfrawley.com/Back_Nos.html).

Gauquelin, M. 1970 (1966). *Astrology and Science.* J. Hughes, (trans.). (London: Peter Davies).

Geertz, C. 2000. *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics.* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press).

Geertz, C. 1993. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures.* (London: Fontana Press).

Gellner, D.N. 2001. 'Studying Secularism, Practising Secularism. Anthropological Imperatives' in *Social Anthropology.* Volume 9, Part 3, pp. 337-340.

Good, B.J. 1994. *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience: an Anthropological Perspective.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Greenwood, S. 2000. *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: an Anthropology.* (Oxford: Berg).

Gunzburg, D. & Greene. L. 2005. 'An Interview with Liz Greene' in *The Mountain Astrologer.* 119, February/March.

Gunzburg, D. & Campion, N. 2003. 'An Interview with Nick Campion' in *Mercury Direct, The Mountain Astrologer.* 108, April/May.

Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. 1997. 'Discipline and Practice: "The Field" as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology' in *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science.* A.Gupta & J. Ferguson, (eds.). (Berkeley, California: University of California Press).

Hand, R. 1976. *Planets in Transit: Life Cycles for Living.* (Atglen, PA.: Whitford Press).

Harding, M. 2004. 'Astrology as a Language Game' in *Astrology and the Academy: Papers from the Inaugural Conference of the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University College, 13-14 June 2003.* N. Campion, P. Curry & M. York, (eds.). (Bristol: Cinnabar Books).

Harding, M. 2003. *The Language of Time.* (A talk given on Charles Harvey Day). 24th January. (07/2006: http://www.valentino-salvato.net/astrology/articles/the_language_of_time.htm).

Hartley, L.P. 1958. (1953). *The Go-Between.* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books).

Harvey, C. & Harvey, S. 1999. *Astrology.* (London: Thorsons).

Hawking, S. 2001. *The Universe in a Nutshell.* (London: Bantam Press).

Hayes, D. & Wynyard, R. (eds.). 2002. *The McDonaldization of Higher Education.* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press).

Headland, T.N., Pike, K. & Harris, M., (eds.). 1990. *The Insider/Outsider Debate.* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications).

Heelas, P. 1996. *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity.* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Heidegger, M. 1977. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other* Essays. W. Lovitt, (trans.). (New York: Harper & Row).

Herzfeld, M. 2001. *Anthropology: Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society.* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Hexham, I. & Poewe, K. 1997. *New Religions as Global Cultures.* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press).

Hobsbawm, E. 1983. 'Inventing Traditions' in E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, (eds.). *The Invention of Tradition.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Hone, M.E. 1978. (1951). *The Modern Text Book of Astrology.* (Revised Edition). (Romford, Essex: L.N. Fowler & Co Ltd).

Hughes, T. 1998. *Birthday Letters.* (London: Faber & Faber).

Humphrey, C. & Laidlaw, J. 1994. *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual*: *a Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Hutton, R. 2003. *Witches, Druids and King Arthur.* (London: Hambledon & London).

Hyde, M. 2004. (1992). *Jung for Beginners.* (Cambridge: Icon Books).

Hyde, M. 1992. *Jung and Astrology.* (London: The Aquarian Press).

Iamblichus. 1999. *Iamblichus on the Mysteries.* T. Taylor, (trans.). (Frome: The Prometheus Trust).

Jameson, F. 1984. 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Capital' in *New Left Review*. 146, July/August.

Kanitscheider, B. 1991. 'A Philosopher looks at Astrology' in *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews.* Volume 16, Number 3, pp. 258-266.

Kauffmann, C.M. 1984. *John Varley: 1778-1842.* (London: B.T. Batsford).

Kelly, I. 1998. 'Why Astrology Doesn't Work' in *Psychological Reports.* Volume 82, pp. 527-546.

Kenny, A. 1973. *Wittgenstein.* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books).

Lash, S. 1990. *Sociology of Postmodernism.* (London: Routledge).

Lehman, L. 2000. *Book of Rulerships.* (New York: Whitford Press).

Leo, A. 2003. *Alan Leo's Astrology for All.* (Whitefish, MT.: Kessinger Publishing).

Leo, A. 1978a. *Esoteric Astrology.* (Rochester, VT.: Destiny Books).

Leo, A. 1978b. *The Key to your own Nativity.* (Rochester, VT.: Destiny Books).

Lévi-Strauss, C. 1973. (1962). *Totemism.* R. Needham, (trans.). (Harmondsworth: Penguin University Books).

Lévi-Strauss, C. 1972. (1966). *The Savage Mind.* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson).

Linklater, M. 2001. 'An Academic Dispute that is out of this World' in *The Times.* 30th August.

Little, K. 2006. *Defining the Moment: Geoffrey Cornelius and the Development of the Divinatory Perspective.* (06/2006: http://www.astrozero.co.uk).

Long, A.A. 1982. 'Astrology: Arguments Pro and Contra' in *Science and Speculation: Studies in Hellenic Theory and Practice.* J. Barnes, et al., (eds.). (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Luhrmann, T. 1989. *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic and Witchcraft in Present-day England.* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

Lukes, S. 1979. (1970). 'Some Problems about Rationality' in *Rationality.* B.R. Wilson, (ed.). (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

Lyotard, J-F. 1988. (1983). *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute.* G. Van Den Abbeele, (trans.). (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Lyotard, J-F. 1984. (1979). *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge.* G. Bennington & B. Massumi, (trans.). (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Macneice, L. 1964. *Astrology.* (London: Spring Books).

Maffesoli, M. 1996. *The Time of the Tribes: the Decline of Individualism in Mass Society.* (London: Thousand Oaks).

Magee, B. 2000. *Wagner and Philosophy.* (London: Penguin Books).

Magee, B. 1983. *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer.* (Oxford: Clarendon).

Malcolm, N. 1958. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: a Memoir.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Marcus, G.E. 1998. *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Marcus, G.E. & Fischer, M.M.J., (?eds.).1986. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: an Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Marshall, P. 2004. *World Astrology: the Astrologer's Quest to Understand Human Character.* (London: Macmillan).

Massey, A. 1998. '"The Way We Do Things Around Here": the Culture of Ethnography', a paper presented at the *Ethnography and Education* Conference, Oxford University Department of Educational Studies (OUDES), 7th-8th September.
(09/2006: http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/2961/waywedo.htm).

Mauss, M. 2003. (1909). *On Prayer.* S.Leslie, (trans.). W.S.F. Pickering, (ed.). (Oxford: Durkheim Press/Berghahn Books).

Mauss, M. 2001. (1902). *A General Theory of Magic.* R.Brain, (trans.). (London: Routledge Classics).

Melton, J.G. 2001. 'The Emergence of New Religions in Eastern Europe since 1989' in *New Religions and New Religiosity.* E. Barker & M. Warburg, (eds.). (Aahus: Aahus University Press).

Morphy, H. 2003. 'Some Concluding Anthropological Reflections' in M. Mauss, *On Prayer.* S.Leslie, (trans.). W.S.F. Pickering, (ed.). (Oxford: Durkheim Press/Berghahn Books).

Morris, B. 1996. (1987). *Anthropological Studies of Religion.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Narayan, K. 1993. 'How Native is the "Native" Anthropologist?' in *American Anthropologist.* 95, (3), pp. 19-34.

Nasser, R. 2004. *Under One Sky.* J. Forrest, (ed.). (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Seven Paws Press).

Naydler, J. 1996. *Temple of the Cosmos: the Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred.* (Rochester, VT.: Inner Traditions International).

Needham, R. 1972. *Belief, Language and Experience.* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

O'Brien, M. 2004. 'Commentary on Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology*' in *Thinking Together: Proceedings of the IWM Junior Fellows' Conference, Winter 2003*. A. Cashin & J. Jirsa, (eds.). (Vienna: IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences, Volume 16).

Obrist, B. 2003. 'Visualization in Medieval Alchemy' in *Hyle: International Journal for Philosophy of Chemistry.* Volume 9, Number 2, pp. 131-170. (06/2006: http://www.hyle.org).

Okely, J. 1992. 'Anthropology and Autobiography: Participatory Experience and Embodied Knowledge' in *Anthropology and Autobiography.* J. Okely and H. Callaway, (eds.). (London: Routledge).

Orwell, G. 1989. (1949). *Nineteen Eighty-Four.* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books).

Outhwaite, W. 2000. 'The Philosophy of Social Science' in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Theory.* (Second Edition). B.S. Turner, (ed.). (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd).

Outhwaite, W. 1983. *Concept Formation in Social Science.* (London: Routledge).

Pals, D. 1996. *Seven Theories of Religion.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Park, G. 1974. 'Divination' in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*. (Fifteenth Edition). 5, pp.916-920. (Chicago: William Benton).

Parker, J. & D. 1991. *Parkers' Astrology: the Definitive Guide to Using Astrology in every Aspect of your Life.* (London: Dorling Kindersley).

Peek, P.M. 2005. 'Divining a History of Divination Scholarship', keynote address to University of Copenhagen conference, *Unveiling the Hidden: an Interdisciplinary Conference on Divination.* 1st – 3rd August.

Pelissier, C. 1991. 'The Anthropology of Teaching and Learning' in *Annual Review of Anthropology.* Volume 20, pp. 75-95.

Phillipson, G. 2006. 'Modern Science, Epistemology and Astrology' in *Correlation.* Volume 23 (2), pp. 4-23. (London: the Astrological Association of Great Britain).

Phillipson, G. 2005. 'Defending Astrology: What do you say to Sceptical People that don't Understand your Interest in Astrology?' in *Prediction.* Volume 69, Number 9, pp. 51-52.

Phillipson, G. 2002. 'Astrology and the Anatomy of Doubt' in *Mercury Direct, Mountain Astrologer.* 104, pp. 2-12.

Phillipson, G. 2000. *Astrology in the Year Zero.* (London: Flare Publications).
Picardie, J. 2005. 'The Friday Column: Horoscopes' in *The Daily Telegraph.* 11th November.

Pidd, H. 2005. 'Lesson's Over' in *The Guardian.* 14th June.

Plotinus. 1991. *The Enneads.* (London: Penguin).

Plumwood, V. 1996. 'Being Prey' in *Terra Nova.* Volume 1, Number 3, pp. 33-44.

Polkinghorne, D.E. 1992. 'Postmodern Epistemology of Practice' in *Psychology and Postmodernism.* S. Kvale, (ed.). (London: Sage).

Popper, K. (1974). *Conjectures and Refutations.* (Fifth Edition). (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).

Ptolemy. 1998. *Tetrabiblos.* F.E. Robbins, (trans.). (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press).

Ritzer, G. 2004. *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption.* (Second Edition). (Thousand Oakes, CA.: Pine Forge Press).

Ritzer, G. 1998. *The McDonaldization Thesis: Explorations and Extensions.* (London: Sage Publications).

Rogers, C.R. 1982. (1967). *On Becoming a Person: a Therapist's View of Psychotherapy.* (London: Constable & Co Ltd).

Rudhyar, D. 1970. (1936). *The Astrology of Personality*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday).

Rudhyar, D. 1980. (1976). *Person Centered Astrology.* (New York: Aurora Press).

Ryden, K.C. 1993. *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place.* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press).

Sahlins, M. 1976. *Culture and Practical Reason.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Sakoian, F. & Acker, L.S. 1989. (1973). *The Astrologer's Handbook.* (New York: Harper Perennial).

Sample, I. 2004. 'Written in the Stars' in *The Guardian.* 18th May.

Sancho, J. 2001. *Beyond Entertainment?: Research into the Acceptability of Alternative Beliefs, Psychic and Occult Phenomena on Television.* (London: Broadcasting Standards Commission & Independent Television Commission).

Sarbin, T.R. 1986. 'The Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Psychology' in *Narrative Psychology.* T.R.Sarbin, (ed.). (New York: Praeger).

Sarup, M. 1993. *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism.* (Second Edition). (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf).

