

An Examination of the Impact of the Internet on Modern
Western Astrology

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Abstract

Astrology is a feature of modern culture. While the academic study of the culture of astrology is on the increase, virtually no scholarship exists on astrology and the Internet. However a large body of literature exists on the relationship between the Internet and religion, and this literature is used as a framework for the study of astrology and Internet.

This research investigates the use of the Internet by modern Western Astrologers, within the context of theories of cyberspace. It looks at how the Internet is being used by astrologers and what effects they believe it can have on astrology and its practice. The research was both quantitative and qualitative. Questionnaires were issued at astrological conferences in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. In addition sixty-five astrologers were interviewed. In the 1990s a body of literature was produced that associated the physical Internet with the virtual world of cyberspace. From this literature came claims of cyberspace as dualistic or Cartesian. My research was informed by theories of dualism inherited from the classical world, and by previous arguments that astrology is dualistic.

The thesis concludes that the majority of astrologers have a dualistic view of the Internet and cyberspace; the online world of cyberspace is viewed as a mental arena in contrast to the offline, physical world. A highly positive use of the Internet is the growth of online astrological communities; connections can be made with astrologers in different parts of the world. The Internet is perceived as a source of vast quantities of astrological information of varying quality. In the views of the astrologers poor quality astrological information can have a detrimental effect on the practice of astrology in the modern Western world.

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- Fractions are written as words
- Percentages are written in figures except when beginning a sentence
- When the number is part of a name such as Astrologer 1 or Appendix 1, figures are used
- Dates are written as figures

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Chapter One - Introduction

Introduction

The title of this thesis is 'Cyberspace and Dualism: An Examination of the Impact of the Internet on Modern Western Astrology'. Chapter One will give an account of the aims of the thesis, the academic rationale, and introduce the methodology used in the research.

The Internet and Cyberspace

Although the terms 'Internet' and 'cyberspace' are both used in connection with the physical network known as the Internet, until 1990 the two were unconnected and they originated and developed in very different ways.¹ Chapter Three contains a discussion on their origins, on how the terms both began to be used to refer to the network known as the Internet and, on how some authors, such as David Bell and Anastasia Karaflogka, differentiated between the Internet and cyberspace.² The Internet tended to refer to the physical network with its hardware and cables, while cyberspace tended to refer to a place created by the machinery, a place people entered when they logged onto the Internet.³ The differentiation between the Internet and cyberspace is an expression of the alleged dualistic view of the Internet/cyberspace that forms a major part of this thesis. However some authors, particularly from around the mid 2000s onwards, such as Wendy Robinson, reject this dualistic view and do not differentiate between the two terms.⁴ Use of either term in the thesis, in quotes from either authors or astrologers, does not imply that they are either referring to one part of a dualism or rejecting the idea, and I have

¹ John Perry Barlow, "Crime and Puzzlement," John Perry Barlow Library http://w2.eff.org/Misc/Publications/John_Perry_Barlow/HTML/crime_and_puzzlement_1.html [Accessed 19/09/2015]

² David Bell, 'Cybercultures Reader: A User's Guide', in *The Cybercultures Reader*, ed. by David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-12, p. 2; Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion: A Critical Appraisal of Religious Discourse on the World Wide Web* (London: Equinox, 2006) pp. 24-25.

³ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 25.

⁴ Wendy Robinson, 'Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption', in *Critical Cyber-Culture Studies*, ed. by David Silver and Adrienne Massanari (New York: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 56-57.

not so inferred unless they specifically state it. For the sake of clarity throughout the thesis, I use the term 'Internet', unless specifically discussing the separate place the theorists claim is created when a person is online, in which case I use the term 'cyberspace'.

The Aims of the Thesis

The aims of the thesis are to investigate how astrologers use the Internet, to examine their relationship with the Internet and to identify if use of the Internet has impacted their practice of astrology or astrology itself. The wider aim of the thesis is to consider issues around dualism and cyberspace in relation to astrology, and to reflect on the wider debates concerning cyberspace.

At the end of 2014 there were almost three billion users of the Internet.⁵ According to Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, who has written extensively on the networked society, the Internet 'weaves the fabric of our lives'.⁶ He states that we live in, on, and by the Internet, in work, business, education, health, governance, entertainment, culture, politics, social movements, war and peace, and friends and family. With over six billion subscribers using wireless devices, humanity, he claims, is almost fully connected in this network of computer networks that has become the backbone of all activities in all domains, resulting in a networked society that has subsumed the industrial society of the previous two centuries. Social networking sites on the Internet, he observes, have become the social spaces where people meet, socialise, retrieve information, express themselves, work, shop, create, imagine, participate, fight, and shape their experience.⁷ Despite all of this, he believes there is little understanding of the social implications of the Internet, and encourages the study of what people are actually doing on the

⁵ Michael Kende, *Global Internet Report 2014: Open and Sustainable Access for All*, (2014), p. 7.

⁶ Manuel Castells, 'Introduction', in *Society and the Internet: How Networks of Information and Communication Are Changing Our Lives*, ed. by M. Graham, W.H. Dutton, and M. Castells (Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. v-vi, p. v.

⁷ Manuel Castells, *Introduction to Society and the Internet*, p. v.

Internet as a necessary step towards allowing humankind to fully understand the impact of the Internet on society.⁸

While, as pointed out by Lindsay Radermacher, there is a vast body of literature devoted to the practice of astrology, until the last decade modern academic work on the topic tended to focus on its history or its role in earlier cultures.⁹ Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the body of literature focusing on astrology and its practice in today's world has begun to expand. However at the beginning of my research in 2007 there was virtually no scholarship on the use of the Internet by astrologers. If, as stated by Nicholas Campion, astrology is part of the culture in which it exists, then Castells's call for more study in the area of Internet practices is relevant to the use of the Internet for astrology.¹⁰ A lack of research on the use of the Internet for astrology implies a lack of understanding of the implications of Internet use for astrology. Patrick Curry stated in 1994 that in order to survive, astrologers have always adapted astrology to the prevailing culture.¹¹ If they have continued to do so, it is possible that changes have occurred in how astrology is being practiced in order to adapt it to Castells's networked society.

When researching use of the Internet, Christine Hine recommends asking, firstly, if the Internet has changed the lives of the subjects and, secondly, if it has fundamentally changed the area under discussion.¹² Following Castell's appeal for more research, and Hine's questions, my approach sought answers to the following four questions:

- To what extent do astrologers use the Internet for astrology and in what ways do they use it?

⁸ Manuel Castells, *Introduction to Society and the Internet*, pp. v-vi.

⁹ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', (MPhil Thesis, University of Kent, 2011), p. vi.

¹⁰ Nicholas Campion, 'Introduction: Cultural Astronomy', in *Astrology and the Academy*, ed. by Patrick Curry and Michael York Nicholas Campion (Bristol: Cinnabar Books, 2004), pp. xv-vvv, p. xxii.

¹¹ Patrick Curry, 'Foreword', *The Moment of Astrology: Origins in Divination*, Vol. Geoffrey Cornelius, Iss. (London: Arkana, 1994), p. xi

¹² Christine Hine, *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015),p. 1.

- What is the nature of their relationship with the Internet?
- Has Internet use changed their practice of astrology?
- Can Internet use bring about any fundamental changes to astrology itself?

Karaflogka argued for the importance of integrating web theory and current thinking on cyberspace into her study of online religion.¹³ I have taken a similar approach to Karaflogka's, believing that to understand the relationship between astrologers and the Internet, and the potential impacts of the Internet on astrology, it is first necessary to understand how the Internet has been viewed by people since its birth.

Robinson identifies three waves of Internet research.¹⁴ The first wave of academic literature portrayed cyberspace as a virtual world separate to the physical world.¹⁵ As changes in technology facilitated a world-wide growth in the use of the Internet and it became a part of everyday life in the developed world, a view of it as a mystical and spiritual place appeared less in the literature. In the twenty-first century the literature began to focus on who was using the Internet and how they were using it. This became known as the second wave of Internet research. The advent of social media brought a whole new body of literature that examined the impact its use was having on the lives of different groups of people. Cortés and Lozano have proposed this body of literature as the third wave of Internet research.¹⁶

The first academic studies of cyberspace or Robinson's first wave of research, for example by Margaret Wertheim, contained a view of cyberspace as a world apart from the physical world, a new version of every ethereal, non-physical abode from

¹³ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*. Preface

¹⁴ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 55-56.

¹⁵ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 55-56.

¹⁶ J.A.Cortés and J.O.Lozano, 'Social Networks as Learning Environments for Higher Education', *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Interactive Multimedia*, Vol. 2, Iss. 7 (2014), pp. 63-69, p. 63

Plato's world of Being to the twentieth century vision of life in outer space.¹⁷ This world could be entered, and returned from, at will, via the computer. Comparisons by, for example Michael Benedikt, were made between the new online world and previous intangible worlds; just as many of them had been considered sacred or mystical, so too it was believed must cyberspace be.¹⁸

As stated above, one of the aims of my research is to examine the relationship astrologers have with the Internet. Taking the three waves of Internet research into account, my research will cover the period from the first wave of literature with its portrayal of cyberspace as a non-physical world, through to Cortés and Lozano's third wave.¹⁹

Dualism

The issue of the Internet, cyberspace and dualism, as discussed above, has been debated from the first wave of the literature that began in the 1980s. Some of the authors, such as Sharon Stockton, used the terms dualistic or Cartesian, viewing the Internet as a place where the mind has separated from the physical body; others used different analogies as, for example, Bell and Karaflogka who divided the Internet into separate places, the physical network and the non-physical place created by that network.²⁰ Other analogies have come from Dave Healy who viewed cyberspace as a representation of the frontier in the American Wild West, or Nicole Stenger who viewed cyberspace as paradise.²¹ When the Internet began to be used commercially and became part of day-to-day life, the second wave of

¹⁷ Margaret Wertheim, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet* (New York and London: Norton, 1999) pp. 38-39; Plato, *Timeaus*, Translated by Donald J. Zeyl, Plato: Complete Works (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 28a-28c.

¹⁸ Michael Benedikt, 'Introduction', in *Cyberspace: First Steps*, ed. by Michael Benedikt (Cambridge Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 1-25, pp. 1-3.

¹⁹ J.A.Cortés and J.O.Lozano, 'Social Networks', p. 63.

²⁰ Sharon Stockton, "'The Self Regained": Cyberpunk's Retreat to the Imperium', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 36, Iss. 4 (1995), pp. 558-612, p. 609; David Bell, *Cyberculture Reader*, p. 2; Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 25.

²¹ Dave Healy, 'Cyberspace and Place: The Internet as Middle Landscape on the Electronic Frontier', in *Internet Culture*, ed. by David Porter (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 55-68, p. 55; Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', *Cyberspace: First Steps*, Vol. Iss. (1991), p. 52

literature appeared, some of which rejected the earlier theories of dualism. Yet some later third wave scholarship, for example Isabelle Jonveaux, appears to still perceive the Internet as dualistic.²² Debates about the online environment (the Internet and cyberspace) versus the offline, physical world, still appear, and the perception of there being two different worlds is still found. However none of the authors mentioned above or any of the literature I could find mentioned asking the users of the Internet/cyberspace how they viewed it. Douglas Cowan stated in 2015 that he also was unable to find any scholarship in the area that tested the claims of the early theorists.²³ Because of the apparently perennial nature of the issue of dualism in connection with cyberspace, I have placed some emphasis on its importance in my thesis, and tested the early theories of dualism on astrologers. Chapter Two is devoted to a review of the theories of dualism that appear in the literature in connection with the Internet, and the issue of dualism figures prominently in my research and my conclusions.

Astrology

The astrology about which this thesis is concerned is modern Western horoscopic astrology. The horoscope or astrological chart, a circular map which Campion explains as 'a schematic map of the heavens captured at a particular moment', is the centre of the practice of modern Western astrology.²⁴ This astrology is what Alie Bird terms 'real astrology' and involves the casting and interpretation of the horoscope or chart, as distinct from newspaper horoscopes. Newspaper horoscopes, which are based only on the Sun's position in the zodiac and, as she states, can be determined by simply knowing the day and month of a person's birth, Bird terms real astrology's 'lightweight relative'.²⁵ The newspaper astrology, usually

²² Isabelle Jonveaux and Gabrielle Varro, 'Virtuality as a Religious Category?: Continuity and Discontinuity between Online and Offline Catholic Monasteries', *Online: Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, Vol. 8, Iss. Religion on the Web: Proceedings of the Conference of the French Association of the Social Sciences of Religion (2015), pp. 28-41, , <http://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/religions/issue/view/2132/showToc>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

²³ Douglas Cowan, 'Personal Email', ed. by Frances Clynes (2015).

²⁴ Nicholas Campion, *What Do Astrologers Believe?* (London: Granta Publications, 2006), p. 44.

²⁵ Alison Wendy Bird, 'Astrology in Education: An Ethnography', (University of Sussex, 2006), pp. 67, 80.

referred to as Sun sign astrology (with non-astrologers sometimes referring to a Sun sign as a star sign) is a twentieth-century development that owes much to the work of Alan Leo (1860-1917). Influenced by the theosophical principle of the Sun's connection to the eternal spirit, he created the type of astrology that resulted in the newspaper columns of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.²⁶ Bird is not alone in her differentiation between Sun sign astrology and 'real' astrology. Curry classified astrology into three discrete categories.²⁷ The first category was 'low' astrology or popular astrology. 'Middling' astrology he considered judicial astrology, or what Campion calls astrology that is 'heavily dependent on the astrologers judgement'.²⁸ 'High' astrology, Curry believes is the astrology of the philosophers, which Campion describes as 'concerned with speculative matters'.²⁹ Campion adapted Curry's hierarchical model. He classified middling astrology as the astrology of chart casting and interpretation - Bird's real astrology, and low astrology as the astrology of newspaper Sun sign columns.³⁰ Campion found that many astrologers believe that Sun sign astrology contributes to astrology's poor reputation in the Western world, and some have accused Sun sign astrologers of 'prostituting their art'.³¹ To differentiate between Sun sign astrology and the astrology that involves casting and interpreting a chart, Bird's terminology of real and Sun sign astrology will be used in the thesis when it is necessary to distinguish between the two. Anytime the term 'astrology' is used alone, it is referring to real astrology.

²⁶ Alan Leo, *The Art of Synthesis* (London: Modern Astrology, 1936 [1904]) pp. 30-31; Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Vol 2: The Medieval and Modern Worlds* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), p. 232.

²⁷ Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power : Astrology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989), p. 95.

²⁸ Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), p. 9.

²⁹ Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power : Astrology in Early Modern England*, p. 95; Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement*, p. 9.

³⁰ Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement*, p. 9; Alison Gwendy Bird, 'Astrology in Education: An Ethnography', p. 67.

³¹ Nicholas Campion, 'Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement: The Extent and Nature of Contemporary Belief in Astrology', (PhD, University of the West of England, 2004), p. 132; Nicholas Campion, *What Do Astrologers Believe?*, p. 90.

Online Religion

In his doctoral thesis Campion found that the majority of the astrologers he surveyed described astrology as a spiritual path. He concluded that astrology was a vernacular religion or a popular religion that exists alongside official religions.³² Although virtually no literature exists on the use of and effects of the Internet on astrology, a large corpus exists in the area of the use of the Internet for religious purposes. This body of literature is examined in Chapter Four, with an emphasis on the literature that discusses how scholars believe religions have been impacted by the Internet. The findings of my research will be compared to the literature on online religion, searching for similarities between the impacts of the Internet on religion as contained in the literature, to the impact the astrologers believe the Internet has had on astrology.

In the literature from the first wave to the third wave, there have been claims that people of a religious or spiritual inclination have a particular affinity with the Internet. Erik Davis believes that Technopagans, a group within the Pagan community who are technically inclined, are strongly attracted to cyberspace because, like magic, it is about creating a separate world.³³ Lorne L. Dawson believes that the Neo-pagan community in general are strongly attracted to the Internet and reasons it may be because of the amount of time they spend working alone.³⁴ According to Wertheim, cyberspace, like heaven, has no terrestrial coordinates.³⁵ The non-physicality of cyberspace is suggested by some authors as an explanation for its particular attraction for people who are religiously or spiritually inclined. In 2006 Christopher Partridge, referring to cyberspace's status as a virtual world, wrote, 'With this in mind, it is likewise not difficult to understand

³² Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 284.

