

What do Japanese Astrologers Believe about the Astrology that they Practice?

by Sean Thornton

This study provides a window into the beliefs and motivations of Japanese astrological practitioners. Their answers are weighed against Bertrand Russell's opinion that modern astrologers operate, either knowingly, or unconsciously, from a false basis. Four guided interviews were conducted with four different Japanese astrologers. Their beliefs were elicited primarily by asking about how they became astrologers and how they explain astrology to themselves and others. The key findings were that each astrologer held complex beliefs in understanding and explaining their own relationship with astrology, and that they felt that they had to defend those beliefs a lot less than astrologers living in "the west". Most of the respondents expressed an intuitive confidence in astrology as a functional and effective system of symbolism that manifests and is expressed particularly well by psychological astrology's handling of natal charts.

Introduction

This study is based on interviews with four Japanese astrologers concerning their beliefs in, and involvement with, astrology. Their answers are weighed against Bertrand Russell's opinion that modern astrologers operate, either knowingly, or unconsciously, from a false basis. Russell asked of astrologers

Do they believe themselves in the sciences that they profess? This is a difficult question. Everything marvellous is believed by some people, and it is not improbable that professional astrologers are of this type. And even if they are aware that their own performances are largely guesswork and inferences from information obtained otherwise, they probably think that there are superior practitioners who never resort to these inferior methods.¹

The respondents in this study are from Japan. Three of them focus on Western astrology, and one on Vedic astrology. In searching online for academic studies into the practice of non-Japanese astrology in Japan no other papers were

¹ Bertrand Russell, 'On Astrologers', *Hearst Newspaper* 1932, p. 1.

found. As such this study has the aim of revealing something new about modern astrology, Japan, and globalization.

The interviews were intended to encourage the respondents to tell their own stories about how they became involved in astrology and how that involvement has developed and manifested over the years. There was an emphasis on how they understood and explained the workings and systems of astrology to themselves and to others. The findings of the interviews were in turn related to Russell's 1932 lamentations on astrology wherein he challenges contemporary (at his time of writing) astrology on a number of grounds. It was hoped that answers to Russell's questions could be inferred from the interviews.

The literature review will attend to Russell's article, as well as attempt to clarify what 'belief' means, particularly in the context of astrology. The section on methodology will account for the choice of the interview technique and give details of how the interviews were prepared for and conducted. The discussion section will confront the contents of the interviews and how they relate to the discourse of 'belief' raised by Russell. The conclusion will try to estimate how the interviewees would respond to Russell's challenges.

Review of the Literature

It seems appropriate to begin by clarifying Russell's perspective. His initial concern is that in recent centuries astrology has been trivialised and marginalised. In relation to astrology no longer being something that is of central concern to rulers such as it was in ancient Babylon or Rome he remarks that 'there is always something pathetic about a great and ancient tradition which has fallen on evil days.'² He goes on to describe twentieth century astrology as 'sadly modernised' on the basis that it is too neat: being typed, rather than 'inscribed cabalistically upon parchment.'³ There is a sense that the point he is trying to make is about disenchantment such as that with which Patrick Curry also concerns himself.⁴ To illustrate the core of disenchantment, Curry references Max Weber, saying 'the fate of our times is characterised by rationalism and intellectualisation' - which manifests primarily in the form of forcing everything into an empirical model and dismissing anything that can't be explained by it.⁵

Both Russell and Curry seem to contend that the modern world has reduced everything to a product. Indeed, there is a strong sense in Russell's

² Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

³ Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

⁴ Roy Willis, and Patrick Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture – Pulling down the Moon*, (Berg, 2004), pp. 77 – 84.

⁵ Willis & Curry, *Astrology, Science and Culture*, p. 77.

comments that he suspects that some modern astrologers are financially motivated, 'hard-working and highly meritorious business men or women, with an aged mother or an invalid husband to support'.⁶ In his closing address, Russell's possible grief for lost enchantment is swept aside with his statement that for 'any person with even the vaguest idea of the nature of scientific evidence, such beliefs as those of astrologers are of course impossible'.⁷ His blanket dismissal of modern astrology could be taken as a disclaimer in the face of his nostalgic reverence for its ancient versions.