Sepharial. Undated but early 1900s. *How to Make and Read your own Horoscope.* (London: William Rider & Son, Ltd.).

Shaw, G. 1995. *Theurgy and the Soul: the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus.* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press).

Simms, C. 2003. 'Editorial: the Future; London, Baghdad, Washington' in *Astrology Quarterly.* Volume 73, Number 2.

Smith, W.C. 1998. (1977). *Believing: an Historical Perspective.* (First published as *Belief and History*, see below). (Oxford: Oneworld Publications).

Smith, W.C. 1977. *Belief and History.* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia).

Smith, W.C. 1967. *Questions of Religious Truth.* (New York: Scribner).

Smith, W.C. 1963. *The Meaning and End of Religion: a New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind.* (New York: Macmillan).

Spencer, N. 2000. *True as the Stars Above: Adventures in Modern Astrology.* (London: Victor Gollancz).

Sperber, D. 1985. *On Anthropological Knowledge: Three Essays.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Stern, D.G. 1995. *Wittgenstein on Mind and Language.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Steuerman, E. 2000. *The Bounds of Reason: Habermas, Lyotard and Melanie Klein on Rationality.* (London: Routledge).

Stewart, C. 2001. 'Secularism as an Impediment to Anthropological Research' in *Social Anthropology.* Volume 9, Part 3, pp. 325-328.

Stewart, C. 1991. *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture.* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press).

Stocking, G.W., Jr. 1992. 'The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays' in *The History of Anthropology.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press).

Stronge, P. 2006. 'In the Name of all that is Holy: Classification and the Sacred' in *eSharp: Faith, Belief and Community.* Issue 7. (09/2006: www.sharp.arts.gla.ac.uk/issue7/Stronge.pdf).

Talbot, M. 2006. 'Night Schools could learn from Cuts' in *The Daily Telegraph.* 12th April.

Tedlock, B. 2005. 'Toward a Theory of Divinatory Practice', keynote address to University of Copenhagen Conference, *Unveiling the Hidden: an Interdisciplinary Conference on Divination.* 1st – 3rd August.

Tedlock, B. 2001. 'Divination as a Way of Knowing: Embodiment, Visualisation, Narrative, and Interpretation' in *Folklore.* 112, pp. 189-197. (London: Routledge Journals).

Teissier, E. 2001. *La Situation Épistémologique de L'astrologie à travers L'ambivalence Fascination/Rejet dans les Sociétés Postmodernes*. Doctoral Thesis, Sorbonne, University of Paris V.

Teissier, E. 1997. *Sous Le Signe de Mitterrand.* (Paris: Edition °1).

Tester, J. 1987. *A History of Western Astrology.* (New York: Ballantine Books).

THES. 2001. 'Lets Make it Magical' in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement.* (Editorial). 6th July.

Thorndike, L. 1958. *A History of Magic and Experimental Science: Volume VII.* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Tuan, Y-F. 1977. *Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Tuan, Y-F. 1975. 'Place: an Experiential Perspective' in *Geographical Review.* 65, pp. 151-165.

Turner, B.S. 1991. (1983). *Religion and Social Theory.* (London: Sage Publications).

Turner, E. 1992a. 'The Reality of Spirits' in *Revision.* 15.1, pp. 28-32.

Turner, E., et al. 1992b. *Experiencing Ritual: A New Interpretation of African Healing.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).
Turner, V.W. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure.* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books).

Vaihinger, H. 1925. *The Philosophy of 'As If': a System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind.* C.K. Ogden, (trans.). (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company).

Van Gennep, A. 1960. (1908). *The Rites of Passage.* M.B. Vizedom & G.L. Caffee, (trans.). (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

Van Gennep, A. 1937. *Le Manuel de Folklore Français.* (Paris: August Picard).

Wasserstrom, S.M. 1999. *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade and Henry Corbin at Eranos.* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press).

Weber, M. 1970. (1948). 'Science as a Vocation' in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.* H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, (trans. & ed.). (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd).

Weber, M. 1970. (1948). 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions' in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.* H.H. Gerth & C. Wright Mills, (trans. & ed.). (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd).

Who's Who. 2000. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Wilcox, K. (1982). 'Ethnography as a methodology and its application to the study of schooling: a review' in *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling.* G. Spindler, (ed.). (New York: CBS Publishing).

Williams, J. 1998. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy.* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

Willis, R. & Curry, P. 2004. *Astrology, Science and Culture: Pulling down the Moon.* (Oxford: Berg).

Winch, P. 1979. 'Understanding a Primitive Society' in *Rationality.* B.R. Wilson, (ed.). (Oxford: Basil Blackwell)

Wittgenstein, L. 1988. *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology.* (Volume 1). (Oxford: Blackwell).

Wittgenstein, L. 1974. *Philosophical Grammar.* R. Rhees, (ed.). A. Kenny, (trans.). (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

Wittgenstein, L. 1963. *Philosophical Investigations.* (Second Edition). G.E.M. Anscombe & R. Rhees, (eds.). G.E.M. Anscombe, (trans.). (Oxford: Blackwell).

Yates, F.A. 2002. (1972). *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment.* (London: Routledge).

Yates, F.A. 1992. (1966). *The Art of Memory.* (London: Pimlico).

Yates, F.A. 1991. (1964). *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

APPENDIX A
ASTROLOGERS' EDITED CURRICULA VITAE

The following passages have been excerpted from the publicity material of the astrologers mentioned in the text, originally published for the most part on websites, less so in books, or circulated by astrological schools and associations. Their wide range of content and disparate styles reflect the multiple purposes for which they were originally compiled, and the different approaches of the individuals concerned.

ADAMS, JESSICA:
Jessica, who grew up in Swan Bay, in northern Tasmania, and went to Brooks High School, now lives in Sydney, Bellingen and London, in three monthly cycles. Having left Tasmania for Sydney at the age of twenty-one to attend the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, she is now best known for her work as an astrologer. She's been casting charts since she was fourteen, and working as a professional astrologer since she was twenty-three. For the past three years, she's been the *Daily Telegraph's* resident astro-expert. The thousands of charts she's studied over the years must have revealed some special encoded information regarding the secrets of success, because Jessica, once a journalist, has had a run of accomplishments which are turning her into the Helen Fielding Rolled Into Mystic Meg of Australia.
1999. *The New Astrology for Women.* (London: Corgi Books).
(07/2006: www.yasminboland.com/articles_jessica.html & http://www.jessicaadams.com)

ALLSOP, NICKY:
Nicky is a traditional astrologer, specialising in Fertility Astrology, who practises from Cape Town and over the Internet. A graduate of the Rod Suskin School of Astrology, Nicky has also studied medieval astrology with Bernadette Brady. Nicky specialises in Fixed Stars, using them in the medieval tradition of parans, and not on the ecliptic. Her work in fertility has been published in local magazines such as *Marie Claire* and she has been featured on SABC3's *Free Spirit*. Her pioneering work in fertility has been cited in various papers presented in the UK, most notably in a PhD paper by Pat Harris of the Research Group for the Critical Study of Astrology at the University of Southampton, and Nicky has been interviewed by Garry Phillipson for his doctoral research project at Bath Spa University. Geoffrey Cornelius invited her to present her work and her 'famous chart' to The Company of Astrologers in the UK in September of 2005. Nicky continues to refine her work, and has done research on more than 400 charts, and her data and findings will be published some time in the near future.
(07/2006: http://www.argoastrology.com/speakers_loc1.php)

AMANDA, JANE, MA:
Jane wrote of her experience on the Sophia Centre's first course: 'it is an honour to be amongst the first intake of students on the MA in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* at Bath Spa University College, especially in the knowledge that, consequent only to the Herculean effort of the organisers, astrology has at long last been re-introduced to higher education after a protracted exclusion. It is clearly evident that a great deal of thought and preparation has gone into the selection of modules and course content. The reading lists are comprehensive: there is sufficient material introduced to keep even the most mercurial totally absorbed.'
(07/2006: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/pub/transit/may2003/alice.htm)

ANGELO, MARIE, DPhil, CPsychol (Couns, Occ, Teaching & Research), AFBPsS, CHOREO:
Marie is a chartered psychologist and student of Hermetic arts who designed and runs an MA at the University of Chichester, West Sussex, UK, based on her doctorate, *The Imaginal Tree: Active Imagination as Education* (Sussex, 1992). She teaches through alchemical imagery and reflective practice, some ideas on which are published as follows:
2005. 'Splendor Solis: Inviting the Image to Teach' in *Harvest*. Volume 51, Number 2. (London: Karnac).
2003. 'This Thing of Brightness: the Feminine Power of Transcendent Imagination' in *The Feminine Case: Jung, Aesthetics and Creative Process*. T. Adams & A. Duncan, (eds.). (London: Karnac).
(08/2006: www.jungianstudies.org/conferences/greenwich/abstracts/ &
http://www.chiuni.ac.uk/research/MaTranspersonalArtsPractice.cfm)

AVELAR, HELENA AND RIBEIRO, LUÍS:
Helena and Luís are full-time astrologers, teachers and researchers in astrology. Helena was born in Lisbon in 1964. She has studied astrology since she was very young, although she began a structured study only in 1992. She began counselling in 1996 and teaching in 1999. Luís was born in Setúbal in

1974. He began his astrological studies in 1991 and his practice in 1995. In 1999 they founded an astrological school in Lisbon, Escola de Astrologia Integrada, which, in 2004, became the Academia de Estudos Astrológicos. The Academy offers a four-year course which includes astrological interpretation, basic astronomy and calculation, as well as counselling skills; it promotes regular workshops and lectures with renowned guest astrologers. Besides teaching and lecturing, Helena and Luís publish a monthly astrological bulletin and write articles for various magazines and journals. Their research work focuses mainly on recovering the traditional practice, investigation into the history of astrology in Portugal and mundane astrology. Since 2002 they have organised *Stellium*, the Portuguese Astrological Conference, which brings together both Portuguese and foreign astrologers.
2003. *Vamos Falar de Astrologia* (*Let's Talk about Astrology*).
2004. *Astrologia Real* (*Royal Astrology*).
(06/2005: www.academiadeastrologia.com & http://www.astrolodge.co.uk)

BEST, SIMON, **MA**:
With fellow astrologer and historian of astronomy, Dr Nick Kollerstrom, Simon produced guides for astrological gardeners in the 1980s entitled *Planting by the Moon*. He seems of late largely to have severed his links with the astrological community. At the time of writing, I have only once encountered him at an astrological gathering, although he is still listed as the Consulting Editor for Psychology of *Correlation*, the Astrological Association's bi-annual journal of research in astrology. He is currently editing *The Electromagnetic Hazard and Therapy News* quarterly report and is co-author, with Salford University biophysicist Dr Cyril Smith, of *Electro-magnetic Man: Health and Hazard in the Electrical Environment* (1989).
(02/2005: http://www.em-hazard-therapy.com/index/; http://www.astro3.demon.co.uk/intro/)

BLACKETT, PAT:
Pat is a tutor at the Company of Astrologers and is the Secretary of the Sophia Committee and Editor of Star Temple newsletter. She has a special interest in psychoanalysis, divination and the Tarot. She is the co-author, with Maggie Hyde, of the children's book *Your Starsign and You*. Pat is currently taking the MA course in *Mysticism and Religious Experience* at the University of Kent at Canterbury.
(05/2005: www.astrolodge.co.uk/astro/newsandevents/ summer2005/astroprac/patblackett.html)

BRADY, BERNADETTE, MA:
Australian by nationality, Bernadette now lives in Bristol, UK and holds an MA in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* from Bath Spa University. She is a professional consulting astrologer, Co-Principal of Astro Logos, (a postgraduate speciality school for astrologers), and a Faculty Member of the Astrological Guild of Educators International. She is a Fellow of the Federation of Australian Astrologers and also holds an FAA Diploma. Her publications include the astrological software package *Starlight*, (co-authored with Barnswood Ltd. and published through Zyntara Publications), and *Jigsaw*, (Astrolabe, USA, and Esoteric Technologies, Australia), which she co-authored with Esoteric Technologies.
1992. *The Eagle and the Lark: a Textbook of Predictive Astrology.* (USA: Weisers). Reprinted as:
1999. *Predictive Astrology: The Eagle and the Lark*. (USA: Weisers). (Winner of the UK's Spica Award for the Best Astrological Book of the Year.)
1998. *Brady's Book of Fixed Star.* (USA: Weisers).
(09/2005: http://www.bernadettebrady.com/home.shtml)

BROCKBANK, JAMES, MA, Dip WESA, QHP, QPMA:
James lives in London and is a graduate of Oxford University, Bath Spa University College, The White Eagle School of Astrology, and is a qualified horary and medieval astrology practitioner. He has been studying astrology for over ten years and has a particular interest in medieval and Hellenistic techniques. James is currently working on a PhD in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* at Bath Spa University. He is Honorary Treasurer of the Astrological Association of Great Britain.
(08/2006: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/pub/transit/sep2005/councilprofiles3.htm)

BROOKE, ELISABETH:
Selected Publications:
1995. *An Astrological Herbal for Women.* (London: Crossing Press).
1995. *A Wisewoman's Guide to Spells, Rituals, and Goddess Lore.* (London: Crossing Press).
1995. *Women Healers: Portraits of Herbalists, Physicians, and Midwives.* (London: Healing Arts Press).
1993. *Women Healers Through History.* (London: The Women's Press Ltd).
1993. *A Woman's Book of Shadows: Witchcraft - A Celebration.* (London: The Women's Press Ltd).