³³ Erik Davis, 'Technopagans: May the Astral Plane Be Reborn in Cyberspace', *Wired*, Vol. 3, Iss. 7 (1995), www.wired.com/wired/archive/3.07/technopagans.html. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

³⁴ Lorne L. Dawson, 'The Mediation of Religious Experience in Cyberspace', in *Religion and Cyberspace (Amazon Kindle Edition)*, ed. by Morten T. Hojsgaard and Margit Warburg (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).loc 471-937

³⁵ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, pp. 38-39.

the attraction of cyberspace to religious believers and spiritual seekers'.³⁶ In 2015, Jonveaux proposed the idea that there was an affinity between the virtual and the spiritual, which would explain why religions were so rapidly attracted to the Internet. Like Partridge, she concluded that both religions and the Internet have to do with the non-material.³⁷ Taking into account Campion's conclusion that astrology is a vernacular religion, and the fact that astrologers, accepting Partridge's theory, also deal with the non-material, the results of my research will be examined in order to determine whether or not astrologers have a particular affinity for the Internet.³⁸

If astrologers prove to have a particular affinity with the Internet, it raises the question of whether astrologers tend toward dualism or if dualism can be found in astrology. This issue was investigated by Bernadette Brady as part of her doctoral thesis. A dualist argument in astrology, she argued, was one where the astrologer considered that the horoscope was only a partial or incomplete view of the self.³⁹ In her research she discovered a view of the soul or spirit as separate from the horoscope, an idea which can be traced back to Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Aquinas's dualism of body and soul is discussed in Chapter Two of my thesis. His dualistic view of the body as separate from the soul is reflected in his view of the horoscope.⁴⁰ Brady argues that Aquinas introduced a dualism into astrology, with his conclusion that the celestial bodies had power over the body, while the soul and intellect belonged to God.⁴¹ While physical and non-physical realms were linked, there was a fundamental divide between them.

Brady argues that the view that the will or spirit/soul was not contained within the horoscope but was free from it could still be found in the books of twentieth

³⁶ Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West, Vol 2: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), p. 135.

³⁷ Isabelle Jonveaux and Gabrielle Varro, 'Virtuality as a Religious Category?', p. 39.

³⁸ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 284.

³⁹ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate among Present-Day Astrologers', (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, 2011), p. 284.

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Translated by Vernon J. Bourke, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 3.91.92. cited in Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 85.

⁴¹ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 86.

century astrologers such as Alan Leo and Dane Rudhyar.⁴² Dane Rudhyar (1895-1985) who like Leo, was a theosophist is described by Campion as the most influential American astrologer of the twentieth century.⁴³ Brady considers the dualism of Leo and Rudhyar Platonic, in that the soul is not completely free from matter, but is partially free. Speaking of Leo, Brady wrote, '...He accepted a dualist argument by insulating the soul, character, and will from the full influence of fate, allowing it to only influence the body'.⁴⁴ Leo believed that the soul held the will and that it was superior to matter. Matter is fated while the spirit is free. The horoscope is the soul's fate in its current life. He saw a struggle between the will and fate - the horoscope.⁴⁵ She interprets Rudhyar as not seeing the horoscope as a complete image of self but rather, unlike other dualists, as a version of self that was potential and that this potential was the beauty of the cosmos.⁴⁶ At a higher level, she claims, Rudhyar considered that one was free or freer of the world of matter.⁴⁷ In her research, Brady found general agreement that the horoscope reflects the physical body but varying opinions as to whether the mind, soul or will are also reflected in the horoscope.⁴⁸ Her survey results showed that 46% of her questionnaire respondents strongly agreed with dualistic theories of fate, but that monist theories, which held that the will was contained within the horoscope, attracted 52% of the respondents.⁴⁹ Brady's finding, that roughly half the astrologers involved in her research believed the chart could reflect the body but not necessarily the mind, will be compared to my findings concerning astrologers' view of the Internet and cyberspace.

⁴² Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', pp. 121-22.

⁴³ Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Vol 2*, pp. 241, 46.

⁴⁴ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 126.

⁴⁵ Alan Leo, *The Progressed Horoscope* (London: L. N. Fowler, 1929 [1905]), p. 350. Cited in Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 125.

⁴⁶ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 128.

⁴⁷ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 131.

⁴⁸ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 291.

⁴⁹ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 213.

My Research

My research consisted of two rounds of questionnaires, one in 2009 and the second in 2012, and interviews with sixty-five astrologers. When researching the Internet, Robert V. Kozinets claims that by the time the research is finished a new set of research questions may have evolved during the investigations, contrasting dramatically with the starting set.⁵⁰ This proved to be the case with my research. Between 2009 and 2012, there was a vast increase in the use of social media for astrology that merited the issuing of a second questionnaire. This took place in 2012 and included a greater focus on social media use in astrology. A major component of the social media use for astrology is participation in the numerous astrology groups existing on Facebook. To properly research the use of these groups, ten of the sixty-five astrologers interviewed were administrators of Facebook astrology groups. In the text these interviewees are referred to as 'admins' to differentiate them from the other fifty-five interviewees, who are referred to as 'interviewees' or 'conference astrologers'.

Insider Issue

I am an insider in astrology and in the world of Information Technology (IT). I have been a student of astrology since 1987, a teacher and practitioner since 1990 and have lectured at astrological conferences and local group meetings in Ireland, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). I hold the Diploma from the Faculty of Astrological Studies (FAS), have worked as their IT Manager and currently hold the position of distance learning tutor. I am also a former council member of The Astrological Association (AA) (formerly the Astrological Association of Great Britain). My current full-time job is as a permanent, full-time lecturer in an Institute of Technology in Dublin. In addition to my MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology, I have a B. Sc. and an M. Sc. in Computing from Trinity College Dublin and a Higher Certificate in Web Design and Development from the Institute of Technology, Tallaght, Dublin.

⁵⁰ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online* (London: SAGE, 2010), p. 80.

Alie Bird and Lindsay Radermacher argue that, given the complex nature of astrology and the years of studying needed to become proficient in it and familiar with the astrological world, when researching astrology the inside or emic researcher is at an advantage.⁵¹ Another advantage in favour of the emic researcher in the world of astrology concerns the issue of trust in the researcher. Jo Pearson, David Hufford, and Gustav Jahoda believe the issue of trust becomes crucial when people are being questioned about their beliefs, and they are likely to be cautious about revealing their beliefs to someone who does not share them.⁵²

Similarly, it is argued by Steve Jones there are advantages in Internet practices and the human relationship with the Internet being researched by someone proficient as a technician in the area. Jones observes that there is a gap between the scholars engaged in Internet studies and the technicians who work on the physical Internet.⁵³ He calls this gap 'the ages-old division in the academy between theory and practice', and argues that it is important for Internet scholars to know in broad terms the programming, engineering and standards of development related to the Internet. Only when theorists and critical scholars of the Internet know something about the conditions in which it developed, he believes, can they begin to answer any question that begins with 'Why?'.⁵⁴

Taking the above statements into consideration, my position as an insider in the world of astrology and the Internet puts me in a unique position to research the use of the Internet by astrologers. My research will investigate the use of the Internet

⁵¹ Alison Wendy Bird, 'Astrology in Education: An Ethnography', p. 6; Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 90.

⁵² Jo Pearson, 'Going Native in Reverse: The Insider as Researcher in British Wicca', in *Theorising Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem* ed. by Elizabeth Arweck and Martin Stringer (Birmingham: University Press, 2002), pp. 103-04; David J. Hufford, 'The Scholarly Voice and the Personal Voice: Reflexivity in Belief Studies', in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* ed. by Russell T. McCutcheon (London: Cassell, 1999), p. 300; G. Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition* (London: Allen Lane, 1969) pp. 133-34.

⁵³ Steve Jones, 'Dreams of Fields: Possible Trajectories of Internet Studies', in *Critical Cyberculture Studies*, ed. by Adrienne Massanari David Silver, Steve Jones (New York and London: NYU Press, 2006), p. xi.

⁵⁴ Steve Jones, *Dreams of Fields*, p. xii.

by astrologers and their relationship with the Internet in order to lead to a greater understanding of the impact of the Internet on astrology.

Chapter Conclusions

Recent decades have seen the rapid spread of the Internet and cyberspace which has become of a source of interest to scholars. As there is a need for more research, I am researching the use of the Internet by astrologers. Previous scholarly research into modern astrology by Campion and Brady has identified astrology as a vernacular religion and as dualistic. Therefore literature on cyberspace and dualism, as well as research into online religion will provide the foundation for my research. The next chapter, Chapter Two, will review models of dualism.

Chapter Two - Dualism

Introduction

From its beginnings in the 1980s, cyberspace literature has contained claims that the notion of cyberspace represents a dualistic view of the world, and that the use of cyberspace involves a separation of body and mind. Chapter Two will introduce some of the theories of dualism, in existence from ancient times up to the twenty-first century, that frequently appear in the cyberspace literature.

Definitions of, and theories concerning the nature of space and place were already forming a body of literature in the twentieth century. Much of this literature built on or challenged theories of space which, like those of dualism, had been in existence from the time of Plato. Chapter Two will examine the debates on the nature of space that have existed since Plato's time, and the twentieth and twenty-first century literature on the nature of space and place.

Dualism

An important distinction between two different types of dualism - anthropological dualism and cosmological dualism - was made by George Eldon Ladd. According to Ladd, 'Cosmological dualism contrasted two levels of existence: the earthly and the heavenly; and anthropological dualism contrasted two parts of the individual: the body and soul'.⁵⁵ He wrote that these two types of dualism are closely associated, with the body belonging to the earthly level and the soul belonging to the heavenly or spiritual level.⁵⁶

One of the most frequent discussions in the cyberspace literature concerns the alleged dualism of cyberspace; using Ladd's typology I am classifying the different forms of dualism that appear in the literature, as either cosmological or anthropological. Questions related to Ladd's typology have featured in these debates, and his model provides a useful framework for analysing subsequent

⁵⁵ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm E. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993 [1974]) pp. 435-36.

⁵⁶ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

issues in dualism. Some authors, for example Benedikt, consider cyberspace to be dualistic in its portrayal as a world separate from the physical world - a form of cosmological dualism - while others, for example Jennifer Cobb and Sharon Stockton, argue that the view of cyberspace as a mental arena contributes to a split between the body and mind - a form of anthropological dualism - where the mind becomes a disembodied entity in the world of cyberspace.⁵⁷

Dualisms, both cosmological and anthropological, have existed in works created long before the birth of cyberspace and have appeared in different forms throughout history. The words of the authors of these works are frequently echoed in the writing of cyberspace authors of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The next section examines the dualisms of different writers from the past.

Plato

Examples of the co-existence of cosmological and anthropological dualism can be found at least as far back as classical Greece, in the writing of the Athenian philosopher Plato (c. 428-348 BCE). Abraham P. Bos gives an explanation of Platonic dualism, to which I am applying Ladd's model. 'Platonic dualism', states Bos, is the name given to Plato's concept of the sharp distinction between a visible, corporeal reality and an intelligible, incorporeal world of Ideas, and alongside these, the visible, corporeal and perishable body and an incorporeal, invisible soul.⁵⁸ Plato's cosmological dualism consisted of a perfect and unchanging world of Being - Bos's intelligible, incorporeal world of Ideas - which was inhabited by a creator God, and an imperfect, unstable world of Becoming - Bos's visible, corporeal reality - that contained the visible universe, including the Earth.⁵⁹ The world of Being is grasped

⁵⁷ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 2; Jennifer Cobb, 'A Spiritual Experience of Cyberspace', *Technology in Society*, Vol. 21, Iss. (1999), pp. 393-407, p. 399; Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 609.

⁵⁸ Abraham P. Bos, 'Aristotelian' and 'Platonic' Dualism in Hellenistic and Early Christian Philosophy and in Gnosticism', *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 56, Iss. 3 (2002), pp. 273-91, p. 273

⁵⁹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-c; Abraham P. Bos, 'Aristotelian and Platonic Dualism', p. 273.

by understanding, while the world of Becoming is grasped by opinion, which he associated with the body and the physical senses.⁶⁰ In Plato's words,

As I see it, then, we must begin by making the following distinction: What is that which always is and has no becoming, and what is that which becomes but never is? The former is grasped by understanding, which involves a reasoned account. It is unchanging. The latter is grasped by opinion, which involves unreasoning sense perception. It comes to be and passes away, but never really is.⁶¹

Alongside Plato's cosmological dualism, to use Ladd's terminology, is an anthropological dualism consisting of an immortal soul trapped in a mortal body - Bos's incorporeal, invisible soul and visible, corporeal and perishable body.⁶² Plato associated the soul with all that is divine and unchanging, and the body with all that is mortal and constantly changing.⁶³ Thus he associates the soul with the world of Being, and the body with the world of Becoming. Comparing the soul and body to two kinds of existence — the invisible, which always remains the same, and the visible, which never does — he argued that since the soul was invisible to the human eye, it is more like the invisible and the body more like the visible.⁶⁴ Plato wrote 'the soul is altogether more like that which always exists in the same state rather like that which does not'.⁶⁵ He continued 'the soul resembles the divine, and the body resembles the mortal'.⁶⁶

Plato believed the soul was distinct and separate from the body, and that only with the soul could people gain pure knowledge, stating, 'For whenever it (the soul) attempts to examine anything with the body, it is clearly deceived by it'.⁶⁷ He

⁶⁰ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28d.

⁶¹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28d.

⁶² Plato, *Timeaus*, 69-72; Abraham P. Bos, 'Aristotelian and Platonic Dualism', p. 273.

⁶³ Plato, *Phaedo*, Translated by G.M.A. Grube, Plato: Complete Works (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 79e-80a.

⁶⁴ Plato, *Phaedo*, 79a-79b.

⁶⁵ Plato, *Phaedo*, 79e.

⁶⁶ Plato, *Phaedo*, 80a.

⁶⁷ Plato, *Phaedo*, 403b.

claimed that people must escape the body if they are to have pure knowledge.⁶⁸ He wrote,

And indeed the soul reasons best when none of these senses troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor pleasure, but when it is most by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it in its search for reality.⁶⁹

For this reason, '...the philosopher more than other men frees the soul from association with the body as much as possible.'⁷⁰ He viewed this as preparation for death, which he saw as the complete separation of the body and soul, and a state with which the philosopher would be happy.⁷¹ Of the two, he saw the soul as the more important.⁷²

According to Cornelia J. de Vogel, Plato implies a difference in value between the world of Being and the world of Becoming. That which always exists - the world of Being is purer and 'better' than that which passes away - the world of Becoming.⁷³ Similarly the soul is superior to the perishable and impure material body.⁷⁴ Plato's view of the relationship between body and soul, Robert J. O'Connell argues, meets the criteria that historians of thought have laid down for a genuine dualism: firstly, that there are two members involved - body and soul, and secondly, that those members, even when joined to each other, remain opposed to each other.⁷⁵

Plato's view of the soul changes throughout his works. In the earlier *Apology* Socrates had considered the possibility of death as 'a dreamless sleep', where the

⁶⁸ Plato, *Phaedo*, 66e.

⁶⁹ Plato, *Phaedo*, 65c.

⁷⁰ Plato, *Phaedo*, 65a.

⁷¹ Plato, *Phaedo*, 63b-c.

⁷² Plato, *Apology*, Translated by G.M.A. Grube, Plato: Complete Works (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 30ab.

⁷³ Cornelia J. de Vogel, *Rethinking Plato and Platonism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), p. 162.

⁷⁴ Cornelia J. de Vogel, *Rethinking Plato and Platonism*, p. 162.

⁷⁵ Robert J. O'Connell, *Plato on the Human Paradox* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 114.

dead 'have no perception of anything'.⁷⁶ Yet in *Phaedo*, Plato argued that the soul is immortal.⁷⁷ He claimed that that which brings the body to life is the soul and this is always so. All living things, he wrote, have immortal souls, not just humans.⁷⁸ David Bostock interprets this as stating that the soul is not necessarily related to consciousness, since only humans have consciousness.⁷⁹ However in the *Timaeus* Plato wrote about a tripartite soul. Plato located the divine part of the soul in the head and the mortal part in trunk of the body.⁸⁰ The mortal soul he divided into two. One part he put below the midriff. This was the part of the mortal soul concerned with appetites that he wrote 'was not going to understand the deliverance of reason'.⁸¹ The other part, which was concerned with the spirit, was put between the head and the midriff, 'so that it might listen to reason and together with it restrain by force the part consisting of appetites'.⁸² In the *Timaeus*, only the reasoning part of the soul is immortal.⁸³ Gareth B. Matthews however, argues that Plato viewed the soul as separate from the body whether or not it survived death.⁸⁴ According to Hendrik Lorenz, Plato's continual revision of his theory of the soul indicated an ongoing reflection by him, throughout his life, about the nature of the soul.⁸⁵ It is Plato's association of the reasoning part of the soul with immortality, and therefore with the divine, that has relevance for the discussion of anthropological dualism in this thesis.

Gnosticism

Hans Jonas described Gnosticism as the common features of the numerous sects that had sprung up in the first centuries of the Christian era. In an era of religious syncretism, he wrote, the general religion of the East Mediterranean was 'a

⁷⁶ Plato, *Apology*, 40c-e.