Closer consideration of the nature and meaning of belief is pertinent to adequately approach Russell's questions about the beliefs of astrologers. Carl Bankston defines belief as 'statements about the supernatural which are taken as true', and elaborates on this by portraying beliefs as socially negotiated cosmologies that offer the possibility of access to benefits that are not available through typical material means.⁸ Bankston sees belief as being a combination of the individual psychological need to understand one's place in the universe, and the desire to share these understandings and potentially form groups on the basis of shared perspectives.⁹ Nicholas Campion takes the strictly psychological aspect of belief to a logical conclusion by identifying what technically constitutes belief as a psychological concept: that which a person accepts or agrees with about a matter or subject or object.¹⁰ He adds that 'a belief does not have to be true, but neither is it necessarily false: it is the perception of the believer which counts' - and this may be applied to anything, including religion and science.¹¹

Campion presents both sides of the argument and adds that belief in general originates in a personal tendency in some people towards believing. He notes that prior research has indicated that 'strong belief in the paranormal, including astrology, is likely to correlate with strong belief in either religion or science or both. In other words, the unifying principle is belief, and the object of belief may be irrelevant'.¹² However, at the same time he cites a number of surveys that failed to find correlations between strength of belief in astrology and religion, or science and the paranormal.

⁶ Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

⁷ Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

⁸ Carl L. Bankston, 'Rationality, Choice and the Religious Economy: The Problem of Belief', *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2002, pp. 311, 312.

⁹ Bankston, 2002, p. 314.

¹⁰ Nicholas Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement: the extent and nature of contemporary belief in Astrology' (PhD thesis, Study of Religions Department, Bath Spa University College, 2004), p. 155.

¹¹ Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', p. 155.

¹² Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', p. 182.

In his paper on the paranormal, Joseph Laycock suggests that over the last few decades the grouping methods of believers have been diversifying. He cites the proliferation of television shows concerned with the paranormal and the supernatural, such as ghosts, UFOs, angels, or astrology. For him, this is a demonstration of popular cultures harnessing and expressing beliefs that are shared by a significant portion of the population (of the USA in the case of his study).¹³ This could be a public aspect of the privatisation of belief. Campion also suggests that 'astrology may exist as part of the process of privatization, the increasing pluralism of religiosity'.¹⁴ For both Bankston and Laycock belief seems to be about people figuring out what is true to them and then communicating these thoughts and feelings to others. In his study of schoolgirl beliefs, T.L. Brink found that an admixture of incompatible beliefs is quite common, one example of this being the combining of Catholic beliefs with a belief in reincarnation.¹⁵ Reincarnation is a belief that Tony Walter and Helen Waterhouse identify as a key example of the privatisation of religion in Britain and as a possible instance of said privatisation being a vehicle for deviance in beliefs.¹⁶ Campion sees another side to it, and observes a tendency for positivists and empiricists to wield the term 'belief' like a cudgel and use it as a pejorative term to imply something that is accepted without evidence or without a rational basis.¹⁷ Drawing upon Campion and Bankston's perspectives in particular, belief in the context of my research is defined as statements about the nature of reality that a person expresses as being true either to themselves or to others.

Methodology

The study attempted to gather insights into Japanese astrologers and their beliefs concerning astrology. There were three options: face to face, online, or a combination of both. William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson point to a number of techniques that have proved suitable for understanding and explaining people's experiences - including case studies, interviews, questionnaires and

¹³ Joseph Laycock, 'Paranormal Belief: A New Frontier?' (Nova Religion: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2011, University of California Press), p. 95.

¹⁴ Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', p. 177.

¹⁵ T. L. Brink, 'Inconsistency of Belief among Roman Catholic Girls: Concerning Religion, Astrology, Reincarnation' (Review of Religious Research, 20, 1978), p. 82.

¹⁶ Tony Walter & Helen Waterhouse, 'A Very Private Belief: Reincarnation in Contemporary England' (Sociology of Religion, Vol. 60, No. 2, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 187.