CAMPION, NICHOLAS, PhD:
Nick has a BA from Queen's College, Cambridge, an MA from The School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and a PhD from The University of the West of England/Bath Spa University College. He is an internationally recognised authority on astrology and past President of both the Astrological

Association of Great Britain and the Astrological Lodge of London. He currently lectures in Astrology at Kepler College, Washington State and Bath Spa University where, as Principal Lecturer in History, he is Director of the Sophia Centre in the School of Historical and Cultural Studies. He was born in Bristol, England, in 1953. He moved away in 1968 but returned in 1984. He has travelled widely in Asia (Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia) and his primary interest is in the similarities between cultures, rather than the differences. At the heart of the matter is the question of why people believe what they believe. As a historian, his main interest is in the relationship between human culture and the sky, whether in astronomy, astrology, sacred calendars, sky gods, UFO cults or the politics of the space race.

Selected Publications:

2007. *The Historical Dictionary of Astrology.* (Scarecow Press).

2007. *Cosmos: A Cultural History of Astrology.* (London: London and Hambledon).

2006. *What do Astrologers Believe?* (Cambridge: Granta).

2005. *The Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena,* proceedings of the fourth conference on astronomical phenomena, Magdalen College, Oxford June 2003. (ed.). *Culture and Cosmos*. Volume 8, nos. 1 & 2. (Bristol: Cinnabar Books).

2005. 'The Survival of Babylonian Astrology in the Late Roman Empire' in *Horoscopes and Public Spheres: Essays on the History of Astrology.* G. Oestmann, D. Rutkin & K. von Stuckrad, (eds.). (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter).

2004. *Galileo's Astrology.* With N. Kollerstrom, (eds.). *Culture and Cosmos.* Volume 7, number 1, Spring/Summer. (Bristol: Cinnabar Books).

2004. *Astrology and the Academy*: papers from the inaugural conference of the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University College, 13th-14th June 2003. With P. Curry & M. York, (eds.). (Bristol: Cinnabar Books).

(06/2006: http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about/profiles/profile.asp?user=academic%5Ccamn1 & http://www.nickcampionreports.com/ & http://www.nickcampion.com/index3.htm)

CASSAR, MARIELLA, DFAstrolS, RCAstrol:

Mariella is a professional astrologer and a trained astrological counsellor. She sees clients at home in Beckenham, Kent and gives telephone consultations to clients worldwide. She combines her knowledge of Western and Vedic astrology in her consultations. She began her training as an astrologer in 1986 with the Company of Astrologers which gave her a solid foundation in traditional astrology. She joined the FAS to learn the modern psychological approach and obtained both their Certificate and their Diploma. Subsequently, she undertook a postgraduate course with the Faculty to train as a counselling astrologer. In 1996, she began her studies in Vedic Astrology and in the past ten years has studied with world famous astrologers in this field, visiting India on an annual basis. She is a member and past Treasurer of the International Association of Professional Astrologers (IAPA), a member of the British Association of Vedic Astrologers (BAVA), and a member of the Sri Jagannath Organisation (SJC). She has served on the Council of the Astrological Association of Great Britain (AA) and was a tutor with the Faculty of Astrological Studies (FAS). She gives talks on astrology in the UK and overseas and is a regular speaker at the Astrological Lodge of London (ALL) and at BAVA meetings and conferences. She contributes regular articles to *Gochara*, the Journal of the British Association of Vedic Astrology, and other publications. She has practised yoga and meditation for almost thirty years and from time to time she organises weekend seminars to introduce beginners to yoga, meditation and the spiritual philosophy of her Master, Shrii Shrii Anandamurtiji. She is very interested in the fields of alternative health and healing and is a qualified nutritionist. She was a member of the National Federation of Spiritual Healers for several years. Prior to taking up a career in astrology, Mariella worked in the City as a member of the London Stock Exchange. She is a Fellow of the Securities Institute and a member of the Society of Technical Analysts. (08/2006: http://www.mariellacassar.co.uk/about_me.html)

CHANDLER, CLAIRE:

Claire is the President of the Astrological Lodge of London and has edited *Astrology Quarterly* since 2001. She cannot remember a time when astrology was not part of her life and she began formal study with the Faculty of Astrological Studies in 1994, when the Uranus/Neptune conjunction squared her Moon. She has been giving professional readings since 1995 and has been speaking since 1998. She is currently studying for Robert Zoller's Diploma in Medieval Astrology and investigating other traditional methods and practices. She is particularly interested in Mundane Astrology. She is also the secretary of the Advisory Panel on Astrological Education (APAE).

(06/2005: http://www.astrolodge.co.uk & www.clairechandler.com)

CLIFFORD, FRANK:
Frank began studying astrology and palmistry in 1989, and has appeared on radio, TV and in newspapers discussing both subjects. In 1997, he founded Flare Publications to publish books and to promote astro-palmistry in media fields.
His most recent books have been about hand analysis and have been published in seven languages.
Forthcoming. *The Midheaven.*
2002. *Palmistry 4 Today.* (London: Rider).
2004. *Palm-Reading.* (London: Hamlyn).
2003. *British Entertainers.* (His Data Compendium for Solar Fire).
2000. *Venus*.
2000. *Mars*.
Sun-sign columns and phone-lines: *Marie Claire*, *Reveal*, *Quick and Simple* and *Candis*.
He has been profiled in *The Guardian*, *Good Health*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Express* and numerous regional magazines.
(08/2006: www.flareuk.com & http://www.londonschoolofastrology.co.uk/)

COLE, GLENDA:
Glenda began her study of astrology twenty-five years ago. She is Chair of the Suffolk Astrological Society, a long running astrology group based in Bury St Edmunds. After letting her membership lapse, Glenda re-joined the Astrological Association of Great Britain four years ago, having realised she missed the advantages of being an AA member. Glenda's role on its Council is that of Local Groups Co-ordinator, to which she brings her long running experience and passion for local astrology groups.
(08/2006: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/pub/transit/nov2005/councilprofiles4.htm)

CORNELIUS, GEOFFREY:
Geoffrey is a consultant astrologer with a background in philosophy and divination. He is a former President of the Astrological Lodge of London, and a co-founder of the Company of Astrologers. He has been active in UK astrological education since the 1970s and is one of the original band of pioneers of the subject both in adult education and at university level. He currently teaches *Cosmology and Divination* in The *Mysticism and Religious Experience* MA programme at the University of Kent, where he is engaged in doctoral research studies in divination.
(Cornelius: 2003: i)

COSSAR, FAYE:
Faye has, since 1986, had her practice for astrology, and later for therapy, in Amsterdam. She has a successful business background in consultancy and management and runs her own company for business astrology. She has studied astrology since the 1970s, starting in her homeland of New Zealand, and continuing in England and Holland. Her last achievement has been her graduation, in 2004, with an MA in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* from Bath Spa University. Her therapy training was completed in the Netherlands. Faye teaches in the Netherlands and in London and has also lectured in Bath, York, Belgium and Norway.
(08/2006:
http://www.astrolodge.co.uk/astro/newsandevents/summer2006/astrohealingday/fayecossar.html &
http://www.erhvervsastrologi.dk/erhvervsastrologi/Nytdesign/Konferencerenglish.htm)

COSTELLO, DARBY:
Darby studied psychology, philosophy and theology in America in the mid 1960s. After some travel, she returned to the US to study astrology in Boston, first with Francis Sakoian and Louis Acker and then with Isobel Hickey. In 1971 she went to South Africa for a brief visit and stayed for twelve years. During that time she worked with the Museum of Man and Science, in Johannesburg, recording the art and practices of the *sangomas*, the diviner/healers of Southern Africa. Concurrently, she began doing charts for people, gradually developing a wide clientele over the years. In 1983 she came to London. During the first few years she developed her practice and began giving workshops and seminars to various groups, while deepening her own knowledge of astrology's cultural history. In 1988 she joined The Centre for Psychological Astrology, where she has been teaching and supervising students ever since. She is also a visiting tutor for The Faculty of Astrological Studies, and she teaches and lectures regularly throughout the UK and Europe.
She wrote her first book, *Astrology*, for Dorling Kindersley's *Pocket* series, with Lindsay Radermacher. She then wrote three books of seminar collections for the CPA Press: *The Astrological Moon*, *Water and Fire*, and *Earth and Air.*
She was one of the four contributors to *The Mars Quartet*, published in 2001.
(08/2006: http://www.darbycostello.co.uk/ & http://www.cpalondon.com/staff/darby.html)

CURRY, PATRICK, PhD:
Patrick was born in Canada but has lived in London for most of the past thirty years. His academic qualifications include a BA (Hon) in Psychology from the University of California (Santa Cruz), an MSc in Logic and Scientific Method from the LSE, and a PhD in the History and Philosophy of Science from University College London. He lists his interests, other than astrology, as including ecology, fiction, photography, music and martial arts. During 2002 to 2006, he was Lecturer in the MA programme in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology at the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University. Prior to that he concentrated on research and writing, together with some lecturing. Most of his published work to date concerns astrology and/as divination (examined historically and philosophically); ecology (personal, political, ethical and spiritual); and the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien. Patrick is currently a part-time lecturer in the *Study of Mysticism and Religious Experience* and the *Cultural Study of Cosmology and Divination* postgraduate programmes at the University of Kent at Canterbury. In his staff profile on the latter's website, he records that his current research addresses enchantment as a kind of human experience, one which touches on other neglected concerns in relation to religious studies such as the natural world, erotic communion, art and divination. It is influenced by the work of Max Weber and succeeding critical theorists, as well as other writers as diverse as J.R.R. Tolkien, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, David Abram, Sean Kane, Val Plumwood, Bruno Latour and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. He is also interested in related issues such as the nature of truth, metaphor, embodied phenomenology, pluralism and post-secularism.
Selected Publications:
2006. *Ecological Ethics*: *An Introduction.* (Cambridge: Polity Press).
2004. *Astrology and the Academy*. Co-edited with Nicholas Campion and Michael York. (Bristol: Cinnabar Books).
2004. *Astrology, Science and Culture: Pulling Down the Moon.* With Roy Willis. (Oxford: Berg).
2004. (1998, 1997). *Defending Middle-Earth: Tolkien, Myth & Modernity.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin).
1995. *Postmodernism for Beginners.* Part-author. (Cambridge: Icon). Republished as:
2003. *Introducing Postmodernism.* (Cambridge: Icon).
1995. *Machiavelli for Beginners*. (Cambridge: Icon). Republished as:
2000. *Introducing Machiavelli*. (Cambridge: Icon).
1992. *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology.* (London: Collins & Brown).
1989. *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England.* (Oxford: Polity Press).
(09/2006: http://www.kent.ac.uk/secl/thrs/staff/curry.htm &
06/2005: http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about/profiles/profile.asp?user=academic%5Ccurp1)