⁷⁷ Plato, *Phaedo*, 70c-72a.

⁷⁸ Plato, *Phaedo*, 105d.

⁷⁹ David Bostock, *Plato's Phaedo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 189.

⁸⁰ Plato, *Timeaus*, 69c.

⁸¹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 71a.

⁸² Plato, *Timeaus*, 70a.

⁸³ Plato, *Timeaus*, 69-72.

⁸⁴ Gareth B. Matthews, 'The Epistemology and Metaphysics of Socrates', in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, ed. by Gail Fine (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 114-38, p. 136.

⁸⁵ Hendrik Lorenz, 'Plato on the Soul', in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, ed. by Gail Fine (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 243-66, p. 243.

dualistic transcendent religion of salvation'.⁸⁶ These common features, he states, were the emphasis on knowledge, or gnosis, as the means for the attainment of salvation, or even as the form of salvation itself.⁸⁷

Knowledge of God brings about salvation by transforming the individual and uniting them with the divine,

Now it is fitting that the soul regenerates herself and becomes again as she formerly was. The soul then moves of her own accord. And she received the divine nature from the father for her rejuvenation, so that she might be restored to the place where originally she had been. This is the resurrection that is from the dead. This is the ransom from captivity. This is the upward journey of ascent to heaven. This is the way of ascent to the father.⁸⁸

The above quote from 'The Exegesis on the Soul' speaks of restoration and being reunited with the divine father. Like Plato, who believed that knowledge is acquired before birth, Robert Galbreath argued that gnosis is recognition, a regaining or relearning of knowledge once known but subsequently forgotten or repressed in the prison house of the flesh.⁸⁹ It is knowledge of the self in its universal aspect, its origin and essence, its plight and purpose.⁹⁰ Like Plato who believed that through philosophy universal ideas could be recalled, the Gnostics believed that through gnosis humanity can reach the divine.⁹¹

Reflecting the Gnostics' anthropological dualism of body and soul is a cosmological dualism consisting of a cosmos and a divine realm. The cosmos is the domain of planetary demons known as Archons, the collective rulers of the world - a prison

⁸⁶ Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* 2nd ed., rev. edn (Routledge, 1992), p. 32.

⁸⁷ Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, p. 32.

⁸⁸ *The Exegesis on the Soul*, Translated by William C. Robinson Jr, The Nag Hammadi Library (The Gnostic Society Library), <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/exe.html>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

⁸⁹ Plato, *Phaedo*, 75c-e; Robert Galbreath, 'Problematic Gnosis: Hesse, Singer, Lessing, and the Limitations of Modern Gnosticism', *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 61, Iss. 1 (1981), pp. 20-36, p. 26

⁹⁰ Robert Galbreath, 'Problematic Gnosis', p. 26.

⁹¹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 90d; *The Exegesis on the Soul*.

where humanity is trapped. The Earth is surrounded by seven spheres, each representing a planet in the solar system, and an eighth sphere of the fixed stars.⁹² Each planetary sphere has its own demon or Archon who seeks to prevent the spirits of humans from passing up through its spheres to the divine realm beyond.⁹³ The idea of planetary spheres did not originate with the Gnostics, having being described by Plato, but in Gnosticism the spheres are the seats of the demonic Archons.⁹⁴ Each sphere has its own appetites and passions which are passed on to humans by the Archons. After death, the spirit travels upwards, leaving behind at each sphere the appetites and passions associated with it, until it reaches the divine realm and becomes reunited with God.⁹⁵

According to Kurt Rudolph, there are certain common elements between Platonic dualism and the dualism of the Gnostics, such as their cosmologies with the concept of the divine realm beyond the celestial spheres that encircle the Earth. But there is also what he terms a 'dividing gulf' between the two.⁹⁶ Gnostic dualism differs from Platonic dualism in that it is anti-cosmic which he explains as 'an unequivocally negative evaluation of the visible world together with its creator; it ranks as a kingdom of evil and of darkness'.⁹⁷ He claims that this identification of matter with evil, a fundamental concept of Gnosis, is not to be found in Platonic dualism.⁹⁸ While Plato's God, like the Gnostic God, was beyond the spheres, Plato's cosmos is divine because it was created by God, whereas the Gnostic cosmos is populated by demons, who act as obstacles between man and God.⁹⁹ Giovanni

⁹² *On the Origin of the World*, Translated by Hans-Gebhard Bethge and Bentley Layton, The Nag Hammadi Library (The Gnostic Society Library), <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/origin.html>. [Accessed 31/05/2015]

⁹³ *Apocryphon of John*, Translated by Frederik Wisse, The Nag Hammadi Library (The Gnostic Society Library), <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/apocjn.html>. [Accessed 31/05/2015]

⁹⁴ Plato, *Republic*, Translated by G. M. A. Grube and Rev. C. D. C. Reeve, Plato: Complete Works (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 616C – 17B; *On the Origin of the World*.

⁹⁵ *The Teachings of Silvanus*, Translated by Malcolm L. Peel and Jan Zandee, The Nag Hammadi Library (The Gnostic Society Library), <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/silvanus.html>. [Accessed 31/05/2015]

⁹⁶ Kurt Rudolph and Robert McLachlan Wilson, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1987), p. 61.

⁹⁷ Kurt Rudolph and Robert McLachlan Wilson, *Gnosis*, p. 60.

⁹⁸ Kurt Rudolph and Robert McLachlan Wilson, *Gnosis*, p. 60.

⁹⁹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-c; *Apocryphon of John*.

Filoramo, however, argues that Plato contributed to the anti-cosmic views of Gnosticism, impacting both its cosmological and anthropological dualism. He wrote,

...he (Plato) had helped to introduce serious doubts as to the possibility of human existence not at odds with the laws of the cosmos, with his doctrine of a radical opposition between the essential world of ideas and the transient, corruptible world of appearance. These doubts were translated, then, into a concept of the human body as, if not a prison, certainly an obstacle to the free development of the life of the spirit.¹⁰⁰

The ascension through the planetary spheres is part of the Gnostic anthropological dualism which, Rudolph claims, echoing Ladd's assertion that cosmological and anthropological dualisms are closely associated, parallels its cosmological dualism to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between statements about the individual and those about the world.¹⁰¹ As with Plato, where humanity was part of the imperfect world of Becoming, in Gnosticism, humanity is part of the cosmos and can only achieve salvation when the spirit travels up through the planetary spheres to reach God.¹⁰² People are composed, on the one hand, of an earthly body and soul, which the Archons have afflicted with their own appetites and passions, corresponding to one of the planetary spheres and, on the other hand, of a divine spirit.¹⁰³ The spirit, which is an actual piece of god, is a divine spark that is trapped in the human soul.¹⁰⁴ The Archons created humanity to purposely keep this divine spark in the world. Thus, as the world is enclosed by the planetary spheres, the spirit is enclosed by the appetites and passions originating from them.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 54.

¹⁰¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36; Kurt Rudolph and Robert McLachlan Wilson, *Gnosis*, p. 60.

¹⁰² *Tripartite Tractate*, Translated by Harold W. Attridge and Dieter Mueller, The Nag Hammadi Library (The Gnostic Society Library), 1.15, <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/tripart.htm>. [Accessed 30/05/2015]

¹⁰³ *Apocryphon of John*.

¹⁰⁴ *The Teachings of Silvanus*.

¹⁰⁵ *Apocryphon of John*.

Christianity

The concept of a cosmological dualism was incorporated into Christianity where it took the form of a belief in another world inhabited by God, where the faithful go after death.¹⁰⁶ As with the other forms of cosmological dualism discussed above, it is mirrored by an anthropological dualism of body and soul. It is the soul that can live forever in the immaterial other world when it leaves the physical world at the death of the body.¹⁰⁷ Just as in Gnosticism, redemption or salvation is found by escaping to the transmundane world. Examples of this philosophy can be found in the writings of two Christian saints: Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

Augustine

Saint Augustine (354–430 C.E.) of Hippo in modern day Algeria is described by Michael Mendelson as, 'one of the towering figures of medieval philosophy whose authority and thought came to exert a pervasive and enduring influence well into the modern period'.¹⁰⁸ Augustine spent nine years among the Manicheans, a Gnostic sect, before converting to Christianity and studying Platonism. During that period he would have had much exposure to Gnostic dualism and the struggle between good and evil, light and darkness; Mendelson argues that this, as much as Platonism, influenced his later writings.¹⁰⁹ While Augustine frequently describes his move away from Manichean thought, his writing continues to contain examples of anthropological and cosmological dualism. The following paragraphs contain examples of each type of dualism.

In his *Confessions*, Augustine tells how, at the time of his conversion, his beliefs changed from the Manichean polarity of extreme good and extreme evil, to a dualism of body and soul,

¹⁰⁶ *Gospel of John*, Bible: King James'Version (Kindle Edition) (Wilmington, DE: Montechristo Publishing LLC, 2011), 3.11-15.

¹⁰⁷ *Gospel of John*, 3.16-17.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Mendelson, "Saint Augustine," Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/>. [Accessed 30/12/2014]

¹⁰⁹ Michael Mendelson, "Saint Augustine," <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/>. [Accessed 30/12/2014]

And it seemed better to me to believe how no evil had been created by thee (God)--for in my ignorance evil appeared not only to be some kind of substance but a corporeal one at that. This was because I had, thus far, no conception of mind, except as a subtle body diffused through local spaces. This seemed better than to believe that anything could emanate from thee which had the character that I considered evil to be in its nature.¹¹⁰

Augustine believed that the individual consisted of both body and soul and both were a necessary part of the whole. Like Plato he believed that the human soul had a rational component and that this was superior to the body.¹¹¹

Man is a rational substance consisting of mind and body, then without doubt man has a soul that is not body, and a body that is not soul. And hence these three things are not man, but belong to man, or are in man. If, again, we put aside the body, and think of the soul by itself, the mind is somewhat belonging to the soul, as though its head, or eye, or countenance; but these things are not to be regarded as bodies. It is not then the soul, but that which is chief in the soul, that is called the mind.¹¹²

As with the Gnostics, at death the soul can 'be set free' when it will 'return henceforth no more to misery'.¹¹³

In *The City of God*, Augustine describes two opposing worlds which, he states, have existed since the beginning of time: the city of heaven and the city of earth.¹¹⁴ Like Plato he associates the heavenly realm and the divine with the invisible, and the earthly realm with the visible.¹¹⁵ In his words, 'Of all visible things, the world is the

¹¹⁰ St. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, (London, New York and Victoria: Penguin Books, 1961), 5.10.19-20.

¹¹¹ Plato, *Republic*, 439d-e; St. Augustine of Hippo, *On the Holy Trinity*, XV.7.11, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/ecf/103/1030226.htm>. [Accessed 30/12/20014]

¹¹² St. Augustine of Hippo, *Trinity*, XV.7.11. [Accessed 30/12/20014]

¹¹³ St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* Kindle edn (Dublin: Veritatis Splendor Publications, 2012), XI.4.

¹¹⁴ St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, XI.I.

¹¹⁵ St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, XI.4; Plato, *Phaedo*, 79a-79b.

greatest; of all invisible, the greatest is God. But, that the world is, we see; that God is, we believe.'¹¹⁶

St. Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) was a Dominican theologian from the Lazio region of modern-day Italy.¹¹⁷ At that time the Aristotelian corpus had been translated into Latin, and Aquinas was called upon to defend Catholic doctrine against new ways of thinking that had sprung from contemporary interpretations of Aristotle.¹¹⁸

Prominent in his writing is the issue of the anthropological dualism of body and soul. In *Summa Theologica* he considers the nature of the human soul, comparing it to the body. He concludes that the soul is not a body but moves the body.¹¹⁹ Agreeing with Augustine he concludes that it is incorporeal.¹²⁰ The soul is incorruptible and lives on, in another form, after the death of the body. He wrote, 'Thus death comes to both alike (humans and animals) as to the body, by not as to the soul' and 'After separation from the body it will have another mode of understanding'.¹²¹ He concludes that the intellect and the soul are associated.¹²² Although associated, they are not one and the same thing, but the intellect is one of the powers of the soul,

It is necessary to say that the intellect is a power of the soul, and not the very essence of the soul. For then alone the essence of that which operates is the immediate principle of operation, when operation itself is its being: for as power is to operation as its act, so is the essence to being. But in God alone His action of understanding is His very Being.

¹¹⁶ St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, XI.4.

¹¹⁷ Ralph McInerney and John O'Callaghan, "Saint Thomas Aquinas," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/aquinas/>. [Accessed 30/12/2014]

¹¹⁸ Ralph McInerney and John O'Callaghan, "Saint Thomas Aquinas," <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/aquinas/>. [Accessed 30/12/2014]

¹¹⁹ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Benziger Bros. edn Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (Christian Classics Ethereal Library), Q. 75.1, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.pdf>. [Accessed 22/08/2015]

¹²⁰ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 75.2.

¹²¹ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 75.6.

¹²² Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 76.1.

Wherefore in God alone is His intellect His essence: while in other intellectual creatures, the intellect is power.¹²³

The above quotes from Augustine and Aquinas illustrate an anthropological dualism of body and soul that is representative of Christian dogma.

Body and Mind

Closely related to anthropological dualism's concept of a separation of body and soul is a separation of body and mind. Howard Robinson refers to this type of anthropological dualism as 'the mind-body problem'. He defines mind-body dualism as follows: 'In the philosophy of mind, dualism is the theory that the mental and the physical—or mind and body or mind and brain—are, in some sense, radically different kinds of thing'.¹²⁴ He argues that people have bodies which, in common with all physical objects, have properties such as size, weight, shape and colour, which can be observed and measured. But, he points out, people also have mental properties which are not so easily associated with external or concrete objects, such as consciousness, emotions, intentionality. The mind-body problem concerns the relationship between these two entities.

Plato believed that the soul had a rational component.¹²⁵ Augustine, a Platonist, followed this mode of thought and stated that the mind was not the soul, but 'chief in the soul'.¹²⁶ Aquinas believed that, although associated, they are not one and the same thing, but that the intellect is 'a power of the soul'.¹²⁷ Descartes, who is discussed in the next section, distinguished clearly between mind and body but believed mind and soul were the same thing.¹²⁸

¹²³ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 79.1.

¹²⁴ Howard Robinson, "Dualism," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/dualism/>. [Accessed 03/08/2015]

¹²⁵ Plato, *Republic*, 439d-e.

¹²⁶ St. Augustine of Hippo, *Trinity*, XV.7.11. [Accessed 30/12/20014]

¹²⁷ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 79.1.

¹²⁸ Rene Descartes, 'The Principles of Philosophy', in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes Vol 1*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), pp. 201-302, p. 221.

Descartes

Writing in the seventeenth century, Rene Descartes (1596-1650) wrote of a dualism of mind and body, with the mind being superior to the body.¹²⁹ According to Marleen Rozemond, few views are as central to Western philosophy as Descartes' dualism; while contemporary philosophers generally reject dualism, they continue to pay attention to it, even if it is just to hold him responsible for what is seen as a modern, problematic split between mind and body.¹³⁰ For this reason she believes that understanding Cartesian dualism is of great importance.¹³¹ Cartesian dualism is extensively discussed in the first and second waves of cyberspace literature, and for this reason Descartes' work on this topic, with particular emphasis on the extreme importance he placed on the mind, will be examined in some detail in the following paragraphs.

Descartes had a fundamental distrust of the body; he considered it unreliable and inferior to the mind, which led him to reject knowledge obtained through his senses. He wrote,

But immediately afterwards I noticed that whilst I thus wished to think all things false, it was absolutely essential that the 'I' who thought this should be somewhat, and remarking this truth, 'I think, therefore I am', was so certain and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions brought forward by the sceptics were incapable of shaking it, I came to the conclusion that I could receive it without scruple as the first principle of the Philosophy for which I was seeking.¹³²

In the statement, 'I think, therefore I am', referred to as the *Cogito* from its translation into Latin *cogito ergo sum*, Descartes was referring not to everyday thoughts, but to Reason. He believed Reason is what separates humans from

¹²⁹ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 101.

¹³⁰ Marleen Rozemond, *Descartes's Dualism* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. xi.

¹³¹ Marleen Rozemond, *Descartes's Dualism*, p. xi.