¹⁷ Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', pp. 159, 160, 163.

surveys.¹⁸ The length and depth of a case study as described by Judith Bell was deemed not viable for the research in question.¹⁹ Bell also highlights the issue that ‘Surveys can provide answers to the questions ‘What?’, ‘Where?’, ‘When?’, and ‘How?’, but it is not easy to find out ‘Why?’”²⁰ A response to Russell’s concerns that does not attend to the ‘Why?’ might be described as hollow.

I had previously met four astrologers in Japan and felt that there was a good chance that they could be recruited as respondents, and perhaps introduce me to additional potential interviewees. Both the small sample size and the subject matter of ‘belief’ pointed towards the use of an interview technique. The expectation was to talk in detail to a limited number of astrologers about their relationship with, and understanding of, astrology. Robert Stake identifies the task in such a case to be that ‘qualitative researchers perceive what is happening in key episodes or testimonies, represent what is happening with their own direct interpretation and stories’.²¹ This approach is supported by Bernadette Brady’s research, which inquired into astrologers’ thoughts and experiences about fate. In that study, Brady’s interviews were ‘designed to ask broad questions’ and ‘drift into personal anecdotes about their experiences of fate and/or their attitude to it’.²² A comparable approach seemed suitable for this study as a way of investigating personal experiences and explanations of the interviewees’ belief(s) about astrology.

The four respondents lived close enough that a group meeting would have been possible, however it was determined that individual interviews would have a better chance of yielding pertinent and detailed responses due to certain aspects of Japanese culture. The primary point of concern was that a group interview could be overly influenced by *kohai/sem pai* dynamics. The basic meaning of these terms is junior (*kohai*) and senior (*sem pai*), literally in the sense of one person being older than the other. There is a tendency in Japan for the *kohai* in any situation to defer to or seek consensus with the *sem pai*. Yuko Nippoda shows that this manifests primarily in the sense of children obeying adults, but as people progress through adulthood the hierarchy develops to include all elders as well as people with a clear expertise in the matter at hand.²³ Pauline Taylor discusses the

¹⁸ William Braud and Rose Marie Anderson, ‘Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences’ (USA, Sage Publications, Inc., 1998), p. 38.

¹⁹ Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, (Suffolk, McGraw-Hill, 2010), pp. 8 – 9.

²⁰ Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, p. 12.

²¹ Robert E. Stake, ‘The Art of Case Study Research’ (SAGE Publications, Inc., 1995), p. 40.

²² Bernadette Brady, ‘Theories of Fate among Present-day Astrologers’ (PhD thesis, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2011), p. 248.

²³ Yuko Nippoda, ‘Japanese Culture and Therapeutic Relationship’ (Online Readings in Psychology, 10 [3], 2012), p. 4.

dynamics of Japanese group hierarchy in relation to students on overseas study programmes - students who are newer to overseas study assume the *kohai* role and turn to their *sempai* for support, guidance, and decision-making.²⁴ This 'deference effect' is not unique to Japan and attention was already drawn to it by Monique Hennink's, Inge Hutter's and Ajay Bailey's work on qualitative research methods.²⁵ I considered it to be a potential problem in interviewing my Japanese astrologers, and firmly decided against a group interview on this basis. If a group interview were conducted, I assumed that the respondents would internally evaluate who the *sempai* was regards each matter and wait for that person to answer first. Thereafter the other participants would not contradict that response, and might even adjust their contributions to validate what had already been said. Although my comprehension of this dynamic is at an outsider level, I understand *kohai/sempai* dynamics enough to know that my research should minimise their impact.

On the matter of introducing other respondents a complication arose. There were other possible interviewees, but not ones that were willing and able to be interviewed in English. Conducting interviews in Japanese was not a viable option since the high degree of accuracy of representation necessary in an academic study would only be possible with a bilingual interviewer. My knowledge of Japanese is conversational but not bilingual and the interview content would need to be translated for use, which is a time-consuming process that could easily result in a flawed translation. Charlotte Aull Davies raises the concern that ethnographers 'must remain aware that translation in any case is far from a theoretically neutral activity and that their own perspectives, both professional and personal, will influence translations'.²⁶

Having established that individual interviews were going to be the core of the research method, the specific style of the interviews needed to be considered. The additional aim of responding to Bertrand Russell's challenge was to be approached in an indirect manner by eliciting the interviewees' beliefs. Under these conditions, Bell recommends guided interviews - which also allow respondents to focus on their own concerns within a general topic.²⁷ Davies describes semi-structured interviews as being 'formally bracketed, and set off in

²⁴ Pauline Taylor, 'International Japanese Students: their Expectations and learning needs at Australian Universities' (PhD thesis, Sydney, University of Technology, 2008), pp. 120, 147, 186, 224, 251.