DUNCAN, ADRIAN, ROSS:
I am Welsh but was born in York. During my youth I went to boarding school in Cambridge for six long years. Naturally I did the opposite of what boarding school had trained me to do, dropped out of university and headed out East. As a consequence of a year-long stay in India in 1970, I was gripped by the magic of astrology. At my Saturn return - aged 30 - I moved to Denmark, which just happens to be one of the most astrologer-friendly countries in the world. Here you go to a bank and say you want to loan to start up as an astrologer, and the manager asks you to do his/her chart. After about 5 years in Denmark I became President of Ekliptika - the Copenhagen Astrology Society - and remained so for about seven years. One of the more significant events organised was the 1991 Copenhagen Astrology Conference which invited Russian astrologers to the West for the first time. During the 1980s I lectured at conferences and astrological societies as far apart as Atlanta, San Diego, Montreal, Dublin, Manchester, London, Holland, Norway and Sweden. In the 1990s I developed the horoscope interpreter software, *World of Wisdom.* This was born out of my frustration with both the incomprehensible DOS programmes of the time and the general elitist approach to astrology. My goal with *WOW* is to enable ordinary people to get to understand their horoscopes in greater depth without necessarily having to visit an astrologer. Sales of *WOW* have now reached over 100,000 copies in 12 languages. In 1998 I moved from Denmark to England for three years, during which time I edited the *Astrological Journal*. (09/2006: http://www.world-of-wisdom.com/05_astrologers/adrian.htm)

ECCLES, BERNARD, MA:
Sometimes writing as Bernard Fitzwalter, Bernard has been teaching and lecturing in astrology for twenty years. He has been a prominent member of the Astrological Lodge of London since 1978 and was its President twice between 1988 and 1995. He taught programmes in the techniques of prediction at the Marylebone-Passington Institute for seven years and now teaches short courses for the Lodge and at the FAS Summer School. In his commercial guise, he writes books and Sun-sign columns for newsapers and magazines worldwide, and his books have sold over half a million copies. In recent years, he has been closely involved in the Sophia Project; he was among the first graduates of its MA programme in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* at BSU.

(2004: FAS handout & 03/2005: http://www.skyscript.co.uk/physiognomy.html)

EDWARDS, MICHAEL, BA, PG Dip Film Studies (Slade), QHP:

Mike says of himself that he has been 'an humble student of the Art', aka the Hermetic Tradition, for thirty-three years. While teaching what he terms *Astrologia* to adults, he became the first lecturer in four centuries to teach horoscopic astrology to degree level in a British university, at Sussex. As editor of *Astrology Quarterly,* journal of the Astrological Lodge of London, he was made a life member. He now teaches Hermetic Arts and Kosmos with his wife, Dr Marie Angelo, on her graduate programme at the University of Chichester. He also lectures, consults and teaches privately.

(*The Astrological Journal.* Volume 48, Number 3, May/June 2006.)

EKREK, ALICE, MA:

Alice started studying astrology after graduating in History in 1996. She participated in a humanistic astrology group in the Czech Republic while teaching English there in 1998. After returning to the UK she completed an MA in Religious Studies at King Alfred's College, Winchester; her final dissertation was entitled *Concepts of Spirituality in Psychological Astrology*. She became a member of the Astrological Association of Great Britain in 1999, joining the Council in 2002. She recently became Secretary, and is involved in the organisation of the Association's activities and events. Alice is Administrator of the Sophia Centre at Bath Spa University.

(08/2006: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/pub/transit/sep2005/councilprofiles3.htm)

ENGLAND, HEDLEY:

Hedley's book, *Degrees of Flight: the Astrology of Aviation*, (2004, Lunation Press, http://www.lunationpress.co.uk/), takes a sceptical view of astrology. This healthy attitude lets the astrology drive the story through the astrological signatures of prediction, and through post analysis of these events I learn more as an astrologer. This analysis uncovers issues which may challenge some long held beliefs and upset the current mind sets of mainstream astrologers. However, the new findings reveal a Universal Truth that, once accepted, will push astrology further. The book explores, from an astrological perspective, the major aviation events from the Montgolfier Balloon ascent in 1783 to the last commercial flight of Concorde in 2003, a span of 220 years. The most important event since 1783 was the flight by the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, USA in 1903. It demonstrated that mankind had mastered the dimension of the skies through the use of powered and controlled aircraft. An astrological argument has arisen that a specific degree, the fifth of Sagittarius, (being the Midheaven of the chart of that event), somehow represents the paradigm of powered flight.

FARNELL, KIM, MA:

Kim has been a professional astrologer since 1990. She has taught astrology and lectured extensively in the UK and overseas. She was a Council member of the Astrological Association of Great Britain for nine years and is presently on the Executive Committee of the British Astrological and Psychic Society.

Her numerous publications include:

2005. *One Mystic Vampire: a Biography of Mabel Collins, Victorian Visionary.* (London: Mandrake).

1998. *The Astral Tramp: a Biography of Sepharial.* (London: Ascella).

Her work has been published in a variety of astrological periodicals. She has also written books published in Japanese and Serbo-Croat.

(07/2006: http://www.skyscript.co.uk/love.html and http://www.swan-island.com/astrosex/index.shtml & http://www.astrolodge.co.uk)

FORREST, STEVEN:

Gazing through astronomical telescopes in his early teens led Steven to begin exploring astrology. He received a BA in Religion in 1971 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and shortly thereafter began to establish his astrological practice.

Selected Publications:

2001. (1988). *Skymates: the Composite Chart.* With Jodie Forrest. (Seven Paws Press).

1995. *The Book of Pluto.* 1993. *The Night Speaks.* 1986. *The Changing Sky*. 1984. *The Inner Sky.*

Additionally, Steven has written technical articles for most of the major American astrological journals and several national magazines outside the astrological field. He composed the texts for two popular computerized astrological report writers, *The Sky Within* and *SkyLog*. Steven has also written the monthly astrology column for *Elle* and *Sassy* magazines and has appeared on the national cable TV show *Alive and Wellness*, as well as many radio programmes around the country. He travels widely throughout the US, Mexico and Canada lecturing on astrological topics, although his primary focus is still on his private astrological practice. Steven is currently Chair of the Kepler College Advisory Council, which is part of an effort to open an accredited astrologically-oriented university in Seattle, WA. He won the 1985 Professional Astrologers Incorporated Award for an 'Outstanding Contribution to the Art and Science of Astrology', and was nominated for a United Astrology Congress Regulus Award in 1992 and 1995.

(07/2006: http://www.stevenforrest.com/stevebio.html)

FRAWLEY, JOHN:

John specialises in traditional techniques, firmly rooted in the modern world; he has the ability to make the most complex ideas simple and fun. He is known in the UK for his televised predictions of the correct scores of soccer matches, and from Brisbane to Budapest for his entertaining and authoritative lecturing on the Western tradition in astrology. He teaches the Apprenticeships in Horary and Traditional Natal Astrology to students in six continents.

He is the author of the Spica Award-winning *The Real Astrology*, and also of *The Real Astrology Applied*, *Sports Astrology*, *The Horary Textbook* and the magazine *The Astrologer's Apprentice.*

(08/2006: http://www.johnfrawley.com/ & http://www.argoastrology.com/speakers_int4.php)**GEORGE,**

GEORGE, DEMETRA, MA:

Demetra has a BA in Philosophy and an MA in Classics. In 2002, she received the Marion D. March Regulus Award for Theory and Understanding. A practitioner of astrology for over thirty years, specialising in asteroids and archetypal mythology, she is the author of *Astrology for Yourself*, *Mysteries of the Dark Moon*, and *Finding Our Way Through the Dark*. Demetra lectures internationally and leads pilgrimages to the sacred sites in the Mediterranean. Currently she is a professor at Kepler College, Seattle, where she teaches the history of astrology in ancient and medieval civilisations as well as the techniques of Hellenistic astrology.

(08/2006: http://nicolashays.com/_wsn/page5.html)

GILLETT, ROY BEd, ACII:

Roy has been a full-time astrologer since 1976 and has studied, taught and advised clients world-wide. He was Chair of the Astrological Association from 1994-1999 and has since been its President. He has organised astrology conferences for twenty-five years, including most of the annual AA conferences since 1994. Roy published daily astro-diaries between 1978 and 1990 and writes the AA Journal's regular *Working with the Planets* articles. He has also written *A Model of Health, Zen for Today's Living* and *The Essence of Buddhism*. He supports *Astrolabe* and *Solar Fire* astro-software and has appeared widely on the broadcast media. Roy campaigns to improve OFCOM's guidelines for astrology in the media and helps English Heritage organise equinox/solstice dawn access to Stonehenge.

(08/2006: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/pub/transit/may2005/councilprofiles1.htm)

GREENE, LIZ, PhD:

Having lived in Switzerland for some years, Liz has recently relocated to the West Country. She founded the Centre for Psychological Astrology (CPA) with Howard Sasportas in 1983, and remains its Director. In 1996, she created the CPA Press, which publishes selected seminars offered by various tutors as part of the CPA seminar programme. She has a doctorate in Psychology and is a qualified Jungian Analyst; she also holds a diploma in Counselling from the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology in London and a Diploma from the FAS, of which she is a lifetime Patron. She is the author of many books on astrological, psychological and mythological themes, which have been translated into a number of different languages, and include *Saturn: A New Look at an Old Devil*, *Relating*, *Astrology for Lovers*, *The Astrology of Fate*, *The Mythic Tarot* (with Juliet Sharman-Burke), and *The Astrological Neptune and the Quest for Redemption*. Her latest book is *Relationships and How to Survive Them.* In 1985 she began a collaboration with Swiss physicist, Dr Alois Treindl of *Astrodienst*, and created the first of several computer-generated astrological interpretation reports based on artificial intelligence programming. There are now six of these reports on the market, available in many languages.