¹³² Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 101.

animals and supplies proof of the existence of both man and God and he outlined his method to develop Reason.¹³³

Distrust of information gained through the body and the physical senses can be found in much of Descartes' work. Like Plato, he believed the body can deceive, and he gave examples of how the senses can deceive.¹³⁴ One example concerned the apparent size of the sun. He stated that the eyes see the sun a certain size but the intellect knows it to be much bigger; therefore if a person were to trust their sight over their intellect they would be in error.¹³⁵

Descartes reasoned that if he had no body but could still think, then he would know that in order to think he must exist; however, if he had a body but did not think, then he had no reason to suppose himself to exist. He believed that the body and the physical world were not necessary requirements for existence.¹³⁶ In his words:

From that I knew that I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which is to think, and that for its existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing; so that this 'me', that is to say, the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from body, and is even more easy to know than is the latter; and even if body were not, the soul would not cease to be what it is.¹³⁷

Descartes uses the terms mind and soul interchangeably. He states that he sees them as the same; therefore to him, the mind is immortal. He wrote, 'From this it follows that the human body may indeed easily enough perish, but the mind [or soul of man (I make no distinction between them)] is owing to its nature immortal.'¹³⁸ He said that the rational soul could not in any way be derived from

¹³³ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 82.

¹³⁴ Plato, *Phaedo*, 403b.

¹³⁵ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 161.

¹³⁶ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 101.

¹³⁷ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 101.

¹³⁸ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 141.

the power of matter, but that it must expressly be created by God. Without it our bodies function like those of animals who have no ability to reason.¹³⁹

Descartes stated repeatedly that the mind and the body are separate and that the body is dependent on the mind. For example, 'I had already recognised in myself that the nature of the intelligence is distinct from that of the body'.¹⁴⁰ He believed that not only was the mind a separate entity from the body, but that he could detach from his body and operate purely in his mind. He stated:

I have been well accustomed these past days to detach my mind from my senses, and I have accurately observed that there are very few things that one knows with certainty respecting corporeal objects, that there are many more which are known to us respecting the human mind, and yet more still regarding God Himself; so that I shall now without any difficulty abstract my thoughts from the consideration of [sensible or] imaginable objects, and carry them to those which, being withdrawn from all contact with matter, are purely intelligible. And certainly the idea which I possess of the human mind inasmuch as it is a thinking thing, and not extended in length, width and depth, nor participating in anything pertaining to body, is incomparably more distinct than is the idea of any corporeal thing.¹⁴¹

He also wrote of how the mind and body were connected:

Nature also teaches me by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst etc., that I am not only lodged in my body as a pilot in a vessel, but that I am very closely united to it, and so to speak so intermingled with it that I seem to compose with it one whole.¹⁴²

Descartes' perception of God appears to support his idea that mind and body are separate and the mind superior. Just as Plato associated the rational component of

¹³⁹ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 141.

¹⁴⁰ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 103.

¹⁴¹ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 171.

¹⁴² Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 192.

the soul with immortality and the divine, Descartes believed that God was pure mind.¹⁴³ He reasoned that he himself was not perfect but because he existed there must be a perfect Being, namely God, who created him.¹⁴⁴ While he, Descartes, had two natures, the mind and the body, God who is perfect cannot have two natures as this would be an imperfection. From this he concluded that God had no body.¹⁴⁵ Therefore God is pure mind.

Comparisons have been drawn between Descartes's dualism and the theories of Plato by, for example, Sarah Broadie, Stephen Buckle, or Michael Pakaluk.¹⁴⁶ Pakaluk, discussing 'Socrates Defence' in Plato's *Phaedo*, claims that it is 'not unlike Descartes' famous argument, based on the identification of an activity in which the soul can in principle engage on its own without assistance from the body'.¹⁴⁷ According to Pakaluk 'Socrates Defence', that the soul survived after the death of the body, offers an argument in favour of a real distinction between body and soul that is 'roughly analogous' to Descartes' argument.¹⁴⁸ Buckle discusses what he terms 'the broadly Platonic nature of Cartesian dualism' and argues that both Plato and Descartes believed, 'that true understanding requires turning away from the sensed world of change and decay to the eternal truths discoverable by the intellect'.¹⁴⁹ Broadie also points to similarities between Plato and Descartes; both are concerned with an incorporeal mind or soul that is, during an individual's lifetime, attached to the body, but which is immortal.¹⁵⁰

Plato viewed the soul as tripartite with the rational soul being immortal.¹⁵¹ Rozemond's interpretation of this is that for Plato the mind is only part of the soul,

¹⁴³ Plato, *Timeaus*, 69-72; Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁴ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁵ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁶ Sarah Broadie, 'Soul and Body in Plato and Descartes', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 101, Iss. (2001), pp. 295-308, ; Michael Pakaluk, 'Degrees of Separation in the "Phaedo"', *Phronesis*, Vol. 48, Iss. 2 (2003), pp. 89-115, ; Stephen Buckle, 'Descartes, Plato and the Cave', *Philosophy*, Vol. 82, Iss. 320 (2007), pp. 301-37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4619726>.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Pakaluk, 'Degrees of Separation in the "Phaedo"', p. 89.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Pakaluk, 'Degrees of Separation in the "Phaedo"', p. 90.

¹⁴⁹ Stephen Buckle, 'Descartes, Plato and the Cave', pp. 301-05.

¹⁵⁰ Sarah Broadie, 'Soul and Body in Plato and Descartes', p. 296.

¹⁵¹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 69-72.

whereas for Descartes the mind was the entire soul.¹⁵² To both Plato and Descartes it is the rational soul or mind that is immortal and associated with the divine. Broadie makes this point saying that the mind, in Descartes' writing, cannot be separated from God.¹⁵³ Pakaluk, however, claims that both Plato and Descartes conflate dualism with immortality.¹⁵⁴ Similarities to the work of Plato have been pointed out since Descartes first published his writing; an example of this is the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who argued that many of the points made by Descartes had already been covered by Plato.¹⁵⁵ Before publication, the *Meditations* was circulated in manuscript form among various theologians and philosophers. Their criticisms were sent to Descartes who had six sets of objections published with the first edition of *Meditations* along with his replies.¹⁵⁶

Descartes distinction of body and mind was raised in the 'Objections' by both Hobbes, the author of *The Third Set of Objections*, and Antoine Arnaud, a French theologian, who wrote *The Fourth Set of Objections*.¹⁵⁷ Hobbes in his 'Objections', took a materialist position in opposition to Descartes' Idealism, and appears to attack the separation of body and mind. He wrote,

Hence it is possible for a thing that thinks to be the subject of the mind, reason, or understanding, and hence to be something corporeal; and the opposite of this has been assumed, not proved. Yet this inference is the basis of the conclusion that M. Descartes seems to wish to establish.¹⁵⁸

Using an argument that would be used by Allucquere Rosanne Stone over 300 years later about cyberspace, and is discussed in Chapter Three, Hobbes concluded:

¹⁵² Marleen Rozemond, *Descartes's Dualism*, p. xiii.

¹⁵³ Sarah Broadie, 'Soul and Body in Plato and Descartes', p. 297.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Pakaluk, 'Degrees of Separation in the "Phaedo"', p. 95.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Hobbes, 'Third Set of Objections, First Objection', in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1982), p. 60.

¹⁵⁶ G. R. T. Ross, 'Introduction', in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1982), p. 452p., p. iii.

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *Third Set of Objections*, Vol II, p. 61; Antoine Arnaud, 'Fourth Set of Objections, the Nature of the Human Mind', in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1982), p. 84.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Third Set of Objections*, Vol II, p. 61.

Hence, since the knowledge of this proposition, I exist, depends upon the knowledge of that other, I think, and the knowledge of it upon the fact that we cannot separate thought from a matter that thinks, the proper inference seems to be that that which thinks is material rather than immaterial.¹⁵⁹

Arnauld also examined the principle that the mind is separate and distinct from the body. He criticised Descartes,

But if you reply that body is not absolutely excluded from my essence, but merely in so far precisely as I am a thinking being, the fear seems likely to arise that some one will entertain a suspicion that the knowledge of myself, in so far as I am a thinking being, is not the knowledge of anything fully and adequately conceived, but is known only inadequately and by a certain intellectual abstraction'.¹⁶⁰

Descartes replied, 'I thought I took sufficient care to prevent anyone inferring that man was simply a spirit that makes use of a body'.¹⁶¹

Unfortunately he did not prevent anyone inferring this. In the twentieth century Gilbert Ryle coined the term 'the ghost in the machine' to describe what he considered to be Descartes' conception of the body and soul.¹⁶² Writing in 1949, in a chapter called 'Descartes' Myth', he outlined what he termed 'The Official Doctrine', of 'the nature and place of minds', which he claimed 'hails chiefly from Descartes'.¹⁶³ He considered the Official Doctrine to be absurd and set out to prove that it is false in principle, thus challenging what he saw as the views of

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Third Set of Objections*, Vol II, p. 62.

¹⁶⁰ Antoine Arnauld, *Fourth Set of Objections*, Vol II, p. 84.

¹⁶¹ Rene Descartes, 'Reply to Fourth Objections', in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1982), pp. 96-122, p. 102.

¹⁶² Gilbert Ryle and Daniel C. Dennett, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012 [1949]) pp. 15-16.

¹⁶³ Gilbert Ryle and Daniel C. Dennett, *The Concept of the Mind*, pp. 11-15.

Descartes.¹⁶⁴ Ryle's interpretation of Descartes' writing was that Descartes saw the body and mind or soul as completely separate, with the mind being the pilot that steers the ship of the body, or the motor in the engine - the ghost in the machine.¹⁶⁵ Echoes of Plato's statement that the soul animates the body can be heard in this view, along with that of Aquinas who stated that the soul moves the body.¹⁶⁶

Not all scholars agree that Descartes really viewed the mind and body as distinct and separate. While Ryle's interpretation of Descartes' position, as stated above, is that the mind and body are distinct and separate, his interpretation is challenged by Lily Alanen who argues that Descartes considered the body and the soul/mind to be united.¹⁶⁷ While Ryle believed the modern view of the nature of mind and body was greatly influenced by Descartes, Alanen believes the modern view of Descartes has been greatly influenced by Ryle. She calls this the 'Myth of the Cartesian Myth', referring to Ryle's 'Descartes' Myth'. She points out that although Descartes, when proving the mind-body distinction, does describe the mind as completely independent from the body, he nevertheless rejects the Platonist view of man as a pure mind accidentally united to the body, embedded in Ryle's metaphor. The mind-body union she argues, is a substantial union but she agrees there is a difficulty reconciling it with Descartes' radical dualism. She points out that when faced with this difficulty, Descartes invariably replied that the union of the mind and the body cannot be explained by more clear and distinct ideas; in fact it need not be explained at all, because as a 'primary notion' it should be plain to everyone.¹⁶⁸ With the use of the words, 'invariably replied', Alanen appears to be accusing Descartes of evading the question.¹⁶⁹ However, just as Lorenz claimed with

¹⁶⁴ Gilbert Ryle and Daniel C. Dennett, *The Concept of the Mind*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁵ Gilbert Ryle and Daniel C. Dennett, *The Concept of the Mind*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁶⁶ Plato, *Phaedo*, 105d; Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 75.1.

¹⁶⁷ Lilli Alanen, 'Reconsidering Descartes's Notion of the Mind-Body Union', *Synthese*, Vol. 106, Iss. (1996), pp. 3-20, p. 3

¹⁶⁸ Rene Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, pp. 332-33. cited in Lily Alanen, 'Mind-Body Union', p. 4

¹⁶⁹ Lilli Alanen, 'Mind-Body Union', p. 4.

Plato, Alanen believed that Descartes revised his view on the soul over the years, and the idea of its union with the body is a more mature view.¹⁷⁰

In the theories of Plato, the Gnostics, Christianity and Descartes, the immaterial mind or soul is associated with the transcendent and the divine, and seen as superior to the physical, imperfect body, which inhibits the soul in its search for knowledge and wisdom.¹⁷¹ Body and soul or mind are seen as separate and distinct from each other, with the soul, in Plato's case, the rational soul, surviving the death of the body.¹⁷² The body can deceive the mind, which is the source of knowledge and the divine. Paralleling the examples discussed above, of an anthropological dualism of body and mind or soul, are the examples of a dualistic cosmos, with one half of the cosmos, the half Ladd refers to as the heavenly level of existence, being perceived as superior to the other mundane half.¹⁷³ The sacred world is the abode of the transcendent divine and cannot be reached by living mortals with a physical body. It is yearned for but only reached by the soul after death. To humanity, reaching that world represents salvation and eternal life. In both anthropological and cosmological dualism the soul and the divine realm are perceived as invisible and non-tangible, while the body and the earthly realm are considered visible and material - a point which has relevance for how cyberspace would be perceived. This argument will be revisited in Chapter Three in connection with the debate in the cyberspace literature about the alleged dualism of cyberspace.

Dualism and Space

The language of dualism has been applied to space. Isaac Newton (1642-1727) wrote of a dualism of space; he saw space as consisting of absolute space and relative space. He coined the term absolute space in order to distinguish space from

¹⁷⁰ Hendrik Lorenz, *The Soul*, p. 243; Lilli Alanen, 'Mind-Body Union', p. 3.

¹⁷¹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28d; *The Exegesis on the Soul*. [Accessed 19/09/2015]; St. Augustine of Hippo, *Trinity*. [Accessed 19/09/2015]; Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 103.

¹⁷² Plato, *Phaedo*, 701c-72a.

¹⁷³ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

the ways by which it is measured, which he called relative space.¹⁷⁴ Relative space is the popular space that we perceive in relation to our bodies, while absolute space is true, fixed, mathematical space. He wrote:

Absolute space, by its own nature without relation to anything external, always remains similar and immovable: relative [space] is some mobile measure or dimension of this [absolute] space, which is defined by its position to bodies according to our senses, and by ordinary people is taken for an unmoving space: as in the dimension of a space either underground, in the air, or in the heavens, defined by its situation relative to the earth.¹⁷⁵

He considered space infinite and homogenous and its different parts indistinguishable to human senses, so therefore a way had to be found to measure space. He devised a coordinate system.

But because the parts of space cannot be seen, or distinguished from one another by our senses, therefore in their stead we use sensible measures of them. For from the positions and distances of things from any body considered as immovable, we define all places; and then with respect to such places, we estimate all motions, considering bodies as transferred from some of those places into others. And so, instead of absolute places and motions, we use relative ones; and that without any inconvenience in common affairs.¹⁷⁶

The case against Newton's absolute space was put forth by Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716) in ongoing correspondence with Samuel Clarke, who was a follower of Newton, and whose letters are believed to have had input from Newton. Leibniz claimed that space was relative meaning that it was not an entity

¹⁷⁴ Isaac Newton, 'General Scholium', in *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, (London, 1729).II

¹⁷⁵ Isaac Newton, *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1995),p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ Isaac Newton, *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (London, 1729) Book 1, 'Scholium' IV

in itself but, like time, it acted upon real entities. To him it was ideal, meaning that it was of the mind, and was not what he called 'an absolute Being'.¹⁷⁷ Leibniz wrote,

I have demonstrated, that *Space* is nothing else but an *Order* of the existence of things, observed as existing Together; And therefore the Fiction of a material finite Universe, moving forward in an infinite empty Space, cannot be admitted. It is altogether unreasonable and *impracticable*. For, besides that there is *no real Space* out of the material Universe; such an Action would be without any Design in it: It would be working without doing any thing, *agendo nihil agere*. There would happen *no Change*, which could be observed by Any Person whatsoever. These are Imaginations of *Philosophers who have incomplete notions*, who make Space an absolute Reality. Mere Mathematicians, who are only taken up with the Conceits of Imagination, are apt to forge such Notions; but they are destroyed by superior Reasons.¹⁷⁸

Clarke argued against this, '*Time and Space are not of the Nature of Proportions at all, but of the Nature of absolute Quantities to which Proportions belong*'.¹⁷⁹ It was Newton's theory of space as absolute that would be dominant up until Einstein's work on the relativity of space.

Modern Critiques of Dualism

From the late twentieth century onwards, dualistic views of space began to be challenged in the literature, with authors proposing alternative ways of looking at space which they believed would bring about a unified theory space. This section looks at the work of three writers: Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault and Edward Soja. All of these men proposed a three-part view of space. Two of these parts are

¹⁷⁷ Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, "Third Letter to Clarke," The Newton Project, <http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/view/texts/normalized/THEM00230>. [Accessed 22/08/2015]

¹⁷⁸ Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, "Fifth Letter to Clarke," The Newton Project, <http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/view/texts/normalized/THEM00234>. [Accessed 22/08/2015]

¹⁷⁹ Samuel Clarke, "Fifth Letter to Leibniz," The Newton Project, <http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/view/texts/normalized/THEM00235>. [Accessed 22/08/2015]

similar to the traditional mental and physical space - Newton's absolute and relative space, while the third attempts to eliminate the gap between the two, to contain both types of space and to represent the space that is lived in by people. Lefebvre called it 'social space', Foucault called it 'heterotopia' and Soja called it 'thirdspace'.¹⁸⁰ Following Soja, in the remainder of this thesis, I shall refer to this concept of a third space that contains both the mental and the physical as a thirdspace. The idea of a thirdspace was not new when Lefebvre wrote of his social space. Plato's tri-part soul consisted of a reasoning part, an appetitive part, and a part that, if not actually containing the other two, was able to negotiate between them.¹⁸¹ This view of a thirdspace that acts as an intermediary between the spaces of the mental and the physical appears in the writing of Henry Corbin, who coined the term '*mundus imaginalis*' or 'imaginal space'.¹⁸² While Corbin's imaginal space does not map directly on to the third spaces of Lefebvre, Foucault, and Soja, like them, he seeks to challenge the existing two-part view of space that he claims consists of a physical space and a mental space.¹⁸³ Corbin's imaginal space will be discussed at the end of the section.