²⁵ Monique Hennik; Inge Hutter; Ajay Bailey, 'Qualitative Research Methods' (Ashford, Sage Publications, 2013), p. 164.

²⁶ Charlotte Davies Aull, *Reflexive Ethnography* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), p. 125.

²⁷ Bell, *Doing Your Research Project*, p. 165.

time and space as something different from the usual social interaction'.²⁸ Semi-structured interviews seemed the appropriate choice, because, according to Alan Bryman, they avoid the risk of the rambling of unstructured interviews (due to the lack of guidance).²⁹ Unstructured interviews could have proven interesting but not necessarily useful. It would have been unreasonable to waste my interviewees' time by leaving so much to chance.

A list of approximate questions was composed, and the interviewees decided the time and location of the appointments. At the beginning of each interview, permission was requested to record it; a formal privacy statement was read aloud; and some background questions were asked about what else the respondents' lives involved other than astrology. This led into how they got involved in astrology, what role it plays in their lives, how they comprehend and express their beliefs concerning astrology, and how they deal with hostile inquiry. Thereafter, the interviews began to wind down, and the option was given to make additional comments. Lastly, the respondents were thanked for their time, and asked to complete the interview release form. The interviews lasted between 24 and 42 minutes.

It is not easy to calibrate where one stands on the insider-outsider scale. For example, when I compared my situation to that of Jenny Blain in her paper about Seidr practitioners I felt that I was simultaneously less of an insider than her and less of an outsider too. Blain is deeply involved with the Seidr community - to the extent that she fields the possibility that, anthropologically speaking, she may have 'gone native'.³⁰ Blain devotes a number of sections of her article to the issues around academic positioning in relation to research, and conveys an understanding and concern for how ethnography can manifest and how it might be perceived.³¹ My outsider dilemma was far simpler: to attend to the task at hand without reducing the interviews to a dry checklist.

In consulting Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, the insider-outsider positioning of this project can be somewhat clarified. The interviews were conducted with the intention of comprehending the experiences of the astrologers from their own perspectives. This places the interview set-up and execution within an interpretist paradigm, which Max Weber would identify as *Verstehen* intentions – that is, the focus and intention being to understand the respondents from their own

²⁸ Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography*, p. 106.

²⁹ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, (Oxon, Routledge, 2001), p. 46.

³⁰ Jenny Blain, 'Speaking Shamanistically: Seidr, Academia and Rationality' (DISKUS, Volume 6, 2000), p. 5.

³¹ Blain, 'Speaking Shamanistically: Seidr, Academia and Rationality', p. 6.

perspectives.³² Russell's challenge is sourced in positivism, containing as it does the hypothesis that astrologers are basically lying to themselves and that astrology has no actual empirical value.³³ Most of the parameters appear to fit the 'insider' classification, but with an 'outsider' agenda. My theoretical solution in regard to this last was Liz Greene's suggestion to adopt Ninian Smart's 'methodological agnosticism', since this paper has 'no specific hypothesis to prove or disprove' and a neutral position is pursued.³⁴ 'Methodological agnosticism', according to Russell McCutcheon, is 'a stance that avoids any and all stands on issues of knowledge'.³⁵

A phenomenological approach to the interviews focusing on the respondents' experiences of astrology was an ideal goal, tempered by the agenda of attending to Russell's query. On account of this, it was necessary for the interviews to be guided rather than in totally free form - with an effort made to gather potential responses to Russell's challenge by way of what Dermot Moran describes as approaching phenomenological disclosure through a detour.³⁶ Kathryn Hayes points out that reflexivity is a balancing act between being considerate enough of the flaws in any given piece of research and not over-indulging in reflection at the expense of other areas during the production of a paper.³⁷ I was acutely aware that my interviews were shaped by the need to answer a particular question. This brought a level of formality to the interviews, which was less than ideal. Additionally, there was the concern that my work had a distinct sample bias in that all of my interviewees happened to also be people who were fluent in English as a second language.