(06/2005:http://www.astro.com & http://www.cpalondon.com/staff/liz.html &
http://www.astrology.org.uk/pages/about_fas/faculty_alumni.htm)

GUNZBURG, DARRELYN:

Darrelyn is the writer of the award-winning plays *Hiccup* (Currency Press, 1989) and *Behind the Beat* (Currency Press, 1992), and the award-nominated play *Water From The Well* (Tantrum Press, 1992). Her latest book is *Life After Grief: An Astrological Guide to Dealing With Loss* (The Wessex Astrologer, 2004). Educated in Perth, WA, Darrelyn began her working life as a fire-eater with a circus. She left the University of Western Australia at the end of her second year to join the Australian Film Industry, working on the crews of feature films with directors such as Peter Weir, (*The Last Wave*), and Fred Schepisi, (*The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*). Her early, short films all won local awards and were screened at the Sydney and Adelaide Film Festivals from 1977 to 1979. She worked at Fred Schepisi's production house in Melbourne as assistant editor/PA, meanwhile completing the Women's Training Course run by the Open Programme of The Australian Film, Television and Radio School in Melbourne in 1978. From 1980 to 1983, she was writer-director at Film Australia in Sydney. Darrelyn is a professional consulting astrologer and Co-Principal, with Bernadette Brady, of *Astro Logos*, a post-graduate astrological school founded in 1990 in Adelaide, South Australia and now located in Bristol, that

prepares students for the International Diploma of Astrology established by the Astrological Guild of Educators International (AGEInt). (09/2006: http://www.darrelyngunzburg.com/)

HAMBLIN, David:

A former Chairman of the Astrological Association of Great Britain, David spent much time testing astrological claims, but found no evidence in their favour. Eventually he gave up reading birth charts but retained his interest in astrology. He argues that the spiritual dimension is a necessary part of human existence, and that, for many astrologers, astrology is a religion rather than a science. It enriches their lives (and the lives of their clients) in the same way that other people's lives are enriched by Christianity. So why not allow astrologers to practise their religion in peace, he asks, rather than constantly press them to turn it into a science? Even if astrology isn't really 'true', it is still a wonderful thing, a fantastically complex and beautiful construct that draws our attention to the heavens and makes us aware that we are a tiny yet still significant part of the universe. Most astrologers are affected by this, and have a quality of beauty in themselves. And what, after all, would happen to astrology, he wonders, if it was proved beyond doubt that there is a connection between planetary positions at a particular time and events on Earth occurring at the same time? It would be taken over, not only by science, but by politics and big business. It would become part of the system from which so many of us long to escape. It would do great harm, because of the way in which it would be used by unscrupulous people in search of profit and power. It would lose its magic and its capacity to inspire. How much better that it should remain one of those things (like life after death) that are never proved but remain tantalisingly possible, elusive, just out of reach, offering glimpses of a universe that lies beyond our ordinary experience.
(09/2006: www.astrology-and-science.com & cited by Phillipson 2000)

HAND, ROB:

Rob was known in his early career as the first practising astrologer to write astrology software for other astrologers. From this effort, he founded *Astro-Graphics* Services in 1979, which later became *Astrolabe, Inc.* In 1997 he established the Association for the Retrieval of Historical Astrological Texts (ARHAT), a formal archive, library and publishing company for preserving his work and findings. Rob's library now houses original texts and translations of over two dozen ancient and medieval astrologers. His books to date include: *Horoscope Symbols; Planets in Transit; Planets in Composite; Planets in Youth; Essays on Astrology* and *Night and Day: Planetary Sect in Astrology.* He is Chair of the National Council for Geocosmic Reseach (NCGR) and is a patron of The Faculty of Astrological Studies. He lectures in conferences, seminars and workshops worldwide, and offers professional astrological services to astrologers and the general public. (Phillipson 2000: 210-211)

HARDING, MIKE, ADEP, UKCPreg, DFAstrolS:

Mike is an existential psychotherapist and is Chair of the Society of Existential Analysis. He is interested in the cross-over points between psychoanalysis, existential practice and the ancient wisdom traditions. He is a lecturer and supervisor at The School of Psychotherapy & Counselling, Regent's College, with a particular interest in continental philosophy and the work of Wittgenstein. He is also a consultant astrologer and has written extensively on both its technical and philosophical aspects. Mike has spent many years as a Council Member of the Faculty of Astrological Studies, and was Director of the Faculty's Counselling Within Astrology course. He is also a past chairman of the Astrological Association of Great Britain and of the Association of Professional Astrologers. He worked with Charles Harvey for many years, primarily in business and mundane astrology, and co-authored *Working with Astrology* with him. Mike is also author of the *Hymns to the Ancient Gods* and of numerous articles for various astrological publications.
(07/2006: http://www.astrology.org.uk/pages/about_fas/faculty_alumni.htm & Harding 2004: ix)

HARRIS, PAT, MSc:

Pat edits *Correlation*, the astrological research journal. She qualified as an astrologer with the Faculty of Astrological Studies in 1982 and was its PR Officer from 1983 to 1999. In 1997, she received her Masters degree in Health Psychology from Southampton University. She has written various articles on Northern Ireland and the Anglo-Irish relationship which have been published in the *Astrological Association Journal*, *The Irish Astrological Journal*, *Realta* and *The Celtic Astrologer Journal*. In addition to currently conducting doctoral research at The University of Southampton in the applications of astrology to health psychology, Pat Harris has offered online 'Astro-Fashion Profiles' (personal fashion guides for women based on their birth charts) since 1998. Profiles are produced, she tells us, through the medium of a computerised programme and provide fashion pointers on such areas as personal and professional style, colours, fabrics, textures and shape. They also involve some degree of sexual psychology as they explore personal fantasy images. They are necessarily light hearted in tone, being designed to inspire and uplift and to some extent, entertain.
(09/2006: http://www.astrology-research.net/rgcsa.htm & http://www.astrologyfashion.com/pat.htm)

HYDE, MAGGIE, BA:
Maggie read English at the University of Ulster and worked in Adult Education in London where she was responsible for developing a range of New Age subjects including Complementary Medicine, Astrology, Buddhism and the *I Ching*. In 1984, she co-founded the Company of Astrologers and was its director from 1983 to 1999. Since 1988, she has written columns for the media and has been the astrologer for *Cosmopolitan*, *The Media Guardian* and the Business Section of the *Sunday Observer*. She is currently the astrologer for *Woman's Own*. Her consultancy work led to an interest in psychoanalytic thought: she was influenced mainly by the existential psychology of the Philadelphia Association and became an Associate Member in 1999; her interest in Jung culminated in the publication of two books published in 1992: *Jung and Astrology* and *Jung for Beginners*.
(08/2006: http://maggiehyde.com/index.php, http://www.companyguide.co.uk/gamhcv.htm & http://coa.hubcom.net/)

JUDD, STEVE, MA:
Steve was born near Southampton in July 1955. After leaving the army at twenty, he found his first astrological book in 1980, and spent the next years buried in books studying astrological basics, leading to his first consultations in 1982. He is totally self-taught. Over the next fifteen years, he expanded his ability by doing over four thousand chart readings. In 1994, after many years working at the Glastonbury Festival Green Fields, Steve was one of the founding members of the Big Green Gathering. Since 1998, Steve has increased his astrological career exponentially, starting when he began work for the astrological phone lines. He wrote for Jonathan Cainer, contributing to his website and *Daily Mirror* column. During 1999 and 2000, Steve worked as a real-time Internet astrological consultant for *World International Television*. He now works solely for himself. In the last seven years, Steve's number of consultations has increased to the point where he now has records of over seventeen thousand horoscopic readings; he has a loyal client base, many of his clients returning for monthly/yearly updates. Steve has considerable experience of dealing with different media: he has appeared on local radio stations in Cornwall, Bristol, Hereford, Stevenage and the highlands of Scotland amongst others, on local TV in the HTV and GMTV areas, and has national TV appearances to his name. In September 2003, Steve began studying for the MA in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* at the Sophia Centre, Bath Spa University. He was awarded his Masters Degree in July 2005, and his PhD application is now in process.
(09/2006: http://www.stevejudd.com/biography)

KOLLERSTROM, NICK, PhD:
Nick has a Cambridge science degree and has worked as a physics schoolteacher. He is recognised throughout the astrological community for his pioneering studies that have brought his scientific background into exciting fields of research on planets, plants and metals. He has been actively involved in the study of planet-metal associations and other matters of a Hermetic nature for thirty years, and has lectured on these subjects since 1975. His work in medical research resulted in his book *Lead on the Brain - a plain guide to Britain's No 1 pollutant*. His investigation of lunar effects upon plant growth led in the 1980s to his gardener's guide *Planting by the Moon* and the popular annuals *Gardening and Planting by the Moon*. Nick Kollerstrom's latest title, *Crop Circles: The Hidden Form*, published by Wessex books, offers a new way of experiencing the crop circle mystery, through the geometry of the forms revealed in crops.
(09/2006: http://www.skyscript.co.uk/galast.html)

LEVINE, RICK:
Rick founded the website *StarIQ*, with Jeff Jawer, to bring high quality astrology to the general public. They are both professional astrologers who have counselled, lectured and networked in the US and internationally for over twenty years. They lead a team of astrologers, writers, editors, programmers, artists and administrators committed to presenting astrology as a tool for empowerment, understanding and creativity. Rick is also author of *Tarot.com's* daily horoscopes, which are read on many other websites including *AOL*, *Beliefnet*, *Women's Entertainment TV* and many others. He is an active voice in the astrology community whose special gift is to bridge the gap between astrology and spirituality, science and religion and the head and the heart. Rick has been involved in the alternative health and natural products industry for twenty years. In 1982, he founded The Center for Astrological Research and Education in Minneapolis, MN; he was a Founding Trustee of the Kepler College for Astrological Arts and Sciences, Seattle, that is state licensed to issues degrees in Astrological Studies. Rick served two terms on the Steering Committee for the Association for Astrological Networking (AFAN). He is a two-term past President of the Washington State Astrology Association (WSAA). He is a member of the Organisation for Professional Astrologers, the National Conference on Geocosmic Research (NCGR) and the International Society for Astrology Research (ISAR). In addition to his astrology lectures, he teaches astrologers how to make use of technology, including computers and the Internet.

(09/2006: http://www.stariq.com/about.HTM & http://horoscopes.aol.tarot.com/about-us/bios/Levine)

LITTLE, KIRK:

Kirk is an astrologer and psychiatric social worker living in Gorham, Maine. He studied with Bob Mulligan in the late 1970s. He has a bachelors degree in American and European History and a Masters degree in Social Work. His primary interests are in the history of astrology and its connection to other disciplines.

(09/2006: www.astrozero.co.uk/articles/Defining.htm)

MANTAS, SANTIAGO:

Born in London to Spanish parents, Santiago has, in addition to his astrological activities, established an enviable international reputation as a front-ranking concert pianist. After winning scholarships to study the piano at the Vienna Academy of Music, the Cologne Hochschule and at Trinity College of Music, he went on to tour America, Germany, Switzerland and Scandinavia, and gave numerous solo recitals on London's South Bank. His regular appearances at the Royal Albert Hall have included a world première of Paul Hart's Piano Concerto in D, The Cathcart, for which he has written a cadenza, and has won exclusive performance rights for the next few years. His broadcasting has not been limited to the BBC, but also includes Spain, Austria, Central and South America. His extensive concerto repertoire ranges from Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn to Schumann, Saint-Saens, Ravel and Gershwin. Santiago has become a renowned interpreter of the Spanish and South American classical piano repertoire: beyond the music of Villa-Lobos, Granados, Albeniz and de Falla, which he has premièred, he has brought composers such as Ginastera, Guastavino and Buchardo to a wider audience. Santiago is an Honorary Fellow of Trinity College of Music, where he adjudicates.

(09/2006: http://www.tobinmusic.co.uk/recitals/372.htm &
http://www.swaledale-festival.org.uk/archive_2003/2003_day_25-5.cfm)

MARTIN, CLARE, MA, DFAstrolS, DpsychAstrol:

Clare has been teaching astrology since 1991 and is currently President of The Faculty of Astrological Studies. She is a qualified Integrative Psychotherapist and Supervisor at The Centre for Psychological Astrology, with an astrological practice in London. For the last two years, Clare has been working on the restructuring and rewriting of the Faculty's courses and examinations. As a member of the Sophia Project committee, she hopes to see the Faculty play a central role in the re-establishment of astrological studies at British universities.

(2003: FAS Handout)

NASSER, RAFAEL, BS:

Rafael has a BS in Economics from Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania. By the time I was five, he says, I had lived in three different European countries and, at age eleven, when my family relocated to the US, I could speak five languages. My youthful peregrinations prevailed upon me to adopt a chameleon like personality that reflected the cultural context in which I found myself. My sense of identity vacillated like a weathervane. About fifteen years ago I discovered astrology and came to realise – to my utter amazement – that below my shape-shifting self existed a deeper, integrated structure that could be coherently discerned by people who interpreted weird looking scratchmarks placed around a twelve-spoked wheel. I was wonderstruck. Rafael admits to an earnest desire to demythologise and demystify astrology in order to deepen our understanding of this ancient science, discover the nature of our profound relationship to the kosmos, and perhaps shine a ray of light on the mystery of our being.

(Nasser**,** R. 2004. *Under One Sky*. J. Forrest, (ed.). (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Seven Paws Press).