According to Lefebvre the debates about the nature of space, beginning with Descartes, brought about a vision of space, which lasted up to the middle of the twentieth century, as being empty and having a strictly geometrical meaning.¹⁸⁴ He claimed that mathematicians appropriated space and made it part of their domain, giving it names like curved space, x-dimensional space, Euclidean and non-Euclidean space, abstract space. This, he stated, brought about a dualism, a deep rift between mathematics and reality, both physical and social. He believed it left a problem of how transitions were to be made from the mathematical, mental concepts of space to nature in the first place, practice in the second and thence to a

¹⁸⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991) pp. 2-3; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004 [1970]), p. 23; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace* (Oxford and Cambridge Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 11.

¹⁸¹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 69a-70a.

¹⁸² Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis: Or, the Imaginary and the Imaginal* (Ashuelot: Golgonooza Press, 1976), p. 2.

¹⁸³ Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 5.

¹⁸⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 2-3.

theory of social life.¹⁸⁵ In an attempt to address this problem and bridge that gap, he proposed a triad, a unitary theory of space that allowed three different views of it: physical space, mental space and social space. Physical space he called 'perceived space' or the space created by nature. Mental space is the space of scientists or urban planners and he termed this 'conceived space'. Social space is lived space or what he called 'space of the imagination', and is composed of physical and mental space. It is all-encompassing—it is all space. He wrote,

The fields we are concerned with are, first, the *physical* – nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical formal abstractions; and, thirdly the *social*. In other words, we are concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias.¹⁸⁶

Lefebvre believed that modern philosophers of space had not managed to bridge the gap between the abstract, theoretical view of space and the lived space of society. One space theorist he mentions by name in this respect is Foucault.¹⁸⁷ While Foucault believed that some dualisms were givens, and described two separate spaces which he calls sites, he clearly states that one of the sites, like Lefebvre's social space, contains all other sites.¹⁸⁸

On the topic of a dualistic view of space, Foucault wrote:

And perhaps our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down. These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example, between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 5.

¹⁸⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁸⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁸⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 23.

¹⁸⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 23.

Foucault (1926-1984) described two types of places or sites that he considered different from the usual sites of society.¹⁹⁰ The first of these different sites he called 'Utopias', from the 1516 book by Sir Thomas More.¹⁹¹ He claimed they were different from the real space of society and were society in a perfected form or society turned upside down. He described them as fundamentally unreal: 'Utopias are sites with no real place'.¹⁹² The other different sites he called 'Heterotopias'. These he described as real places that are 'outside of all places'. He said they were sites where 'All the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted', and that they were 'Absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about'.¹⁹³

Soja (born 1940) believes that Foucault's heterotopias were one and the same as Lefebvre's social space.¹⁹⁴ He also believed that a dualistic view of space is part of the modern Western world view, stating that the reason Foucault's concept of space is seen as dualistic is that the modern mindset has become accustomed to viewing space in that way. He states that Foucault's heterotopia is neither a substanceless void to be filled by cognitive intuition nor a repository of physical forms to be phenomenologically described. It is another space, an actually-lived and socially-created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices. He identified a space he called 'thirdspace', saying it was a composite of all spaces and was designed to break down a 'rigid dichotomy'.¹⁹⁵ Writing about Lefebvre and Foucault, he stated:

The assertion of an alternative envisioning of spatiality (as illustrated in the heterotologies of Foucault, the trialectics and thirdings of Lefebvre...) directly challenges (and is intended to challengingly deconstruct) all conventional modes of spatial thinking. They are not just "other spaces" to be added on to the geographical imagination, they are

¹⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 23.

¹⁹¹ Thomas More, *Utopia* (Rockville, Maryland: Arc Manor, 2008)

¹⁹² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 23.

¹⁹³ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 23.

¹⁹⁴ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁹⁵ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11.

also “other than” the established ways of thinking spatially.¹⁹⁶

Corbin's tri-part view of space consists of the physical world connected to the body, the world of the intellect connected to the mind, and the world of the imagination connected to the soul.¹⁹⁷ He carefully distinguishes between the words 'imaginal' and 'imaginary', as 'imaginary' in the contemporary world has taken on the meaning 'unreal' and is associated with fantasy. His 'imaginal' world, he writes, is as real as the worlds of the physical and mental,

However, there is another clime represented by a world possessing extension and dimension, figures and colours; but these features cannot be perceived by the senses in the same manner as if they were the properties of physical bodies. No, these dimensions, figures, and colours are the object of imaginative perception, or of the "psycho-spiritual senses". This fully objective and real world with equivalents for everything existing in the sensible world without being perceptible by the senses is designated as the eighth clime. The term speaks for itself, since it signifies a clime outside all climes, a place outside all places.¹⁹⁸

Like Plato did with his spirited soul, Corbin considers the imaginal world to rank higher than the world of the senses and lower than the world of the mind, describing it as, 'more immaterial than the former and less immaterial than the latter'; he sees it as an 'intermediary between the sensible world and the intelligible world'.¹⁹⁹ Corbin's thirdspace differs from the thirdspaces of Foucault, Lefebvre, and Soja, in that it exists in addition to the worlds of the physical and the mental rather than being a combination of them as proposed by the other authors.

¹⁹⁶ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁷ Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁸ Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 70a; Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, pp. 6,11.

Space as Human Experience

Another twentieth-century debate on the topic of space differentiates between the concepts of 'space' and 'place'. Some authors, for example Christopher Tilley, describe this as two separate views of space; others, for example Anthony Giddens, Robert Trubshaw, and Doreen B. Massey, describe space and place as two different entities.²⁰⁰ However the descriptions of space and place bear some resemblance to Newton's descriptions of absolute space and relative space, in that both the modern writers and Newton describe space as being empty and mathematical, while place and Newton's relative space are the space of human perception and the senses.²⁰¹

According to Tilley, space can be viewed as either an abstracted idealism of a geometrical universal space, or an ontological grounding of space in the differential structuring of human experience and action in the world.²⁰² The former he described as 'a nothingness, a simple surface for action, lacking depth'.²⁰³ This space he said is universal, everywhere and anywhere the same.²⁰⁴ In his second view space is a medium, a container for human action that cannot be divorced from the activities that take place in it. He wrote:

There is no space, only spaces. These spaces, as social productions, are always centred in relation to human agency and are amenable to reproduction or change because their constitution takes place as part of the day-to-day *praxis* or practical activity of individuals and groups in the world.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Oxford: Berg, 1994) pp. 9-11; Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* 1st paperback edn (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), p. 136; Robert Trubshaw, *Sacred Places* (Marlborough: Albion, 2005), p. 1; Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 168.

²⁰¹ Isaac Newton, *Principia*, p. 13.

²⁰² Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, p. 11.

²⁰³ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, p. 9.

²⁰⁴ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, p. 9.

²⁰⁵ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, p. 10.

The space Tilley refers to as being always centred in relation to human agency is similar to what is described by other authors, such as Trubshaw, as place.²⁰⁶ When space is contrasted with place, place tends to be described as a physical location where human activity takes place and which holds meaning for people, while space is usually portrayed as a conceptual and sometimes empty location, the homogeneous space of Euclidean geometry. This is the space that Lefebvre believed was divorced from the space lived in by real people - or place as it is being called here - a view shared by Trubshaw. Clearly differentiating between place and space, Trubshaw describes place as somewhere specific and tangible and space as an abstract analytical concept. He wrote 'We relate to physical places in a way that we cannot to abstract notions of space. Whereas "space" is more about what is conceived and thought about, "place" is what is perceived and lived in'.²⁰⁷ Places, he claimed, are significant because they have meaning.²⁰⁸ Humans have had a sense of place long before the more abstract concept of space, and an understanding of place must precede the idea of space.²⁰⁹

Just as Lefebvre argued that our world view frames our perception of space, Tilley draws attention to the role of the observer in the attribution of meaning to place. He wrote 'The meaning of place is grounded in existential or lived consciousness of it. It follows that the limits of place are grounded in the limits of human consciousness'.²¹⁰ He also wrote 'Personal and cultural identity is bound up with place'.²¹¹ Massey agrees that it is the set of social relations that interact at a particular location that makes it a place, and that a proportion of the social interrelations will be wider than, and go beyond, the area being referred to in any particular context, as a place. She points out that this gives a place its singularity and its identity, as nowhere else does this precise mixture of social interaction

²⁰⁶ Robert Trubshaw, *Sacred Places*, p. 1.

²⁰⁷ Robert Trubshaw, *Sacred Places*, p. 1.

²⁰⁸ Robert Trubshaw, *Sacred Places*, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ Robert Trubshaw, *Sacred Places*, p. 1.

²¹⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 39; Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, p. 15.

²¹¹ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, p. 15.

occur.²¹² Because social relations are continually changing, the identity of a place is unfixed and can change over time.²¹³

The separation of space and place began, according to Giddens, with the advent of modernity. He describes 'place' as being 'best conceptualised by means of the idea of locale, which refers to the physical setting of social activity as situated geographically'.²¹⁴ He wrote that in pre-modern societies, space and place largely coincided since the spatial dimensions of social life were, for most people, dominated by what he terms 'presence', or localised activities.²¹⁵ However in conditions of modernity, locales are thoroughly penetrated and shaped by social influences quite distant from them. He wrote 'What structures the locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the "visible form" of the locale conceals the distanced relations which determine its nature'.²¹⁶ Giddens argued that the separation of space from place has led to the development of 'empty space', or space represented without reference to a privileged locale which forms a distinct vantage point.²¹⁷

The above descriptions of space by Tilley and Trubshaw support Lefebvre's idea that the modern view of space is of its being mathematical, abstract and a mental concept.²¹⁸

Sacred Space

Just as space and place are seen as qualitatively different, sacred spaces and sacred objects have been portrayed as qualitatively different from the non-sacred or the profane.²¹⁹ In the literature, descriptions of the distinction between 'place' and 'space' frequently bear resemblance to the polarisation of sacred and profane space

²¹² Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, p. 168.

²¹³ Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, pp. 168-69.

²¹⁴ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 18.

²¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 18.

²¹⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 19.

²¹⁷ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 19.

²¹⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 3.

²¹⁹ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1915), p. 37.

in the earlier writings of Emile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade, although the later writers describe differences between space and place, and do not tend to portray them as polar opposites, as do Durkheim and Eliade.²²⁰ Durkheim, writing in the early part of the twentieth century, perceived sacred and profane as polar opposites and claimed this polarity was part of all known religious beliefs.²²¹ He described the polarity as absolute. He wrote:

In all the history of human thought there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or so radically opposed to one another. The traditional opposition of good and bad is nothing beside this.²²²

Durkheim claimed that sacred things were 'superior in dignity and power to profane things'.²²³ Just as Lefebvre and Tilley would later argue, Durkheim believed that places and entities are shaped by the social perception of them.²²⁴ He wrote that sacred places and objects are not inherently so, but that the sacred quality is superimposed on them by society, and repeatedly added to them.²²⁵

Eliade had a dualistic view of space, and described sacred space as being qualitatively different from profane space: 'For religious man, space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others'.²²⁶ Like Durkheim, Eliade considered the polarity between the sacred and the profane absolute, and stated that an abyss divides the two modalities of experience.²²⁷ This polarity is repeatedly described in his work. For example, 'The first possible definition of the sacred is that it is the opposite of

²²⁰ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 37; Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt, Inc, 1959), p. 14.

²²¹ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 37.

²²² Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 38.

²²³ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 37.

²²⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 39; Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, p. 15.

²²⁵ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 229.

²²⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 24.

²²⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 14.

the profane'.²²⁸ Similarly, 'Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane'.²²⁹

Durkheim believed that the human mind perceived the sacred and the profane as two distinct worlds that have nothing in common, and so has located them in different parts of the physical universe.²³⁰ Despite referring to the 'physical universe' in the text, he describes the sacred as being identified with an 'ideal and transcendental world', and the profane with the material world. He goes on to say that the break in continuity between these two worlds is so great that passing from one to the other implies a veritable metamorphosis and often requires initiation rites that symbolise a death and rebirth.²³¹ The profane, he stated, should not touch the sacred as the human mind cannot allow the idea of the two things being in contact with each other; this contradicts 'too violently the dissociation of these ideas in the mind'.²³² Eliade also wrote on the importance of the threshold between the two worlds and the rites and rituals involved in passing between them. Using the example of a church door, he described it as 'the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds – and at the same time the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible'. In his words, 'Numerous rites accompany passing the domestic threshold – a bow, a prostration, a pious touch of the hand, and so on'.²³³

Eliade termed the act of manifestation of the sacred 'a hierophany', described as the manifestation of a reality that does not belong in the physical world, taking place in objects that are an integral part of the natural profane world.²³⁴ By embodying the sacred, he believed, any object becomes something else, yet continues to remain itself, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic

²²⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 10.

²²⁹ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 11.

²³⁰ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pp. 38-39.

²³¹ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pp. 38-39.

²³² Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 40.

²³³ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 25.

²³⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 11.

milieu.²³⁵ In Eliade's view when the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space; there is also revelation of an absolute reality, as opposed to the non-reality of the vast surrounding expanse.²³⁶ He described the space in which the sacred manifests as becoming qualitatively different from the surrounding milieu.²³⁷ He describes profane space as homogeneous and neutral with no break qualitatively differentiating the various parts of its mass.²³⁸

Eliade also claimed that the perception of the individual plays a role in determining the sacredness or profanity of an object or place; a sacred entity may be sacred to them only. He wrote:

A sacred stone remains a stone; apparently (or, more precisely, from the profane point of view), nothing distinguishes it from all other stones. But for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality. In other words, for those who have a religious experience all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality.²³⁹

Just as Lefebvre would challenge the dualism of space, Durkheim's polarisation of the sacred and profane has been challenged by Giddens, who wrote:

Durkheim's definition of religion depends upon the polarity of the sacred and profane, as discrete and opposed spheres. But although such a polarity can be clearly discerned in certain religious systems, particularly those of Judaeo-Christian origins, it is by no means universal. On the contrary, it seems that more often than not what Durkheim distinguished as the sacred and the profane intermingle in every day conduct.²⁴⁰

²³⁵ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 12.

²³⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 21.

²³⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 26.

²³⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 22.

²³⁹ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 22.

²⁴⁰ Anthony Giddens, *Durkheim* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1978), p. 102.

The polarity has also been challenged by Steven Lukes who argued that, as Durkheim linked the sacred to society or the collective and the profane to individual life, the dichotomy is explained by the basic and multiple dichotomy between the social and the individual.²⁴¹ The dichotomy between the social and the individual played a significant role in Durkheim's other works, such as *The Division of Labour in Society*. According to Giddens, the conception of religion set out in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* has to be understood within the context of the theory of social development which forms the general framework of Durkheim's work.²⁴²

Eliade's depiction of sacred and profane space can be compared to Trubshaw's statements about space and place. Trubshaw describes place as real, while Eliade uses the same term for the sacred.²⁴³ Similarly, while Tilley describes geometric space as 'universal, everywhere and anywhere the same', Eliade calls profane space 'homogeneous'.²⁴⁴ Like Tilley, the importance of the individual's perception of space is key to Eliade. However, while Tilley and Trubshaw differentiate between space and place Eliade, and Durkheim before him, polarise the two.

Eliade's polarisation is rejected by Larry E. Shiner who wrote that it was unacceptable to portray the sacred space of religious man as the polar opposite of 'the supposedly profanized and disoriented spatiality of modern industrial man'.²⁴⁵ Rather than describing modern Western spatiality as profane, Shiner coined a term 'lived space' which, he points out, has many parallels with Eliade's sacred space. Lived space represents the modern Western experience of space and he argues that this is not homogeneous. He writes 'Within the larger bounds of the territory which we think of as our own there are familiar and cherished places, danger spots and

²⁴¹ Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim : His Life and Work; a Historical and Critical Study* (London: Allen Lane, 1973) pp. 26-27.

²⁴² Emile Durkheim and Anthony Giddens, *Selected Writings* (Cambridge,; University Press, 1972),p. 24.

²⁴³ Robert Trubshaw, *Sacred Places*, p. 1; Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 12.

²⁴⁴ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, p. 9; Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 24.