Discussion

After soliciting the initial background information about each respondent, the topics common to all respondents were discussed, after which some of the distinctive content to each interview was included. The interviews were semi-structured; the wording of the questions varied and there was no fixed order, although there were certain themes that the interviewees were guided towards.

³² Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter and Ajay Bailey, 'Qualitative Research Methods' (Ashford, Sage Publications, 2013), pp. 12 – 17.

³³ Hennink, 'Qualitative Research Methods', p. 14.

³⁴ Liz Greene, 'Mystical Experiences Among Astrologers' (Sophia Centre Press, Culture and Cosmos, 2006), p. 10.

³⁵ Russell T. McCutcheon, 'The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion' (Britain, Continuum, 2005), p. 216.

³⁶ Dermot Moran & Tim Mooney, *The Phenomenology Reader* (Routledge, 2002), p. 5.

³⁷ Gillian Symon & Catherine Cassell, 'Qualitative Organizational Research Core Methods and Current Challenges' (SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), p. 76.

Pseudonyms have been assigned to the respondents throughout this paper. All respondents are from Japan and live there now. Yumi, who is 48 and works primarily as a conference interpreter, is involved with astrology professionally as a sideline, both by taking clients and facilitating astrology workshops. She has an educational background in international relations and social psychology. Miraa is 46 and a full-time media astrologer and has published over 200 books on western astrology in Japanese, including both original works and translations. He also works part-time as a Religious Studies lecturer at university level. His educational background is in transpersonal psychology. Ichii is 43 and works as both translator and interpreter for an advertising agency. He is also a practicing Vedic astrologer with a number of clients. He studied Politics in the UK and Ayurvedic medicine in India. Kibi is 31 and a full-time astrologer who has clients, writes articles, and teaches astrology. He had previously worked in information technology and studied philosophy at university.

All of the respondents have a professional relationship with astrology and earn at least some of their income from it. In addition their employment histories beyond astrology could all be classified as professional white-collar work. In this regard they match with at least one of Russell's claims, that astrologers are 'hard-working and highly meritorious business men or women'.³⁸ None mentioned engaging in astrology out of a necessity (or desire) to earn more money.

Each interviewee told the story of their involvement with astrology. Miraa first became interested in astrology around the age of ten and has the longest acquaintance with astrology; he was making natal charts and giving readings before he had even left school. He mentioning that he feels he was a product of the 'occult explosion' that occurred in the 1970's. At the age of 27, the university that he was working for effectively gave him an ultimatum: either be an academic, or be an astrologer. He chose astrology, but didn't give up on academia, remarking that 'there is such a thing as an intellectual astrologer'. Now, he is a successful media astrologer and writer.

Yumi and Ichii are both currently interpreters. Both became involved in astrology while in their twenties, and in each case their entry into it was rather more dramatic than childhood curiosity. At age 25, while travelling in New York, Ichii experienced a conversion to Hinduism that he described as 'miraculous'; he added that 'it wasn't my choice, it just happened', and also that in his youth he had been sceptical and cynical about religion and spirituality in general. Through the involvement in Hinduism he also got into Vedic Astrology and Ayurvedic Medicine. Yumi begins the story of her history at a particular point in time 'when Saturn returned, around that time. When I was around 29, many people start

³⁸ Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

studying astrology around that time'. She was dealing with a number of struggles in her life and she felt 'I really needed an answer – why is this happening to me?' This led her to dabble in tarot, yoga, Chinese astrology, exorcism, and at one point she was a member of a cult. Many of them made a good first impression on her but over the long-term only Western astrology persisted.