PHILLIPSON, GARRY, BA:

Garry graduated from the University of East Anglia in 1976 with honours in Philosophy. In 1986, he decided to devote time exclusively to the study of Buddhist philosophy and meditation, ordaining as a monk with the Aukana Trust. He left the monastery in 1993, but remains actively involved as a trustee and occasional meditation teacher/lecturer. His book *Astrology in the Year Zero* is based on interviews with astrologers that resulted from his investigation into the philosophy and assumptions that underpin astrology. His own astrological articles have appeared under the aegis of groups including the Astrological Association of Great Britain, the Astrological Lodge of London, the Company of Astrologers, the Urania Trust, The Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism, The Mountain Astrologer and Ascella. He is now a PhD student at Bath Spa University researching the epistemological status of astrology.

(09/2005: http://www.astrozero.co.uk/ &
www.skyscript.co.uk/mercury5.html+garry+phillipson+astrology&hl=en)

PRUDENCIO, JOSÉ, MA:
Having commuted to Bath Spa University from Portugal to attend seminars for the MA in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology*, José graduated from the Sophia Centre in 2005. José is Director of *OLISIPPOS*, Instituto de Astrologia de Lisboa. The Institute specialises in philosophical and hermetical astrology and offers courses for psychologists and psychiatrists. José is currently working on a PhD thesis considering the epistemology of astrology.
(09/2006: www.uraniatrust.org/educ.htm &
www.astrologer.com/aanet/pub/transit/july2005/councilnews.htm)
RIBEIRO, LUIS: see Avelar, Helena.
SELLAR, WANDA:
Wanda has been an astrologer for over twenty-five years and is interested in most areas of its application: horary, karmic, psychological and principally medical. She is trained in traditional, as well as modern, astrological methods and is a qualified horary practitioner. She qualified in aromatherapy almost twenty years ago and has taught the subject for Tottenham University and the Education Department of Holloway prison. She also holds a diploma in perfumery from the International Federation of Essential Oils and Aroma Trades. Wanda works as a crystal healer, astrologer and past life regressionist. She is the author of *The Consultation Chart, The Directory of Essential Oils,* and, with Martin Watt, *Frankincense & Myrrh*. She has been President of the Astrological Lodge of London, and has edited of the AA's *Astrology and Medicine* newsletter. (09/2006:
http://www.astrolodge.co.uk/astro/newsandevents/summer2006/astrohealingday/wandasellar.html &
http://www.skyscript.co.uk/mbs.html)
SPENCER, NEIL:
Neil taught himself astrology as a teenager, and returned to planet gazing after many years as a journalist, editor and broadcaster, during which time he covered music, films and popular culture for publications ranging from *New Musical Express* to *The Observer*. He currently contributes a weekly Sun-sign forecast column to *The Observer* Magazine, and is the author of *True as the Stars above, Adventures in Modern Astrology* (2000). He is also scriptwriter of *Bollywood Queen* (2003), 'Britain's first masala movie musical'.
(03/2006: http://www.argoconference.com/index_files/PAGE351.htm)
SMITH, ADAM:
On his website, Adam describes himself as having been interested in astrology ever since I was about nine, when I listened to some grown-ups talking about star signs and it was the most amazing thing I'd ever heard. I didn't really understand it, but just the names of the signs sounded so wise and familiar somehow, and they completely transported me. Distant memories, perhaps... who knows? It wasn't until many years later that I studied astrology seriously at a Local Authority evening class in Camden (thanks Emily!), but from that time onwards I have had an affinity with the subject. I even covered some astrology from an academic perspective as part of my University degree programme. While hardly anyone ever sets out to be an astrologer, even at that time (1993) the idea was in the back of my mind that it would play a larger part in my world eventually. Professionally, a small but important break was when I began editing the Astrological Association's newsletter *Transit* in 1998, and I am now a full-time writer and speaker. I have since edited the main *Astrological Association Journal* and also the *Astrology Quarterly*, the two heavyweight magazines of British astrology. I am based in London, in Kentish Town, where I write my columns and spend most of my time. We are pretty well served for astrology in the UK generally, and London in particular, which I suppose would be easy to take for granted. But when you have groups of the quality of the Company of Astrologers, Liz Greene's Centre for Psychological Astrology and The Astrological Lodge of London, the oldest astrology group in the Western World, all on the doorstep, there is a lot to be thankful for. I give occasional readings, which can be very rewarding, especially when people say the astrology has really helped, but writing commitments leave less and less time for private clients. Adam writes monthly columns for *Elle, Elle Girl, Emirates, Woman* and *Spirit.* He has written for the BBC, *Harpers Bazaar, The Sydney Telegraph, The Times Educational Supplement* and *The Daily Mirror.*
(09/2006: http://www.astroboogie.com/about.htm & http://www.esoteric-e.co.uk/popup_smith.htm)
STACEY, WENDY, MA, Dip LSA:
Wendy has been practising Astrology since 1989, and started teaching in 1991. Wendy's passion for the past decade has been exploring correlations between childbirth methods and astrology. Wendy joined the Council of the Astrological Association of Great Britain in 1999 as Treasurer and is now its Chair. She is a teacher at the London School of Astrology. Wendy has a background in finance, race relations, housing and education and is now the owner/manager of a West London property development company. She is also the proud mother of two children.

(07/2006: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/pub/transit/july2005/councilprofiles2.htm)

THORNTON, PENNY:

Once a dancer with the Royal Ballet Company, Penny studied astrology and was awarded the DipFAstrolS. In 1990 she qualified as a psychotherapist with the School of Therapeutic Hypnotherapy and Psychotherapy. The 1995 publication, in the US, of her fifth astrology book, *With Love from Diana*: *The Princess of Wales' Personal Astrologer Shares Her First-Hand Account of Diana's Turbulent Years*, prompted what Penny has described as 'a media fandango'. Incensed by her abuse of client confidentiality, the FAS had stripped her of its Diploma before the year was out. Living now between the UK and the US, Penny continues to run astrological practices in both countries and to do some teaching despite remaining, by her own admission, heavily disapproved of by a cabal of British astrologers.

(06/2005: http://www.astrolutely.com)

TRENOWETH, ALEX:

Alex was born in July 1966 in Michigan, and with the Uranus/Pluto conjunction in her own birth chart, found it very easy to connect with the spirit of the 1960s. Alex lives in London with her three children and teaches English and Drama at Raynes Park High School as well as playing trumpet in the South London Jazz Orchestra.

(09/2006: http://interconnections.co.uk/aquarius/)

VOSS, ANGELA, PhD:

An academic, a musician and a consultant astrologer, Angela's staff profile on the University of Kent website reads as follows:

Research Interests:

Magic, Music and Astrology in Western esoteric traditions; Renaissance philosophy and the work of Marsilio Ficino; the role of the imagination in religious experience; symbolism and iconography of Classical and Renaissance art; contemporary attitudes towards astrology and divination.

Career Details:

Part-time lecturer in Religious Studies (since 1999), convening courses in *Cosmology and Divination* for the MA in The Study of Mysticism and Religious Experience and BA in Religious Studies (sponsored by the Sophia Trust).

Recent Publications:

2000. 'Marsilio Ficino, the Second Orpheus' in *Music as Medicine, The History of Music Therapy since Antiquity.* P. Horden, (ed,). (Ashgate).

2000. 'The Astrology of Marsilio Ficino, Divination or Science?' in *Culture and Cosmos.* Volume 4, number 2, pp. 29-45.

2002. 'Orpheus *redivivus*: The Musical Magic of Marsilio Ficino' in *Marsilio Ficino, his Theology, his Philosophy, his Legacy.* (Leiden: Brill).

2003. *Father Time and Orpheus*. (Oxford: Abzu Press)

2004. 'From Allegory to *Anagoge*: the Challenge of Symbolic Perception in a Literal World' in *Astrology and the Academy.* (Cinnabar Books).

2004. *Marsilio Ficino.* N.Goodrick-Clarke, (ed.). *Esoteric Masters* Series. (North Atlantic Books).

Forthcoming. *The Imaginal Cosmos, Astrology, Divination and the Sacred: Proceedings of the Conference held at the University of Kent, October 2004*. (ed.).

Recordings:

2003. *Images of Melancholy.* with John Line, Lynda Sayce, Andrew Wilson-Dickson and the Marini Consort. (Riverrun Records).

2001. *Secrets of the Heavens.* with Mark Rylance, Mark Tucker, Catherine King and the Marini Consort. (Riverrun Records).

(06/2005: http://www.kent.ac.uk/secl/thrs/staff/voss.htm)

WADSWORTH, JOHN, MA:

John describes himself as an astrologer, coach, educator and visionary philosopher who has been using astrology for fourteen years, ever since his first dramatic encounter with astrological symbolism, an experience so profound that it permanently altered his way of seeing and interacting with the world. He has worked professionally in this capacity for the past ten years and has helped numerous individuals, groups and organisations to transform their experience of themselves and give them greater freedom and choice in life. He is a graduate of the Sophia Centre MA programme in *Cultural Astronomy and Astrology* at Bath Spa University and intends to continue his studies there in the form of doctoral research.

(05/2005: http://www.kairosastrology.co.uk & http://www.kairativity.com/About/Overview.htm)

WARD, SUE:
Sue is a practitioner and teacher of the art of traditional horary astrology. For over twenty years, she has concentrated on the method and techniques of the great English astrologer, William Lilly (1602-1681). Sue began her astrological studies in the early 1980s under the late Kay Way. She also studied with the Faculty of Astrological Studies and with the late Olivia Barclay, who played an important role in the revival of the Traditional Art and was, until her death, widely recognised as the leading horary teacher of her time. In 1987, Sue gained her Qualified Horary Practitioner's diploma from Olivia's school and for some time continued a close working relationship with Olivia. For the last decade, Sue has been concentrating on teaching and research while maintaining her astrological practice with clients throughout the world. She has researched at Oxford University and in London, and consulted widely with leading experts in the field. Much of her research has lead to new insights into the techniques and methods of William Lilly and allowed a better understanding of horary practice. Sue has published widely and lectures both in the United Kingdom and abroad. In 1993 she established the Traditional Horary Course which is primarily concerned with research and teaching, offering both Foundation and Diploma level courses to students. Sue is the Principal and prefers to work closely with students at all levels. This reflects her love of the Art and her appreciation that we must do all we can to pass on the full body of our knowledge to the next generation of astrologers.
(06/2005: www.sue-ward.co.uk & http://www.astrolodge.co.uk)

WELLS, VERNON:
Vernon is a member of the Company of Astrologers and a founding member of the *Katarche* correspondence course in horary astrology. He has been an astrologer for over thirty years and has a keen interest in the philosophy of astrology. He is a Latinist, currently studying Arabic. He has contributed to the translation of Ficino's *De Sole* and annotated a translation of Abu Ma'shar's *Smaller Introduction.*
(2005: Company of Astrologers Handout & http://companyofastrologers.com/katarche.htm)

YORK, MICHAEL, PhD:
A Californian who has lived for some years in Europe, Michael has a doctorate from Kings College, London. He is a scholar of modern religious movements and the New Age whose books include *The Divine and the Assurian*, *Pagan Theology* and *A Historical Dictionary of the New Age.*
(06/2005: http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/schools/historical-and-cultural-studies/sophia/news-sophia/ & Gunzburg & Campion 2003: 19)

APPENDIX B
DETAILS OF ASTROLOGY CHARTS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

An Anti-Astrology Signature, the Horoscope used in the *Humanist* attack:
23/11/1907; 04.00 EST; New York; 25.27 Libra Asc. (Cornelius 2003: 27).

Astrology and the Academy Conference, Horoscope for the Full Moon:
14/06/2003; 12.16.27 GMD; Bath; 15.15 Virgo Asc. (Cornelius 2004: 104).

Astrological Lodge of London:
13/07/1915; 19.15 GMT; Finchley London; 05.49 Capricorn Asc.

Anti-War March, Start of March:
15/02/2003; 12.00 GMT; London; 28.05 Gemini Asc.

Anti-War March, Start of Speeches:
15/02/2003; 14.00 GMT; London; 22.52 Cancer Asc.