²⁴⁵ Larry E. Shiner, 'Profane Space, Human Space', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 40, Iss. 4 (1972), pp. 425-36, p. 432.

spaces of special function such as play-grounds or civic centers'.²⁴⁶ Neither is it chaotic and without a centre as is the profane space described by Eliade. Shiner argues that this way of being in the world is a fundamental structure of the human mode of being, rather than a peculiarity of religious man. 'Far from requiring a hierophany to found a world, man and world are correlative. Lived space is a world, it is there primordially as the human environment.'²⁴⁷

Shiner's lived space also has parallels with Massey's and Giddens's descriptions of place and with the social space and thirdspace of Lefebvre and Soja. For example, 'The places of lived space are not abstract locations on a grid but centres of human activity that have to be walked through to be experienced'.²⁴⁸ As with the descriptions of place, Shiner's lived space is described as being different from 'the homogeneity and indifference of geometric space'. He perceives it as heterogeneous, discontinuous and tied to human aims and meanings. Its orientations and places are interlaced with symbolic associations. 'Human space is less a matter of "positions" than of "situations," of intersecting coordinates than of "sites."' ²⁴⁹

Chapter Conclusions

Dualism is a central concern of Western philosophy, and it exists in different forms. Its literary origins can be traced at least as far back as Plato.²⁵⁰ In the different models of dualism, the dualistic cosmos is divided between one part which is entirely physical and the other part which is entirely non-physical, and there are questions about whether or not a person can travel between the two realms. Ladd's distinction between cosmological dualism and anthropological dualism is fundamental to an understanding of the different types of dualism.²⁵¹ Dualism has found expression in the theories of space and place, where space is seen as

²⁴⁶ Larry E. Shiner, 'Profane Space, Human Space', p. 428.

²⁴⁷ Larry E. Shiner, 'Profane Space, Human Space', p. 435.

²⁴⁸ Larry E. Shiner, 'Profane Space, Human Space', p. 429.

²⁴⁹ Larry E. Shiner, 'Profane Space, Human Space', p. 429.

²⁵⁰ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-28c.

²⁵¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

valueless and place as containing values, as for example in the work of Trubshaw.²⁵² Some theorists have taken dualism forward and argued for the existence of a 'thirdspace'.²⁵³ Chapter Three will discuss dualistic issues in relation to the Internet and cyberspace.

²⁵² Robert Trubshaw, *Sacred Places*, p. 1.

²⁵³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 2-3; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 23; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11.

Chapter Three - Literature Review: Cyberspace

Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, until 1990 the terms 'Internet' and 'cyberspace' were unconnected, having originated and developed separately.²⁵⁴ Chapter Three will review the literature on the Internet and cyberspace, and discuss how some of the authors have differentiated between the two. The different histories of the Internet and cyberspace will be examined, along with changes in how they are viewed due to both technological developments and to how the technology is actually being used. The three different waves of Internet research have produced a huge body of literature on the nature of the Internet and peoples' relationships with it. This literature will be reviewed, with reference to how peoples' views of cyberspace have changed over the years, alongside technological developments.

The first section of the chapter contains a review of the technical development of the Internet up to the introduction and spread of social networks and social media, and an account of the birth and growth of the concept of cyberspace. This is followed by a review of the literature from the early days of cyberspace in the 1980s up to and including recent research on social networks and social media. As the most widely used social network site, emphasis is placed on the research concerning Facebook.

Certain themes are featured in the cyberspace literature from the very beginning. As the way the Internet was used and the purposes for which it was used, changed over the years, some of the earlier concepts were challenged, while some are still debated in the most recent literature, including the literature on social media. Two of the most prominent of these debates are around the issue of cyberspace as dualistic, and that of the Internet as a facilitator of online community. Chapter Three contains a review of the literature on the Internet and dualism and on the

²⁵⁴ John Perry Barlow, "Crime and Puzzlement,
http://w2.eff.org/Misc/Publications/John_Perry_Barlow/HTML/crime_and_puzzlement_1.html
[Accessed 19/09/2015]

Internet and community. Another thread in the literature is the issue of identity on the Internet, which is based around the fact that it is often possible for users to conceal their identity from other users, or adopt false identities. This debate about identity and the Internet is also discussed in Chapter Three.

The Birth and Growth of Internet and Cyberspace

The Internet

The Internet came into being in the US with the first message being sent across the network in 1969.²⁵⁵ While initially used for military purposes, the Internet was released to the public in 1983. Technical developments, such as the creation of the World Wide Web in 1991, made the Internet user-friendly and accessible to people unfamiliar with complex technology. Further technical developments and a drop in the prices of computers lead to a rapid spread of the Internet.²⁵⁶ By 2015 there were three billion users worldwide.²⁵⁷

Internet Use

The Pew Internet & American Life Project produces reports exploring the impact of the Internet on individuals and society.²⁵⁸ Their figures for September 2009 showed that 93% of Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine were online, meaning they had Internet access.²⁵⁹ This was the highest usage ranking of any age group. In the sixty-five plus age group it dropped to 43%. In 2012, while the highest-ranking age group was still the eighteen to twenty-nine group and the numbers declined with increasing age, the percentage of people using the Internet had increased in every age group. However, in 2012 Pew Internet began to include access to the Internet from phones, tablets and other hand held devices, in their

²⁵⁵ John Naughton, *A Brief History of the Future: The Origins of the Internet* (Phoenix and London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000),p. 79.

²⁵⁶ John Naughton, *A Brief History of the Future*, p. 47.

²⁵⁷ Michael Kende, *Internet Society Global Internet Report: Open and Sustainable Access for All*, Vol 1, (Geneva and Reston, VA: Internet Society 2014), pp. 70c-72a, [Accessed 08/08/2014].

²⁵⁸ Pew Internet, "About Us," <http://www.pewinternet.org/About-Us.aspx>. [Accessed 13/03/2015]

²⁵⁹ Pew Internet, "Latest Stats," Pew Internet, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Whos-Online.aspx>. [Accessed 19/12/2009]

statistics, which could account for some of the increase.²⁶⁰ The statistics for 2009 and 2012 for the US are displayed in *Table 3.1* below:

Age	2009	2012
18-29	93%	96%
30-49	83%	93%
50-54	77%	85%
65+	43%	58%

Table 3.1 - Pew Internet figures for the US in September 2009 and October 2012

In the UK a 2009 report from the Office for National Statistics, based on the previous three months, also showed a decline in Internet usage as age increased.²⁶¹ In 2012, the decline was still present although Internet use had increased for all age groups. The 2012 report also noted a large increase in the frequency of Internet use with just under 70% of people, overall, using it daily.²⁶² The figures are summarised in *Table 3.2*:

Age	2009	2012
16-24	96%	96%
25-44	92%	96%
45-54	81%	88%
55-64	72%	80%
65+	30%	47%

Table 3.2 - National Statistics Report for the UK in August 2009 and August 2012

²⁶⁰ Pew Internet, "Pew Internet Project Survey July 16 - August 7, 2012," Pew Internet, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Whos-Online.aspx>. [Accessed 11/01/2015]

²⁶¹ Anon, 'Internet Access: Households and Individuals', ed. by Office for National Statistics (Cardiff: Office for National Statistics, 2009).

²⁶² Anon, 'Internet Access: Households and Individuals 2012', ed. by Office for National Statistics (Cardiff: Office for National Statistics, 2012).

The Technical Environment

Web 2.0

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw the introduction and rapid spread of social media and social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.²⁶³

Discussing social networks and social media, Rawn Shah differentiates between the two by explaining that social networking refers to how users build 'networks of relationships to explore their interests and activities with others', while social media refers to the 'online content, or methods to create, share, or build on such content through social means'.²⁶⁴ Examples of social networks include Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace, while YouTube, which allows users to upload, share and view content, could be classed a social media site.

These sites are examples of what are known as Web 2.0 applications.²⁶⁵ Web 2.0, which has been called the second wave of the Internet, began in the early 2000s.²⁶⁶ This second wave runs alongside the second wave in Internet research, as both began to appear in the mid-2000s. The term Web 2.0 does not refer to any technical changes to the World Wide Web, but rather to the way people use it. It is characterised by applications that not only allow users to participate in contributing, organising, and creating their content, but rely on the fact that many people will visit the sites and provide new content that keeps them fresh.²⁶⁷ Gorman and McClean explain the difference between the first and second waves as: 'A simple comparison is to see Web 1.0 as an information source and Web 2.0 as a participatory environment'.²⁶⁸

boyd and Ellison define social networks as:

²⁶³ Gary B. Shelley and Mark Frydenberg, *Web 2.0: Concepts and Applications* (Boston: Course Technology, Cengage Learning, 2011),p. 1.

²⁶⁴ Rawn Shah, *Social Networking for Business: Choosing the Right Tools and Resources to Fit Your Needs* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2010),p. 2.

²⁶⁵ Gary B. Shelley and Mark Frydenberg, *Web 2.0: Concepts and Applications*, p. 1.

²⁶⁶ Gary B. Shelley and Mark Frydenberg, *Web 2.0: Concepts and Applications*, p. 1.

²⁶⁷ Gary B. Shelley and Mark Frydenberg, *Web 2.0: Concepts and Applications*, p. 2.

²⁶⁸ Lyn Gorman and David McLean, *Media and Society into the 21st Century : A Historical Introduction* 2nd ed. edn (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.²⁶⁹

Friends lists are lists of people with whom participants wish to connect.²⁷⁰ Most sites require connections to be mutually confirmed before being displayed. Participants can allow friends on the list to view their personal information and their posts, and to make posts on their profiles. Posts and replies to posts are known as user-generated content.²⁷¹

The most widely used of the social network sites is Facebook which, in March 2015, reported an average of 936 million daily active users, and one and a quarter billion mobile users, making it the second most widely used website in the world.²⁷² Each user has a page called a news feed which displays updates or posts by friends as they occur.²⁷³ These updates are known as status messages and can be thoughts, shared links to photos or other websites, or invitations to attend events. Friends can comment on the status messages of their friends.²⁷⁴ In common with other social network sites (SNSs), Facebook users have a personal profile where they can upload information about themselves such as relationship status, political views,

²⁶⁹ danah m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, 'Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 13, Iss. 1 (2007), pp. 210-30, p. 210

²⁷⁰ danah boyd, 'Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications', in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. by Zizi Papacharissi (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 39-58, p. 45.

²⁷¹ Joseph B. Walther and Jeong-Woo Jang, 'Communication Processes in Participatory Websites', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 18, Iss. 1 (2012), pp. 2-15, pp. 4-5.

²⁷² Anon, "Facebook Newsroom: Statistics," Facebook, <http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>. [Accessed 31/05/2015]

²⁷³ Anon, "Facebook Factsheet," <https://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics#!/press/info.php?factsheet>. [Accessed 20/11/2012]

²⁷⁴ Gary B. Shelley and Mark Frydenberg, *Web 2.0: Concepts and Applications*, pp. 170-71.

and other interests.²⁷⁵ Users can request friendship from other users, who can choose to accept or decline the request.²⁷⁶

Web 3.0

Web 3.0 is a continually evolving development of Web 2.0. Web 3.0 is also known as the 'semantic web' or the 'intelligent web', due to its ability to make connections between pieces of data and to infer meaning.²⁷⁷ Its goal is to identify and classify Web-based data, including the user-generated content of Web 2.0 applications, so that searches of the Web will be able to pick up this data and thus become more effective.²⁷⁸ The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) terms it a 'Web of Data'.²⁷⁹

The identification of data is achieved by 'tagging' (naming or classifying) all data resources on the Web with labels that describe their content and meaning. Users contribute to this by tagging photos or other pieces of uploaded content in social network and social media sites.²⁸⁰ A piece of data with multiple tags from different users, and therefore a corresponding amount of metadata, is known as a 'folksonomy'.²⁸¹ According to O'Reilly, the creation of data objects like folksonomies and what he terms, 'the harnessing of collective intelligence', is turning the web into a 'kind of global brain'.²⁸²

²⁷⁵ Anon, "Facebook Factsheet,
<https://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics#!/press/info.php?factsheet>. [Accessed 20/11/2012]

²⁷⁶ Gary B. Shelley and Mark Frydenberg, *Web 2.0: Concepts and Applications*, p. 171.

²⁷⁷ Kerry Maxwell, "Buzzword: Web 3.0,"
<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/buzzword/entries/web3.html>. [Accessed 08/08/2014]

²⁷⁸ Anon, "Definition of Semantic Web," PC Magazine,
<http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia/term/51092/semantic-web>. [Accessed 08/08/2014]

²⁷⁹ World Wide Web Consortium, "Semantic Web,"
<http://www.w3.org/standards/semanticweb/>. [Accessed 08/08/2014]

²⁸⁰ Anon, "Definition of Semantic Web,
<http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia/term/51092/semantic-web>. [Accessed 08/08/2014]

²⁸¹ Tim O'Reilly, 'What Is Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software', in *The Social Media Reader*, ed. by Michael Mandiberg (New York; London: New York University Press, 2012), pp. 32-52, p. 41.

²⁸² Tim O'Reilly, *What Is Web 2.0?*, p. 41.

Augmented Reality

Augmented Reality (AR) is a variation of a Virtual Reality (VR). VR is defined by Burdea and Coiffet as follows:

It is a simulation in which computer graphics is used to create a realistic looking world. Moreover, the synthetic world is not static, but responds to the user's input (gesture, verbal commands, etc.). This defines a key feature of virtual reality which is interactivity.²⁸³

VR technologies completely submerge a user into a synthetic environment and, while immersed, the user cannot see the physical world around them. In contrast, AR takes computer-generated information such as images, audio, video, and touch or haptic sensations, and overlays them on a real-time environment. AR allows the user to see the real world with virtual objects superimposed on it.²⁸⁴ Alan B. Craig describes AR as a medium one experiences rather than reads, listens to or watches. He claims that although it is currently mainly a visual medium, the user must *engage* with it (italics in original), in order to gain the experience that it provides.²⁸⁵ He provides an example of an AR application,

Imagine for a moment that you visit a vacant lot where you intend to build your dream home. Now let's consider an AR experience where you go to that (vacant) lot, but through the use of technology you are able to see your dream home in place on that lot. You can walk around the house and see it from all different viewpoints just like you could if the house was actually completed on the lot. You can interact with the house, open the door, and so on just like you could in the real world. However AR can also offer the potential to do things that are not possible in a normal interaction in the real world. Perhaps you want to see the house in a different color, move the house on the lot, or see the house take off

²⁸³ Grigore Burdea and Phillippe Coiffet, *Virtual Reality Technology, Volume 1* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003),p. 2.

²⁸⁴ Greg Kipper and Joseph Rampolla, *Augmented Reality: An Emerging Technologies Guide to Ar* (Waltham, MA: Elsevier Science, 2012),p. 1.

²⁸⁵ Alan B. Craig, *Understanding Augmented Reality: Concepts and Applications* (Waltham, MA: Elsevier Science, 2013),p. 2.

like a rocket ship. These are all possible with augmented reality.²⁸⁶

Cyberspace

Cyberspace, as a concept, developed separately from the Internet. The term cyberspace was coined by American author William Gibson who first used the word in *Burning Chrome* in 1982, and developed it in his 1984 novel, *Neuromancer*, the first book of his *Sprawl Trilogy*.²⁸⁷ In this much-quoted passage from *Neuromancer*, Gibson defines cyberspace:

Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts . . . A graphic Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding ...²⁸⁸

Neuromancer is possibly the most well-known example of the literary genre that was termed 'cyberpunk'. The term is also used to refer to the sub-culture of cyberspace enthusiasts, cyberculture itself, or an individual from that sub-culture.²⁸⁹ According to Bell, the kinds of images produced by cyberpunk literature have had important effects in shaping how participants in cyberculture perceive themselves.²⁹⁰ In *Neuromancer* and the two subsequent novels in Gibson's *Sprawl Trilogy*, the main characters were known as console cowboys, and the term 'console cowboys' became used in the literature to refer to all cyberpunk protagonists.²⁹¹ In *Neuromancer* and the novels that followed the protagonist, who is almost always male, lives in a world dominated by technology and spends a lot of time in cyberspace. He frequently breaks laws, flouts authority and takes risks. His technical skills lead him into dangerous situations, but usually bring about his

²⁸⁶ Alan B. Craig, *Understanding Augmented Reality*, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ William Gibson, *Burning Chrome* (London: Voyager, 1995 [1981]),p. 195.

²⁸⁸ William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (London: Harper Voyager, 1995),p. 67.

²⁸⁹ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001),p. 141.

²⁹⁰ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, p. 141.