Kibi had developed a keen interest in Jungian thought from his mid-teens onwards, which led to Psychological Astrology and the works of Liz Greene, Dane Rudhyar and Ryuji Kagami 'although at that time it was just a hobby for me'. He studied Philosophy with a focus on Greek thought because it combined his interests in astrology and archetypes (through mythology). Kibi grew up poor, and when it came time to seek employment he chose what seemed a safe and steady bet: the I.T. business. 'and then in 2008 there was the Lehman shock ... this was the time to take my life in a different direction'. 'Lehman Shock' is the economic crash of 2008 – a commonly referenced low point in the Japanese economy. With his business circumstances disrupted, he took the opportunity to return to his earlier interests and over the last six years he has developed a liveable career in astrology.

The significance of natal charts was the area of belief that all the respondents seemed to hold in common. Each expressed this in their own way, but all indicated that it was a fundamental element of their relationship with astrology. Miraa had actually undertaken experiments where divinatory readings generated using arbitrary non-traditional methods were compared to ones produced authentically using astrological charts. He found that when the diviner tries 'to create answers from nothing, just make them up, it's very difficult to get it right'; whereas with readings based on traditional astrological methods 'it's quite easy to apply, and get right answers'. Kibi said that for many years his sole astrological activity was extensive analysis and contemplation of his own natal chart, and that in turn primed him for working with other people's natal charts during consultations. Yumi sees birth charts in a more literal sense - they are the maps of celestial bodies, and those bodies have a direct impact of human life. On the astrologer's role she said, 'our job is to read the energy given on the day of your birth, we try to interpret the energy that each planet is giving you'. Ichii's first encounter with his own natal chart was rather profound for him. In it he saw clear indications of his overseas study, religious conversion, and many other aspects of his life 'it was all right there, written in the chart'. He came to understand the chart as a manifestation of karma, which he understands as 'things I can change, and things I cannot change'; astrology and the natal chart are, for him, an extension and an expression of this. He elaborated by saying 'do your duty, not other people's duty. The natal chart helps you to identify what your duty is.' Ichii would not agree with T. L. Brink's assertion that 'astrology's

fatalism is based upon blind impersonal forces and is substantially different from whatever fatalism reincarnationists attribute to the workings of karma.³⁹ Ichii views the astrological birth chart as a clear expression of the nature and manifestation of karma.

There was only limited discussion about astrological clients, but interestingly both Kibi and Ichii mentioned very similar things. Kibi gave an account of a client who was considering a divorce. In consultation he explained to the client that a Jupiter-Sun transit was occurring, at which time people may feel a need to manifest relationship changes, and explained 'this transit is like a reset button for relationships'. Ichii also remarked that he had had clients who were engaged in extra marital affairs and were seeking astrological explanations for their own behaviour. He also drew attention to the Jupiter-Sun transit. In both Ichii's and Kibi's cases, they advocated waiting out the transit before making any big decisions.

Russell's article could be seen as a clear example of hostile inquiry, so each interviewee was asked directly about dealing with this type of hostility - explained to the respondents as people challenging the astrologer in a belligerent or accusatory tone to defend his position and justify his practice. Perhaps second-guessing the exact essay question, Miraa's immediate response was 'fortunately in Japan, there is no Richard Dawkins', followed by, 'we can't prove astrology through the accepted way of thinking, astrology is a kind of subjective experience'. Kibi's answer was similar, but began with a diagram. He drew two lines that started close, and then split further apart, and then he added a barrier between the two. He explained: 'at the start there was no conflict between metaphysics and rationality. Then they started to pull apart. Now, there is a wall between them and neither can accept the other without giving up their own ideas'. For him, the main concern was to not seek conflict. Ichii reflected a similar historical sentiment in saying that 'when people challenge astrology with science I remind myself (and maybe them) that science is catching up to spirituality and religion, not the other way around. We've had many answers long before they started asking questions.' Yumi, in seeking clarification, elicited the specific example of Bertrand Russell from me and responded 'I think astrology has evolved a lot since then, that is to say that his stance is old-fashioned'. She also made an interesting comment that astrologers in Japan occupy something of a privileged position because they get all the benefits of the progress and development of the field, but generally do not have to fight the fights because Japan does not share the Western tradition of people constantly championing their own causes whilst trampling others.

³⁹ Brink, 'Inconsistency of Belief among Roman Catholic Girls', p. 82.