Anti-War March, Livingstone/Jackson Presentation:
15/02/2003; 16.00 GMT; London; 14.28 Leo Asc.

BBC, Incorporation:
01/01/1927; 00.00 GMT; London; 06.40 Libra Asc.

BBC, 1st Public TV Service:
02/11/1936; 15.00 GMT; Alexandra Palace, London; 21.47 Pisces Asc.

Blair, Tony:
06/05/1953; 06.10 BST (Zone – 1.00); Edinburgh, Scotland; 04.50 Gemini Asc.

Branson, Richard:
18/07/1950; 07.00 BST; Blackheath, London; 14.13 Leo Asc.

Bricolage Moment:
05/05/2004; 19.35 BST; Hampstead, London; 06.53 Scorpio Asc.

Browning, Elizabeth, Barrett:
06/03/1806; 19.00 LMT (Zone +0.09.12); Durham; 29.13 Virgo Asc.

Bush, George, W:
06/07/1946; 07.26 LMT (Zone + 4.00); New Haven, Connecticut; 07.07 Leo Asc.

Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall:
17/07/1947; 07.10 (Zone –2.00); London; 04.54 Leo Asc.

Charles, Prince of Wales:
14/11/1948; 21.14 GMT; London; 05.23 Leo Asc.

Clinton, Bill:
19/08/1946; 08.51 (Zone +06.00); Hope, Arkensas; 05.31 Libra Asc.

Clinton, Hilary:
26/10/1947; 20.00 (Zone +06.00); Chicago; 29.39 Cancer Asc.

Diana, Princess of Wales (version one):
01/07/1961; 14.00 BST (Zone –1.00); Sandringham; 17.12 Libra Asc.

Diana, Princess of Wales (version two):

01/07/1961; 19.45 BST (Zone –1.00); Sandringham; 18.24 Sagittarius Asc.

Elizabeth I:
07/09/1533 JC; 15.00; Greenwich, London; 07.34 Capricorn Asc.

Elizabeth I's Coronation:
15/01/1559 JC; 12.00; London; 05.01 Gemini Asc.

Elizabeth II:
21/04/1926; 02.40 BST (Zone –1.00); London; 21.26 Capricorn Asc.

Haider, Jörg:
26/01/1950; 13.25 GMT; 13E37, 47N38; 07.32 Cancer Asc.

Hussein, Saddam (as used by Jed):
28/04/1937; 09.15 GMT; Al Ouja, Iraq; 43E31, 34N36; 16.57 Leo Asc.

Hussein, Saddam (as used by Liz & Claire Simms):
28/04/1937; 08.55 BAT (Zone –3.00); Tikrit, Iraq; 43E42, 34N36; 05.06 Cancer Asc.

Iraq:
14/07/1958; 02.00 GMT; Baghdad; 19.43 Cancer Asc.

Kerry, John:
11/12/1943; 08.03 MWT (+06.00); US Army Fitzsimmons Co, USA; 16.09 Sagittarius Asc.

Leo, Alan:
07/08/1860; 05.49 GMT; London; 27.03 Leo Asc.

Livingstone, Ken:
17/06/1945; 00.01 GMT; London; 23.31 Capricorn Asc.

Mandela, Nelson:
18/07/1918; 12.45 GMT; Umtata, Transkei, South Africa; 28E47, 31S35; 21.33 Sagittarius Asc.

Marx, Karl:
05/05/1818; 02.00 LMT; Trier, Germany; 23.04 Aquarius Asc.

Nijinsky, Vaslav:
12/03/1890; 22.30 LMT (Zone –02.02.04); Kiev; 11.11 Scorpio Asc.

Peel, John:
30/08/1939; 08.00 BST; Heswall; 22.45 Virgo Asc.
(Rectified in relation to his transits at time of death from a reported 'around breakfast time'. Cf. Frank Clifford's birth chart database and correspondence on the Jupiter Rising e-mail group dated 10/2004).

Peel, John, died:
25/10/2004; 21.00 LT (Zone +5.00); Cuzco, Peru; 18.01 Gemini Asc.

Pico della Mirandola, recomputed from version given by Luca Guarico:
24/02/1463; 19.54.46 UT; 11E03, 44N53; 17.14 Libra Asc. (Cornelius 2003: 9).

Prince William:
21/06/1982; 20.03 GMT; London; 27.32 Sagittarius Asc.

Teenage Kicks, The Undertones, first release:
01/09/1978; 12.00 BST; Belfast; 02.07 Scorpio Asc.

United Kingdom:

01/01/1801; 24.00 LMT (Zone + 0.00.40); Westminster, London; 07.10 Libra Asc.

USA (Sibley Chart):
04/07/1776; 17.10 LMT (Zone +5.00.40); Philadelphia, PA; 12.21 Sagittarius Asc.

Where are the Documents?:
11/09/2003; 13.22 BST (-1.00); Corsham; 28.42 Scorpio Asc.

APPENDIX C

ASTROLOGICAL ORGANISATIONS AND TRAINING SCHOOLS IN THE UK

This is not a comprehensive list, but it does offer a brief overview of the activities of the main advisory and educational bodies operating within the contemporary British astrological community.

ADVISORY PANEL ON ASTROLOGICAL EDUCATION (APAE)

The APAE was formed on 6th September 1980 at 17.35 GMT, London. It is an independent non-profit making body constituted by the major Astrological organisations and teaching bodies in the United Kingdom. It is a unique forum where the diverse elements of UK Astrology come together and discuss current issues. Appreciation of different approaches has led to creative ways of assessing standards and assisting the move astrology has made into higher education in the UK via the Sophia Project. In fulfilling its aims, the APAE works, as far as possible, from a consensus of opinion within the astrological community in the United Kingdom:

- To monitor and safeguard standards in the teaching of astrology in the UK.
- To advise educational authorities on qualifications of astrologers wishing to teach.
- To assist astrologers wishing to teach.
- To provide an assessment of an unqualified person who wishes to teach.
- To hold discussion meetings, seminars or workshops for interested parties to exchange ideas and information about astrological education.
- To provide a forum for discussion in establishing criteria for any proposed national or international registration of professional astrologers.

(09/2006: http://www.apae.org.uk/ & *Astrology for the University Student* 2004: 2-3)

ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL ASTROLOGERS INTERNATIONAL (APAI)

The APAI was founded on 3rd February 1990 at 11.03 GMT, London. Although UK based, the APAI has members worldwide, including Australia, Europe, Japan, South Africa, Canada and the USA. The APAI will only accept applications for membership from astrologers who hold a professional qualification, at Diploma not Certificate level, from one or more of the following schools:

Faculty of Astrological Studies (FAS); Mayo School of Astrology; Huber School, now known as (API) UK; Qualifying Horary Diploma Course; Centre for Psychological Astrology (CPA); White Eagle School of Astrology; Astrological Guild of Educators; National Council for GeoCosmic Research, Inc.; Federation of Australian Astrologers; AstroSynthesis; London School of Astrology (LSA). The APAI aims:

- To represent the interests of professional astrologers to both the public and the media.
- To support members in situations where a member may be experiencing difficulty, hostility or legal pressure from either the public or the media.
- To offer Professional Indemnity and Public Liability insurance to members at competitive rates, unlikely to be achieved by individual insurance policies.
- To produce a Consultants' List and to advertise widely in order to promote the services of its members and encourage the professional employment of its members.

- To produce a regular Newsletter for its members, enabling them to keep in touch and network with one another.
- To protect the public from professional malpractice and offer the public a safe, fair and reliable service.
- To protect the good name and image of professional astrology in the media and to the public.
- To offer the media the opportunity to contact experienced, qualified astrologers when astrological coverage of an event or any other matter is required.

(09/2006: http://www.professionalastrologers.org/ & *Astrology for the University Student* 2004:10)

ASTROLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN (AA)

The Association was founded on 21st June 1958 at 19.22 BST, London. For nearly fifty years, the AA has been serving astrology by informing and bringing together astrologers from all over the world. It has acted as a central resource to both the public and all other astrological organisations over the past forty-five years. It is generally considered to be one of the most important and influential astrological organisations in the world. Membership is open to all those with a serious interest in astrology and who are in agreement with the aims and objectives of the association. In 2004, the AA had approximately fourteen hundred members of which nearly one third were international members. It publishes *The Astrological Journal* and *Transit Newsletter* every two months and *Correlation,* the Journal of Scientific Research into Astrology, twice yearly. It also publishes *Culture and Cosmos*, a peer-reviewed Journal of the History of Astrology and Cultural Astronomy, and the *Astrology and Medicine Newsletter.* It organises a three-day annual conference and a one-day research symposium every second year.

(09/2006: http://www.astrologer.com/aanet/ & *Astrology for the University Student* 2004:5)

ASTROLOGICAL GUILD OF EDUCATORS INTERNATIONAL

Established in 1998, the Guild is an international organisation of professional astrological educators. It is an independent, non-profit body whose brief is to promote and support the professional astrological educator, assisting these professionals to maintain a high standard in the conduct of examinations at a level acknowledged by the international astrological community. The Guild is not aligned with any one particular astrological association; it has no formal affiliations with specific institutions but maintains a wide network of contacts with astrological educators all over the world. Membership of the Guild is open to astrological educators with recognised qualifications. All members are encouraged to be involved with other recognised astrological associations. The objectives of the Guild are:

- To advance the cause of astrology via professionalism at the teaching level of the astrological community;
- To promote an appreciation and understanding of astrology in the general community through the education and training of professional astrologers;
- To promote the importance of the role of a qualified astrological educator;
- To evaluate and acknowledge the examinations set by Guild members to enable them to use the Guild's imprimatur on their certificates and diplomas;

- To establish, maintain and administer an astrological exam system of an international standard and to have that examination system available to all astrological associations or members;
- To evaluate applicants by examination and to grant certificates and/or awards to those who pass such examinations at specific levels of attainment;
- To promote the role of the professional astrologer in the community by enabling them to use the Guild's imprimatur in the promotion of their professional practice or school;
- To maintain astrological standards for professional astrologers at the level of attainment required by the international insurance industry.

(09/2006: http://www.theastrologicalguild.co.uk/pages/aboutus.htm)

ASTROLOGICAL LODGE OF LONDON (ALL)

The Lodge was born when the astrologer Alan Leo, with the agreement of his wife Bessie, proposed that a London branch of the Theosophical Society should be set up to amalgamate the study of astrology and theosophy. This was on 13th July 1915 at 19.15 GMT, London. The first meeting took place on 13th September 1915 with Bessie Leo as President. Now, The ALL rents rooms for their Monday meetings from the Theosophical Society, but it is an independent body. Its work is the study of astrology in all its branches and 'from the highest point of view', as its constitution says, with attention to the spiritual, historical and philosophical aspects of the subject. The Lodge organises weekly gatherings with lectures on a wide variety of astrological and related subjects and offers its visitors an opportunity to discuss horoscopes, astrological techniques, philosophical backgrounds, etc., with a vast number of other interested minds, ranging from the hobbyist to the full-time professional astrologer. Since the Lodge is not a school as such, it does not provide exams and diplomas or certificates. The Lodge's free beginners' course strives to assist the student in his or her preliminary orientation among the wide range of other and perhaps more professionally orientated courses on offer.

(09/2006: http://www.astrolodge.co.uk/ & *Astrology for the University Student* 2004:13)

BRITISH ASTROLOGICAL AND PSYCHIC SOCIETY (BAPS)

The Society was founded on 11th March 1976 at 20.00 GMT, London by Russell Grant, who is now its President Emeritus. It exists to provide a means of bringing together those actively working in, or interested in, the many different aspects of esoteric, spiritual and New Age teachings, such as Psychic Perception, Astrology, Palmistry, Tarot, Numerology and Healing. BAPS courses are generally split into two parts of not more than twelve lessons each:

- Part One is designed for those new to the subject who wish to learn the basics. It will teach you all you need to know about the subject to practise for yourself and enable you to give readings to your friends. The fees include friendship subscription to BAPS and include *Mercury* Magazine.
- Part Two is designed to take students to the next level and for those that wish to practise on a professional or semi-professional basis. Not only will it teach you more about the subject, it will also teach you the practical issues of setting up a business in an esoteric field. You will learn more about the history as well as developing your own psychic ability to a high standard.