²⁹¹ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 11; For example: Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained'.

escape. Cyberspace is seen as both a place of adventure and excitement and a place where people can become rich.²⁹²

The physical network that would become known as the Internet, and the cyberspace of cyberpunk were developing separately from and alongside each other, but bore little resemblance to each other.²⁹³ Gibson's cyberspace and that of the other cyberpunk novelists such as the 'Metaverse' from Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*, were full VR environments.²⁹⁴ In Gibson's novels cyberspace was a place that was entered physically and could be experienced by all of the senses. For example, in *Neuromancer*, the protagonist, Case, connects to Molly, the novel's leading female character, using a device called simstim, which allows a person to experience what another person is experiencing. Molly is currently in cyberspace and, in cyberspace, has broken a leg. Over the simstim connection, Case can see, hear, and feel what Molly sees, hears and feels, and experiences the pain of her broken leg.²⁹⁵

It was in 1990 that cyberspace was first associated with the physical Internet by John Perry Barlow, co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, in his essay 'Crime and Puzzlement'.²⁹⁶ The term was quickly adopted. As Partridge put it, 'Certainly it is true that it didn't take long for 'cyberspace' to detach itself from the text [of Gibson's novels] and become the commonly accepted term for the world of digital information and communication.'²⁹⁷ 1990 was also the year when the first cyberspace academic conference was held in Austin, Texas.²⁹⁸ Benedikt's 'Introduction' to the conference proceedings gives ten different definitions of cyberspace.²⁹⁹ His definitions can be summarised as follows:

²⁹² For example Case in William Gibson's *Neuromancer* or Bobby Newmark in William Gibson's *Count Zero*.

²⁹³ Anon, *From Arpanet to the World Wide Web* (University of Leiden)

²⁹⁴ Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (Penguin Books Limited, 1994) pp. 22-25.

²⁹⁵ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 217.

²⁹⁶ John Perry Barlow, "Crime and Puzzlement,

http://w2.eff.org/Misc/Publications/John_Perry_Barlow/HTML/crime_and_puzzlement_1.html

²⁹⁷ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 136.

²⁹⁸ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, pp. 3-4.

²⁹⁹ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, pp. 1-3.

- Cyberspace: A word from the pen of William Gibson...A word that gives a name to a new stage, a new and irresistible development in the elaboration of human culture and business under the sign of technology
- Cyberspace: A new universe, a parallel universe created and sustained by the world's computers and communication lines
- Cyberspace: A place, one place, limitless; entered equally from a basement in Vancouver, a boat in Port-au-Prince, a cab in New York City, a garage in Texas City, an apartment in Rome, an office in Hong Kong, a bar in Kyoto, a cafe in Kinshasa, a laboratory on the Moon
- Cyberspace: Everywhere and nowhere, a place where nothing is forgotten and yet everything changes
- Cyberspace: A common mental geography, built, in turn, by consensus and revolution...a territory swarming with data and lies, with mind stuff and memories of nature
- Cyberspace: Its corridors form wherever electricity runs with intelligence. Its chambers bloom wherever data gathers and is stored
- Cyberspace: Through its myriad, unblinking video eyes, distant places and faces, real or unreal, actual or long gone, can be summoned to presence. From vast databases that constitute the culture's deposited wealth, every document is available, every recording is playable, and every picture is viewable
- Cyberspace: Beneath their plaster shells on the city streets, behind their potted plants and easy smiles, organizations are seen as the organisms they are - or as they would have us believe them be
- Cyberspace: From simple economic survival through the establishment of security and legitimacy, from trade in tokens of approval and confidence and liberty to the pursuit of influence, knowledge and entertainment for their own sakes, everything informational and important to the life of individuals - and organisations - will be found for sale, or for the taking, in cyberspace

- Cyberspace: The realm of pure information

Benedikt's definitions correspond to Ladd's cosmological dualism. Cyberspace is a place separate from the mundane, physical world or, in Ladd's terms, a separate level of existence.³⁰⁰ Like Plato's world of Being, it is associated with the mind and is capable of containing all information. In its ability to be entered everywhere by anyone with a modem, it is portrayed as a democratic and revolutionary space, but where all is not what it seems. As will be discussed later in the chapter, the early beliefs of what cyberspace would become, differed greatly from what it actually became. Yet, the ideas contained in these definitions continue to reflect the way the Internet is viewed today.

Benedikt immediately follows the ten definitions with the statement 'Cyberspace as just described—and, for the most part, as described in this book—does not exist.'³⁰¹ But, he said, this stated a truth too simply.³⁰² He thought it soon would exist. In a statement that would capture the essence of one of the ways cyberspace would be viewed in the 1990s, he wrote:

Like Shangri-la, like mathematics, like every story ever told or sung, a mental geography of sorts has existed in the living mind of every culture, a collective memory or hallucination, an agreed-upon territory of mythical figures, symbols, rules, and truths, owned and traversable by all who learned its ways, and yet free of the bounds of physical space and time. What is so galvanizing today is that technologically advanced cultures - such as those of Japan, Western Europe, and North America - stand at the threshold of making that ancient space both uniquely visible and the object of interactive democracy.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

³⁰¹ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 3.

³⁰² Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 3.

³⁰³ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 3.

With this statement Benedikt is claiming firstly, that cyberspace is a technological version of the mythical, other-worldly place that, he states, every culture has and, secondly, that everybody in the developed world would soon be able to access this new democratic space, described in his ten definitions summarised above. He further elaborates, 'Cyberspace can be seen as an extension...of our age-old capacity and need to dwell in fiction, to dwell empowered or enlightened on other mythic planes, if only periodically, as well as this earthly one'.³⁰⁴

Benedikt believed that the Internet was in the process of becoming a Gibsonian three-D virtual reality. He called it 'a technology very nearly achieved'.³⁰⁵ Describing it as 'now under construction', with echoes of Gibson's 'consensual hallucination', he prophesied that it would be a 'full-blown, public, consensual virtual reality that will indeed be cyberspace'.³⁰⁶ This belief was shared by many of the early theorists. McFadden, describing the structure of cyberspace, called the Internet of 1990 a pre-cyberspace, in that it had not yet all the necessary criteria for a true cyberspace.³⁰⁷ Like Benedikt, Davis thought that cyberspace would become a full virtual reality that could be jacked into (entered) by real-life console cowboys, although his comments contain a certain cynicism absent from Benedikt's. Davis wrote,

In fact many of the worlds we'll have the opportunity to jack into will more than likely resemble some unholy combination of theme park, bookstore, and mall. The banal fate of our culture may be to simulate the astral realms inside our machines, and then blanket them with Planet Hollywood, Donkey Kong miniature-golf courses, and Lexis-Nexis fast-food data franchises.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 6.

³⁰⁵ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 131.

³⁰⁶ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 124.

³⁰⁷ Tim McFadden, 'Notes on the Structure of Cyberspace and the Ballistic Actors Model', in *Cyberspace: First Steps*, ed. by Michael Benedikt (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 335-62, p. 341.

³⁰⁸ Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (London: Serpents Tail, 2004 [1998]) pp. 231-32.

However cyberspace did not develop in the way it had been thought it would. While the documents it contained and the uses made of it became much more varied and technologically complex, the sensual experience of cyberspace was limited to what could be seen and heard. In 2003 Benedikt admitted that 'Cyberspace—that wonderful, phantasmagoric three-dimensional alternative reality imagined by William Gibson—was not actually shaping itself on-line as I and many others thought it surely would'.³⁰⁹ Similarly Woodford, et al., in 2002, called the Internet of then 'a far cry from the cerebral idealism of the Internet pioneers'.³¹⁰

The real-world Internet, in the early 1990s, was little more than text documents connected by hyper-links.³¹¹ Yet during the 1990s, as it began to expand and become a commercial arena, many of the Internet theorists—for example, Stockton in 1995—consistently treated the cyberpunk novels as the canonical source, frequently using them to back up their statements about the Internet and how people react to and interact with it.³¹² As late as 2005, Campbell wrote that the prevailing views of cyberspace were both utopian and dystopian, and backed up her statements with examples from Gibson's *Johnny Mnemonic*.³¹³ Even when it became clear that there would be large differences between the fictional cyberspace and the real world version, many of the same themes, which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter, continued to be explored.

Starting around the year 2000 some of the literature began to, once more, separate cyberspace from the Internet, this time in terms of how cyberspace and the Internet were being viewed. In a separation of the physical from the non-physical that encouraged a view of cyberspace as Cartesian, some authors differentiated between the physical network of the Internet and the concept of cyberspace as a

³⁰⁹ Michael Benedikt, 'Towards a General Theory of Value: An Interview with Michael Benedikt', *Gain*, (2003) <<http://gain2.aiga.org/content.cfm?ContentAlias=michaelbenedikt1>>. [Accessed 31/05/2015]

³¹⁰ Chris Woodford, Christos J. P. Moschovitis, Hilary W. Poole, and Laura Lambert, 'The Internet: A Historical Encyclopaedia', Vol. Iss. (2002), p. 193

³¹¹ Anon, *From Arpanet to the World Wide Web*.

³¹² Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 594.

³¹³ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online: We Are One in the Network* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2005), p. 10.

virtual place. Discussing the public's tendency to use the terms 'Internet' and 'cyberspace' interchangeably, in 2006 Karaflogka argued that, although she sees them as entirely distinct from each other, the notion of cyberspace as a place contributed to the growth of the Internet, even though, as she stated, the Internet of the twenty-first century is 'a far cry' from the cyberspace described by Gibson.³¹⁴ According to McFadden, 'a cyberspace may be maintained by a computer network but is not identical with it'.³¹⁵ Bell also differentiates between cyberspace and the physical hardware and software that allows the Internet to exist, or what he calls:

The network of computers, modems, communication links, nodes and pathways that connect users into something (or some things) like the Internet, the World Wide Web, the information superhighway and so on.³¹⁶

Like Karaflogka, he believes there is another dimension to the Internet which he calls 'everywhere and nowhere', a term also used by Benedikt in one of his ten definitions of cyberspace, listed above: 'Everywhere and nowhere, a place where nothing is forgotten yet everything changes'.³¹⁷ In Bell's words:

We have to move beyond the simple answer that physically we are seated in front of a monitor . . . We are simultaneously making ourselves over as data, as bits and bytes, as code, relocating ourselves in the space behind the screen, between screens, everywhere and nowhere.³¹⁸

In this other parallel universe the person in front of the monitor is not just visiting a website, they are clearly entering another world. This world is what Karaflogka calls cyberspace or, as she puts it, 'where the act of connectivity and interactivity takes place'.³¹⁹ She describes it as a place which, although part of the network, is

³¹⁴ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 3.

³¹⁵ Tim McFadden, *Notes on the Structure of Cyberspace*, p. 342.

³¹⁶ David Bell, *Cyberculture Reader*, p. 2.

³¹⁷ David Bell, *Cyberculture Reader*, p. 2; Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 1.

³¹⁸ David Bell, *Cyberculture Reader*, p. 3.

³¹⁹ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 24.

nevertheless completely different from it.³²⁰ To clearly differentiate between the two she uses the term 'Internet' to refer to the physical network and 'cyberspace' to refer to the place Bell calls 'everywhere and nowhere'.³²¹ Karaflogka envisages the Internet and cyberspace as two entities. Bell, while seeing the Internet and cyberspace as two entities, also envisages a third. He writes,

I think of it as combining three things...: it has material, symbolic and experiential dimensions. It is machine, wires, electricity, programs, screens, connections, and it is modes of information and communication: email, websites, chat rooms, MUDs. But it is also images and ideas: cyberspace exists on film, in fiction, in our imaginations as much as on our desktops or in the space between our screens. Moreover, and this is the important bit, we experience cyberspace in all its spectacular and mundane manifestations by mediating the material and the symbolic.³²²

Like Corbin's tri-part view of space, Bell's three dimensions include a physical dimension, a mental dimension and a dimension of the imagination.³²³ However unlike Corbin, Bell's third space, like that of Foucault, Lefebvre, and Soja, contains the other two spaces, or as Bell puts it, is experienced by 'mediating the material and the symbolic'.³²⁴ In his view the human experience of cyberspace, like Shiner's lived world and Lefebvre's social space, comes from negotiating the other two elements.³²⁵ Bell's writing is from the first wave of cyberspace literature. However his idea of cyberspace as a thirdspace or a space that is somehow created from the other two spaces was, as will be seen later in this chapter, ahead of its time. The alleged creation of a separate world somewhere behind the computer screen, a mythic plane, and a world that a person needed to jack in to, as well as a mental rather than a physical experience, led to cyberspace being labelled dualistic by

³²⁰ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 25.

³²¹ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 25.

³²² David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, pp. 1-2.

³²³ Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 5; David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, pp. 1-2.

³²⁴ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, pp. 1-2; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 23; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 3; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11.

³²⁵ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, p. 7; Larry E. Shiner, 'Profane Space, Human Space', p. 432; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 3.

many of the cyberspace authors. The dualism of cyberspace is dealt with extensively in the next section.

Cyberspace and Dualism

In the literature, cyberspace has been called dualistic and many examples of both anthropological and cosmological dualism can be found. Examples of anthropological dualism include Benedikt, who referred to cyberspace as 'a mental geography', and Michael Heim, who spoke of the cybernaut or, cyberspace visitor, escaping 'the prison of the flesh'.³²⁶ These views of cyberspace as a form of anthropological dualism are discussed below.

Cyberspace has since its birth been viewed as a space or place, separate to the material world, existing inside the computer or behind the screen - a form of cosmological dualism. In Ladd's definition of cosmological dualism, the non-earthly half of the dualism is viewed as heavenly or divine; in the examples of earlier cosmological dualisms of Plato, the Gnostics, and early Christianity, the non-material world was considered sacred and associated with knowledge, perfection and the divine.³²⁷ In the literature on the nature of space, scholars differentiate between space and place and between sacred space and non-sacred or profane space. As the debates concerning space and place and the nature of sacred space are relevant to the discussion on cyberspace as a non-physical space in itself and, in comparison with the other non-physical spaces, this literature will be discussed in relation to cyberspace and its cosmological duality.

Another topic that appears in the literature in connection with the world of cyberspace is what has been called 'The Myth of the Frontier'. The Internet is an American invention and the concept of cyberspace originated in America.

³²⁶ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 3; Michael Heim, 'The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace', in *Cyberspace: First Steps*, ed. by Michael Benedikt (Cambridge: MIT, 1991), pp. 59-80, p. 64.

³²⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36; Plato, *Timeaus*, 28d; *The Teachings of Silvanus*; St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, XI.1.

Karaflogka and Healy, for example, make this point and compare cyberspace to the American frontier of the nineteenth century, particularly in connection with the lawlessness of the American West, which was seen as outside the borders of the civilised world.³²⁸ This section contains an examination of literature on cyberspace and the frontier.

Descartes' belief that he could separate his body from his senses and operate in his mind is echoed in the writing of Tomas and Heim, who both contributed to the first wave of Internet research. Tomas refers to jacking in as, 'the instantaneous rite of passage that separates body from consciousness'.³²⁹ Heim visualises the cybernaut or console cowboy as detached from his physical body.³³⁰ In 1990, Heim wrote,

The cybernaut seated before us strapped into sensory input devices, appears to be, and is indeed, lost to this world. Suspended in computer space, the cybernaut leaves the prison of the body, and emerges in the world of digital sensation.³³¹

In this quote, with its reference to sensory input devices, Heim is describing Gibson's cyberspace where the cybernaut is strapped into a deck and experiences himself as physically present in cyberspace and out of touch with the physical world, where his body remains in a chair. In *Neuromancer*, when the console cowboy jacks in to cyberspace he, for console cowboys are almost always male, straps electrodes to his head and enters cyberspace. He is no longer consciously aware of events in the offline world and experiences the world of cyberspace with all five senses.³³² With the words 'prison of the body', Heim echoes Gibson who also described the body as prison. In Gibson's *Neuromancer* the main character, Case, finds himself unable to access cyberspace due to neurological damage. Gibson, with

³²⁸ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 19; Dave Healy, *Cyberspace and Place*, p. 55.

³²⁹ David Tomas, 'Cybercultures Reader: A User's Guide', in *The Technophilic Body: On Technicity in William Gibson's Cyborg Culture*, ed. by David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 175-89, p. 183.

³³⁰ Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes Vol 1*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), p. 171.

³³¹ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 64.

³³² William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 11.

the use of a capital F in 'Fall', is using the analogy of the garden of Eden and echoing the Gnostic concept of the soul imprisoned in the body:

For Case, who'd lived for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace, it was the Fall. In the bars he'd frequented as a cowboy hotshot, the elite stance involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat. Case fell into the prison of his own flesh.³³³

Gibson's 'prison of the flesh' and Heim's 'prison of the body', depicts the body as the place where the mind is trapped, echoing the Gnostic belief that the body is the prison of the divine spark, the piece of the deity that has fallen to Earth.³³⁴ Rudolph's claim that Gnostic anthropological dualism parallels its cosmological dualism to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between statements about the individual and those about the world, could be applied to Gibson's Case and Heim's cybernaut.³³⁵ Both are described as being in a prison of their own body; yet it is not their mind that they, unlike Descartes, seek to escape to, but the world of cyberspace.³³⁶

Case's 'contempt for the flesh' in *Neuromancer* is highly reminiscent of Descartes' distrust of the body and his perception of it as inferior to the mind, the Gnostic association of the material with evil, and what Filoramo interpreted as Plato's concept of the body as an obstacle to the free development of the life of the spirit.³³⁷ In cyberspace Gibson's hero experiences a 'bodiless exultation', just as Descartes experienced clarity when he separated his mind from his physical senses. Likewise, the Gnostic divine spark escapes the body to fly up through the spheres to reunite with the deity.³³⁸

³³³ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 12.