Conclusion

In the case of the four respondents in this study, the answer to Russell's question about astrologers - 'Do they believe themselves in the sciences that they profess?' - seems to be 'yes'.⁴⁰ Yumi believes in astrology on a material and astronomical level, and feels that psychological astrology is a good way to express that. Miraa believes in astrology as 'a framework of the expression of the human experience, intuition, patterns'; and adds that Jungian astrology is the latest manifestation of these ancient symbolic traditions. Miraa expresses a tendency towards reflexivity, often scrutinising his own beliefs. This was most clearly demonstrated in his experimental divinations discussed earlier, from which he concluded that arbitrarily made-up divinations are much less accurate and effective than those based on established divinatory practices.⁴¹ Kibi explains his core beliefs about astrology in an eloquent way 'astrology is like breath work. When a client comes to you, you inspire – that is, you breathe in their situation. Then you use your intuition to make deductions before you expire – which is to express compassion and understanding for them'. Ichii's belief is tied in with his Hinduism, and particularly with the principles of karma within that. None of the respondents had much to say about Japanese astrology - during the interviews they all tended to focus on the astrology that they do practice, rather than the astrologies that they do not. In peripheral conversations that were not directly part of the interviews (and therefore not recorded), some of the astrologers mentioned that they intentionally chose to practice foreign rather than domestic astrology because it was outside of their cultural norm. The adoption of Western or Vedic astrology by these Japanese practitioners could be a manifestation of the privatisation of religion. Walter and Waterhouse note that as part of the privatisation of religion in the UK, people often hold deviant beliefs, such as combining Christianity with reincarnation.⁴² Perhaps a major reason for the adoption of foreign astrologies by the Japanese is that the sense of progress and ongoing development that is apparent in Western astrology is very much lacking in Japanese astrology - which according to Yumi, is stagnant. Throughout the interviews, Yumi, Kibi, and Miraa spoke with enthusiasm about major figures in astrology, such as Liz Greene, Dane Rudhyar, Nicholas Campion, Geoffrey Cornelius and Ryuji Kagami. Ryuji Kagami is Japanese and an astrologer, but not one that deals with Japanese astrology. The pervading sentiment was that Western astrology is intellectually engaging and thus more attractive for the astrologers.

⁴⁰ Russell, 'On Astrologers', p. 1.

⁴¹ Experimental data details unavailable

⁴² Walter & Waterhouse, 'A Very Private Belief', p. 187.

Additionally, Western astrological horoscopes are a common feature in the Japanese media and a mainstream example of public acceptance of astrology in Japan.

Russell may readily pick apart the details of many of the above beliefs, and perhaps also see the diversity of the reasons for belief as problematic. The only functional response to such criticism is the one that each interviewee offered in some form or another: the scientific method is a belief that cannot conclude in astrology's favour due to its paradigms; astrology does not need to operate within those paradigms, so science can have its opinion, but astrology will be what it is. This was a persistent sentiment among the interviewees and in the context of this research is an example of Champion's idea that 'it is the perception of the believer which counts'.⁴³

Ichii, when asked how he explains astrology to both curious and hostile inquirers gave the same answer to both questions: 'it's very simple: MYOB – mind your own business', by which he means that one's natal chart tells them what their own business is and this is what must get on with rather than the common meaning 'don't interfere.' He added that 'if being hostile to astrology is part of one's karma, then so be it', which reflected a similar sentiment expressed by Yumi, who said 'people have the free will to attack astrology, or to practice it. In fact, it's probably in their chart.'

Each respondent demonstrated belief in the validity of what they are doing. Miraa believes that astrology can be handled academically, that symbolism is significant and that astrology is an effective manifestation of symbolism. Ichii believes in the Hindu principle of karma, and that astrology is relevant to comprehending karma. Yumi and Kibi demonstrate a belief that astrology is a good and helpful thing. This is not to say that any of my respondents believe in the 'science' of astrology, or the versions and manifestations of astrology that Russell had in mind when he wrote his article. Indeed, they all expressed in some way that science and astrology are on different paths and may do well to have less to do with each other. All the above respondents believe in what they practice, and appear supportive of pluralism and enchantment.

⁴³ Champion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology, and the New Age movement', p. 155.

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