If you are undecided which course to apply for, you could start with Part One of the Psychic Perception course to try and find out what you are most drawn to and then take

Part Two of the subject you wish to specialise in. The courses may be taken as correspondence, by attending weekend workshops or with a local tutor (subject to availability). Undertaking the course by correspondence should take an average of two years; one year for each part. Students who complete a full course satisfactorily and have been examined by the Society will be issued with a BAPS Certificate of Competence. The certificated student will be eligible to use the letters BAPS Cert. (*discipline*) Member and will be included in the Society's register of practitioners.
(09/2006: http://www.baps.ws/)

CENTRE FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL ASTROLOGY (CPA)
Founded on 13th June 1983 at 14.00 BST, London, the CPA provides a unique workshop and professional training programme, designed to foster the cross-fertilisation of the fields of astrology and depth, humanistic, and transpersonal psychology. It was founded by Liz Greene and Howard Sasportas in 1983. Here you can learn psychological astrology and attend public seminars. The main aims and objectives of the CPA professional training course are:

- To provide students with a solid and broad base of knowledge within the realms of both traditional astrological symbolism and psychological theory and technique, so that the astrological chart can be sensitively understood and interpreted in the light of modern psychological thought.
- To make available to students psychologically qualified case supervision, along with background seminars in counselling skills and techniques which would raise the standard and effectiveness of astrological consultation. It should be noted that no formal training as a counsellor or therapist is provided by the course.
- To encourage investigation and research into the links between astrology, psychological models, and therapeutic techniques, thereby contributing to and advancing the existing body of astrological and psychological knowledge.

(09/2006: http://www.cpalondon.com/ & *Astrology for the University Student* 2004:25-26)

THE COMPANY OF ASTROLOGERS (CoA)
The Company was formed on 14th November 1983 at 21.29 BST, London to promote the practice of astrology as a way of insight and self-knowledge. It offers a full teaching programme and a forum for the sharing of astrology. There are two main levels to the Company's work as a teaching body. The first level covers the symbolic, astronomical and technical framework required in the interpretation of the birthchart. Our tutors are skilled astrologers with many years of experience, and the Company is recognised as one of Britain's leading teaching bodies in practical astrology. The Foundation Programme provides a sound basis in both traditional theory and the best of modern practice of horoscope interpretation. The second level is related to the Company's distinctive approach, which interprets astrology as Divination. We are also interested in those aspects of philosophy and psychotherapy which illuminate astrology as a symbolic language. Working within traditional craft horoscopy, we wish to understand the limits as well as the possibilities of practice, and to open up the questions of how and why astrology works. Our higher level work is represented in courses such as Craft & Creativity. We provide an environment of training and supervision for the professional consultant astrologer, as well as for those seeking self-knowledge. We also offer other studies in divination, especially Tarot and the *I Ching*.

Our Bulletin reflects all aspects of our work. It is sent exclusively to Friends and Members of the Company.
(09/2006: http://www.companyofastrologers.com/ & *Astrology for the University Student* 2004:30)

THE ENGLISH HUBER SCHOOL OF ASTROLOGICAL COUNSELLING
(In association with The Astrological Psychology Institute, Zurich)
The Astrological Psychology Institute UK was founded on 8th June 1983 at 12.30 BST, London. The school offers a professional training in Astrological Psychology and Counselling, using the approach to astrological interpretation developed by the Swiss couple, Bruno and Louise Huber, leading to the internationally recognised DipAPI qualification. The School also offers Foundation courses for beginners. Teaching is by correspondence, with mandatory workshop attendance at Diploma level. Introductory and self-development workshops are offered as part of the school's ongoing workshop/training programme. These are open to anyone interested in the psychological approach to astrology and chart interpretation, and in using this approach as a tool for developing greater self-awareness. The School publishes a twenty page Newsletter twice yearly, which is available on subscription only.
(09/2006: http://www.interconnections.co.uk/misc/Huber/huber.htm & *Astrology for the University Student* 2004:15)

THE FACULTY OF ASTROLOGICAL STUDIES (FAS)
Founded on 7th June 1948 at 19.50 BST, London, the Faculty has an international reputation for excellence in astrological education. We offer flexible modular courses, available anywhere in the world by Distance Learning, at Classes in London and at our annual Summer School in Oxford, which is one of the international highlights of the astrological year. Whether you embark on our Foundation Course for Beginners, our Diploma Course for professional qualification, or attend the many different courses available at Summer School, the Faculty has the course for you! Our tutors, all of whom are experienced professional astrologers who hold the Faculty's Diploma, will guide you through our courses as you build your knowledge and learn to use astrology with skill and confidence.
(09/2006: http://www.astrology.org.uk/)

JOHN FRAWLEY'S HORARY APPRENTICESHIP
That this is a vocational course does not, says John Frawley, mean that all students intend to practise professionally: far from it. It does mean that the subject is taught with a depth, breadth and rigour that will enable them to do so with confidence should they so wish. Other, significantly cheaper, courses are available elsewhere for those who do not wish to engage with the subject at this level. The course is demanding, as it must be if you are to achieve accurate results, but you get a great deal of tutorial support: my aim as your tutor is that you should succeed. Students do find the course rewarding, and even those who regard horary as only a sideline to their interest in natal astrology find the course transforms the way they look at a chart, giving them tools for a precision of judgement they would not have believed possible. I have a (very) limited number on places on a further course in Electional and Traditional Natal Astrology for graduates of this course who wish to extend their knowledge of traditional astrology. The travel involved in my lecturing commitments means that this course is now done entirely by email; I no longer accept postal students. The purpose of this course is simple: it is to

take you to a point where you can judge horary charts with a good degree of reliability. Astrology is a craft, and my extensive experience of teaching by correspondence course, evening class and one-to-one has shown me that the best way to teach it is as a craft. So this course is modelled on a traditional craft apprenticeship, where the student learns by working under close supervision of the master. The basic structure of the course is adapted to suit the individual student's needs and interests by the addition of extra questions as necessary. (09/2006: http://www.johnfrawley.com/qhp.html)

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ASTROLOGY (LSA)

The LSA was founded, on 21st September 2000 at 19.00 BST, London, to celebrate the start of the new millennium by Sue Tompkins and Christine Tate, two astrologers who had been successfully working together for over 15 years. Their aim in starting this new School was to provide a high standard of tuition by recruiting tutors who are experienced practising astrologers, who can bring with them the accumulated knowledge that is only acquired after many years of working on a day-to-day basis with planetary symbolism. Their teaching shows that astrology, essentially a spiritual discipline, can be practical, holistic and have relevance to every aspect of everyday life. Indeed, astrological principles can be applied to all things, from the understanding of our behaviour, emotions, health and relationships right through to events and happenings around us and the headlines in the daily newspaper. The LSA presents classes, seminars and courses designed to enable the student to use the powerful tool of astrology for their own personal self-development and to experience first hand the interconnectedness of all that is contained within the universe.
(09/2006: http://www.londonschoolofastrology.co.uk/)

THE MAYO SCHOOL

The Mayo School courses are internationally acclaimed as providing the finest training available in astrology. Jeff Mayo himself is regarded as the foremost teacher of astrology and is renowned for his contribution to astrological research. The course has been taught by correspondence to students in all parts of the world for over 30 years and is internationally recognised as providing sound practical methods of study under the direct guidance of a tutor. You may be seeking further understanding of astrology as a creative and useful hobby, or because you wish to make the subject an ultimate source of income. Whatever your aim, the aim of the Mayo School of Astrology is to produce students who can apply their knowledge of this age-old subject in modern scientific and psychological terms. Astrology teaches one to recognise that individual human lives and character represent individual patterns in the greater collective pattern of human and cosmic life. It discloses basic laws motivating human impulses for response to the challenge of life. The serious student of astrology can develop a deep understanding and insight to life, to his own character, to the behaviour of his associates, not otherwise possible. The lessons make this possible within a very short period to anyone interested in human character.
(09/2006: http://www.mayoastrology.com/)

THE QUALIFYING HORARY DIPLOMA COURSE

Why could astrologers of the seventeenth century foretell events when present day astrologers cannot? When talking about prediction, one means clear, unambiguous answers to questions such as ‘who will win the battle?’ and ‘where is the lost linen of the slave girl?’ They could, and did, predict in that way, because they had information,

the residue of centuries of deep thought and study. It was a subject that had engrossed the minds of great men since long before Pythagoras: to penetrate the meaning of life on earth; to understand our relationship with the rest of the universe; to calculate time from the luminaries and to observe the connection between events on earth and the movement of the heavenly bodies. William Lilly's book, *Christian Astrology*, published in 1647, was the first astrological textbook written in English. Previously such books would have been in Latin. Lilly translated the information from over three hundred great authorities of the past and put together his masterpiece of eight hundred and seventy five pages.

The Qualifying Horary Diploma course is a two-year correspondence course devised by Olivia Barclay in 1984 and was the first of its kind to teach traditional methods as practised by the great seventeenth century astrologer William Lilly. This is an advanced and rewarding course demanding effort and concentration. The course has students worldwide. It assumes a basic knowledge of chart construction. (Regiomontanus house system is used throughout.) By the end of the course, students should be able to make an accurate, verifiable prediction from a horary chart. This, together with continual assessment throughout the course, replaces a final examination. After demonstrating that your work has reached a professional standard, you will be awarded a Diploma entitling you to use the initials QHP (Qualifying Horary Practitioner) and you will be eligible to join the Association of Professional Astrologers (APA).

The QHP is the only horary course with representation on the APAE (Advisory Panel for Astrological Education) and the only horary course whose graduates are eligible to become members of the APA.

(09/2006: http://www.barbara-dunn-astrologer.co.uk/about.htm)

RESEARCH GROUP FOR THE CRITICAL STUDY OF ASTROLOGY (RGCSA)

The RGCSA is an independent research group, which has been set up to monitor standards of research in astrology and promote the use of sound scientific methods in empirical studies. The group aims to stimulate and facilitate the critical study of astrology as judged by the disciplines of social statistics, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies, and to provide the basis for inter-university and international collaboration on research into astrology.

(09/2006: http://www.astrology-research.net/rgcsa.htm)

THE TRADITIONAL HORARY COURSE

The course has been designed by Sue Ward DTAstrol, QHP, to cater for those who do not want a qualification as well as for those who do. There is a Foundation course suitable for beginners who want an introduction to the art without the commitment of long-term study. There is also one for those who have studied astrology and want to revise or who would like an introduction to traditional astrology. Tuition is of the highest quality, with clear well-researched teaching material. When historical research brings new information to light, we will make that available to you. We are committed to improving educational standards in traditional astrology and to helping you to achieve your goal.

(09/2006: http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/~sueward/)

THE URANIA TRUST

The Urania Trust is a registered UK educational charity, founded in 1970. Its website lists information concerning astrological associations, organisations, societies and educational establishments, bookshops, magazines, publishers and software suppliers.
(09/2006: http://www.uraniatrust.org/)

THE WHITE EAGLE SCHOOL OF ASTROLOGY
Founded on 7th April 1976 at 10.03.50 GMT, Liss, Hants, the school offers three correspondence courses: Beginners', Preparatory and Advanced. As learned and practised in the Lodge, astrology is a spiritual science, an esoteric discipline which helps us to understand the divine pattern which lies behind all life, and our place in it. It is not primarily predictive; rather, it is instructive. Though the astrological component of the Lodge work was not officially constituted as a school until 1976, the first correspondence course was published not long after the foundation of the Lodge, at the request of members who wanted to learn about the subject for themselves. Courses (periodically revised) and horoscopes have been available ever since.
(09/2006: http://www.whiteagle.org/unfoldment/astrology.htm)