³³⁴ *The Teachings of Silvanus*.

³³⁵ Kurt Rudolph and Robert McLachlan Wilson, *Gnosis*, p. 60.

³³⁶ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 171.

³³⁷ Rene Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy*, p. 221; *Apocryphon of John*; Giovanni Filoramo, *Gnosticism*, p. 54.

³³⁸ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 12; Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 171; *Tripartite Tractate*, 1.15.[Accessed 30/05/2015]

Some of the first wave literature contains challenges to the claims that cyberspace is a manifestation of the Cartesian split, in that it allows the cyberspace visitor to leave the body and enter the world of the mind, associated by Descartes with God.³³⁹ While Stockton believes that it is Cartesian, arguing that it posits a separation of mind and body, Stone argues against this statement and against the view that cyberspace is dualistic.³⁴⁰ Using the same argument, that thought cannot be separated from matter, put to Descartes by Hobbes in the seventeenth century, Stone writes:

No matter how virtual the subject may become, there is always a body attached. It may be off somewhere else – and that ‘somewhere else’ may be a privileged point of view – but consciousness remains firmly rooted in the physical.³⁴¹

Bell also argues that cyberspace is not Cartesian. While, as stated above, he differentiates between the hardware of the Internet and the place called cyberspace, he argues against an anthropological dualism of mind and body. Coming to the same conclusion that Hobbes did in the seventeenth century, Bell does not believe that the body and mind can separate.³⁴² He refers to the idea that the mind can split from the body as a working version of Gibson’s ‘consensual hallucination’ and, using Gibson's analogy of the body as meat, he argues that this is because the meat is not that readily discarded; it’s the meat that sits at the screen, typing and reading.³⁴³

While Descartes concluded that the evidence of the body was less reliable than that of the mind, Bolter claims the opposite applies with cyberspace users.³⁴⁴ She challenges what she calls 'a neo-liberal version of the Cartesian binary of mind and

³³⁹ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 103.

³⁴⁰ Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 609; Allucquere Rosanne Stone, 'Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?: Boundary Stories About Virtual Cultures', in *Cyberspace: First Steps*, ed. by Michael Benedikt (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), p. 111.

³⁴¹ Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, p. 111.

³⁴² Thomas Hobbes, *Third Set of Objections*, Vol II, p. 62; David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, p. 141.

³⁴³ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, p. 141.

³⁴⁴ Rene Descartes, *Philosophical Works*, Vol 1, p. 161.

body', which she claims is hailed as enabling users to transcend discrimination based on race, gender, or physical appearance, and as having brought about a 're-emphasis of the mind'. In her view there has been 'a twist'.³⁴⁵ The twist is what she terms 'New Digital Cartesianism', where 'although the body is allegedly "transcended" in virtual environments...it actually functions as a necessary arbiter of meaning and final signifier of what is accepted as "real" and "true"'.³⁴⁶ She discusses the importance users ascribe to knowing a person's age, sex, and location, and states that users who have been 'deceived' about another user's identity often demonstrate anger. She writes 'In the case of "deception", the physical attributes of one's "real" biological identity functions to determine the "real" person'.³⁴⁷ She concludes 'It is the body that is the final arbiter or what is "true"'.³⁴⁸

Lefebvre argued that our world view frames our perception of space, and Tilley argued that it affects our perception of place.³⁴⁹ The same argument is made by Cobb about cyberspace. In her view, the dualism of cyberspace reflects a cultural issue; people want 'to escape the messy and mortal sphere of the body' but are simultaneously afraid of losing touch with the physical world.³⁵⁰ She believes that it echoes Plato's desire to leave behind the imperfect world of the body for the perfect world of Being and states that, in this, cyberspace reflects a culturally entrenched habit of splitting the mind from the body, thereby reducing the primal power of the physical self. However, just as Lefebvre and Soja argued for a unitary theory of space, she argues that the two halves of the dualism can be integrated into a unified world that contains both cyberspace and the material world.³⁵¹ In her words,

³⁴⁵ Megan Boler, 'Hypes, Hopes and Actualities: New Digital Cartesianism and Bodies in Cyberspace', in *The New Media and Cybercultures Anthology*, ed. by Pramod K. Nayar (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 185-208, pp. 188-89.

³⁴⁶ Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, pp. 185-86.

³⁴⁷ Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, p. 196.

³⁴⁸ Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, pp. 185-86.

³⁴⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 39; Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, p. 15.

³⁵⁰ Jennifer Cobb, 'A Spiritual Experience of Cyberspace', p. 399.

³⁵¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 11; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11; Jennifer Cobb, 'A Spiritual Experience of Cyberspace', p. 394.

This scenario reflects our own reality, not the reality of cyberspace itself. If we approach cyberspace from the perspective of a splintered self, we will re-create this dualism in cyberspace. If however we see cyberspace as part of a larger, integrated, sacred experience of the world, the picture begins to change dramatically.³⁵²

Like Bell, Cobb is proposing a view of cyberspace as a thirdspace.

Cyberspace and Place

The relationship between the place called cyberspace and the material world has frequently borne strong resemblance to the relationship between Plato's worlds of Being and Becoming, between the Gnostic transmundane abode of the deity and the evil material plane, and between the Christian heaven and the Earth, with cyberspace being likened to the divine half of the cosmological dualism, the sacred space as opposed to the mundane space.³⁵³ This next section examines the concept of sacred space and what is written in the literature about cyberspace as a sacred space.

Cyberspace as Sacred Space

Chapter Two discussed the cosmological dualism of Plato, the Gnostics and Christianity. Each of these cosmologies contains two worlds, one sacred and one profane. Cyberspace, as discussed earlier, has been viewed by some authors as representing one half of a dualistic cosmos. As with Plato, the Gnostics, and Christianity, one half of the cosmos was seen as qualitatively different from the other; for example, Cowan claims that cyberspace is portrayed as 'somehow qualitatively different from the more mundane places from which we access the online world'.³⁵⁴ It is seen as associated with the divine and therefore a sacred

³⁵² Jennifer Cobb, 'A Spiritual Experience of Cyberspace', p. 394.

³⁵³ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, pp. 1-3.

³⁵⁴ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-28c; *On the Origin of the World*. [Accessed 22/09/2015]; St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, XI.I; Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia: Cyberspace and the Mythology of Placelessness', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 44, Iss. 3 (2005), pp. 257–63, p. 257

place. This section considers cyberspace in relation to the sacred spaces of the Plato, the Gnostics and Christianity, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Many of the early theorists such as, Benedikt, portray cyberspace as a place or space separate from the material world.³⁵⁵ Much of the discussion centred around the nature of the place called cyberspace, and whether or not it existed as a separate imagined or mentally constructed entity from the physical network. In 2005, Cowan pondered the issue, 'Where do we go when we are online?'³⁵⁶ There was a tendency to view cyberspace, as Cowan put it, 'as qualitatively different', as divine or somehow superior to the material world.³⁵⁷ Partridge described it as 'numinous',

There is, it would seem, something peculiarly numinous about the very existence of cyberspace and what it enables the human imagination to achieve. Cyberspace has a transcendent quality. There is something enchanting about its very existence, not to say its exotic possibilities.³⁵⁸

If, as stated by Ladd, cosmological dualism is a contrast between two levels of existence, the earthly and the heavenly, then cyberspace has been seen as the heavenly level.³⁵⁹ Wertheim, comparing cyberspace to the Christian Heaven, writes, 'The attraction of cyberspace is that it is a re-packaging of the Christian Heaven in a secular and technologically sanctioned format'.³⁶⁰ Benedikt described the Heavenly City from the *Book of Revelation* as a religious vision of cyberspace, claiming that both have weightlessness, radiance, numerological complexity and stand for a state of wisdom and knowledge.³⁶¹ On the same topic, Stenger writes:

On the other side of our data gloves we become creatures of coloured light in motion, pulsing with golden particles. We will all become angels, and for eternity. Cyberspace will feel

³⁵⁵ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, pp. 1-3.

³⁵⁶ Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 257.

³⁵⁷ Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 258.

³⁵⁸ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 154.

³⁵⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

³⁶⁰ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21.

³⁶¹ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 15.

like Paradise, a space for collective restoration of the habit of perfection.³⁶²

The heavenly worlds of Plato, the Gnostics, and Christianity contain a god, and so too did the original cyberspace. In *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, the third and final novel in the *Sprawl Trilogy* that began with *Neuromancer*, an artificial intelligence (a computer), when asked if the Matrix (cyberspace) is God, stated that it would be more accurate to say that the Matrix has a god since this god's omniscience and omnipotence are assumed to be limited to the Matrix.³⁶³ The being is not assumed to be immortal, as its existence is dependent on the life of the Matrix.

Ulansey also believes cyberspace contains a god or gods. Comparing the modern world to the time of Plato in terms of a lack of communication with the gods, Ulansey wrote:

At a time when the old gods were experienced as withdrawing and a sense of communication with them difficult to achieve, the new cosmology introduced by Plato answered the question of where they had gone – to the sky. The world once more has a radical new cosmology and this time the question of where the gods are will be answered by cyberspace.³⁶⁴

While Ulansey views cyberspace as a new home for the gods, an association between cyberspace and the divine has been described in other ways. Some of these are described in the next few paragraphs.

³⁶² Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', p. 52.

³⁶³ William Gibson, *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 138.

³⁶⁴ David Ulansey, 'Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace', *The Vision Thing: Myth, Politics, and Psyche in the World*, (2000) <<http://www.mysterium.com/cultural.html>>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

Cyberspace has been compared to Teilhard de Chardin's noosphere by Bauwens, Pesce, Cobb, and Campbell.³⁶⁵ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1891-1955) was a Jesuit theologian and paleontologist, who believed that the story of human life on Earth was an 'ascent of consciousness' that is continuing towards 'some sort of supreme consciousness'.³⁶⁶ He traced the evolution of man from the beginning of time to what he called 'the Omega Point', a point at which all consciousness converges, and which he associates with *the* Supreme Being, or pure spirit.³⁶⁷ Teilhard de Chardin wrote of the noosphere, a new zonal layer outside and above the biosphere. The noosphere is the converged consciousness of all the world. He called it 'the thinking layer, and wrote, 'We have the beginning of a new age. The earth "gets a new skin". Better still, it finds its soul.'³⁶⁸

The concept of a global brain, a collective consciousness, as envisioned by Teilhard de Chardin, is regularly used in connection with the Internet, for example, as quoted above by O'Reilly, the man credited with inventing the term 'Web 2.0'.³⁶⁹ Another example is Mark Pesce, a computer professional, lecturer, and author, who was instrumental in the creation of Virtual Reality Modelling Language (VRML) which is used to create virtual worlds.³⁷⁰ Pesce believes that cyberspace is the manifestation of the noosphere. He wrote, 'The Noosphere, predicted by Teilhard de Chardin three generations ago, and long sought as the philosopher's stone of the information age, can now be said to exist.'³⁷¹ Elsewhere Pesce goes one step further and, supporting Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary theme, suggests that the

³⁶⁵ Michel Bauwens, 'Spirituality and Technology: Exploring the Relationship', *First Monday*, 1 (1996) <<http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/496/417>> [accessed 4th November 1996]. [Accessed 19/09/2015]; Mark Pesce, "Proximal and Distal Unity," <http://hyperreal.org/~mpesce/>. [Accessed 25/08/2015]; Jennifer J. Cobb, *Cybergrace: The Search for God in the Digital World* (Victoria, BC: Crown Publications, 1998), p. 98; Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 58.

³⁶⁶ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1959), p. 256.

³⁶⁷ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 260.

³⁶⁸ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 182-83.

³⁶⁹ Tim O'Reilly, *What Is Web 2.0?*, p. 41.

³⁷⁰ Mark Pesce, "Curriculum Vitae," <http://hyperreal.org/~mpesce/vitae.pdf>. (Accessed 26/01/2014)

³⁷¹ Mark Pesce, "Proximal and Distal Unity," <http://hyperreal.org/~mpesce/>. [Accessed 25/08/2015]

Internet is 'part of our evolution', thus equating it with the Omega Point and Teilhard de Chardin's Supreme Being.³⁷² He wrote,

We can't know for sure if the Web is the same thing as the noosphere, or if the Web represents part of what Teilhard envisioned. But it feels that way ... If Teilhard was right, the Web is part of our evolution, as much an essential element of humanity as our acute eyes, our crafty hands, and our wonderful brains.³⁷³

The influence of Teilhard de Chardin's association of a global mind with God, on the concept of the Internet as a spiritual place is discussed in the literature, for example, by Cobb.³⁷⁴ Quoting Cobb's statement, Campbell writes that interpretations such as this illustrate how individuals are seeking out not just new technological realities, but spiritual realities as well.³⁷⁵

Ladd's comment that anthropological and cosmological dualism are closely associated is reflected in the cyberspace literature.³⁷⁶ Benedikt, blending anthropological and cosmological dualism, describes cyberspace as a venue for consciousness itself.³⁷⁷ Wertheim, who believes that dualism is one of the attractions of cyberspace for the modern world, sees cyberspace as a place for the soul. She states that the failure of modern science to incorporate an immaterial soul into its world picture is one of the reasons people are turning away from science and looking elsewhere, in the hope of locating this missing ingredient. She argues that this omission is an important factor in the appeal of cyberspace, for it is the immaterial soul that in some sense cyberspace caters to as it is not located

³⁷² Mark Pesce, *The Playful World: How Technology Is Transforming Our Imagination* (Kindle Edition: Release under Creative Commons 2.5 Attribution-ShareAlike-NonCommercial License, 2011 [2000]) loc. 2105

³⁷³ Mark Pesce, *The Playful World: How Technology Is Transforming Our Imagination*.loc. 2105

³⁷⁴ Jennifer J. Cobb, *Cybergrace: The Search for God in the Digital World*, p. 97.

³⁷⁵ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 59.

³⁷⁶ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

³⁷⁷ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 124.

within what she calls 'the physicalist world picture'; it has no terrestrial coordinates.³⁷⁸

Two versions of an association between cyberspace and God can be found in the literature. In the first of these cyberspace has become God and in the second, it enables human beings to collectively become god or have a sense of godlike powers. A perception of technology as having god-like characteristics did not originate with cyberspace. Referring to a tendency by people to trust implicitly in computers, Weizenbaum claimed, in 1976, that man has given his autonomy to computers despite the fact that most people have no understanding of the internal workings of a computer. He believes that this occurs because man has projected his own capacity to think onto the computer.³⁷⁹ In 2013 Detweiler stated that faith in technology was widespread, passionate, boundless, and complete.³⁸⁰ Echoing Weizenbaum, he wrote 'We marvel at the results without analyzing how the trick was accomplished. We may be tempted to bow down to the magic box, ascribing secret powers to the technology'.³⁸¹ This idea of technology as godlike in its omniscience has been inherited in conceptions of cyberspace. The idea of cyberspace as an actual god in itself has been posited by several theorists, albeit for different reasons. The ability to find and distribute vast amounts of information in cyberspace led Ward, in 1997, to call it 'The ultimate secularisation of the divine'.³⁸² He continues 'for here is a God who sees and knows all things, existing in pure activity and realized presence, in perpetuity'.³⁸³ Zaleski, also in 1997, believed that cyberspace could one day become God. Considering the future of the Internet, he asked the question, 'Will the WWW evolve into God?'³⁸⁴

³⁷⁸ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, pp. 38-39.

³⁷⁹ Joseph Weizenbaum, *Computer Power and Human Reason: From Judgment to Calculation* (Penguin books, 1993) pp. 9-10.

³⁸⁰ Craig Detweiler, *Igods: How Technology Shapes Our Spiritual and Social Lives (Amazon Kindle Edition)* (Grand Rapids, MI: BrazosPress, 2013) Loc 123

³⁸¹ Craig Detweiler, *Igods*, p. .Loc 127

³⁸² Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997),p. xvi.

³⁸³ Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God*, p. xvi.

³⁸⁴ Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997),p. 20.

The godlike powers of which it is claimed, in the literature, that cyberspace has given humanity a sense, are immortality, omniscience, and omnipotence. Bauwens terms this 'The God Project'.³⁸⁵ Like Weizenbaum he believes it began long before the creation of cyberspace. He writes, 'Metaphorically, technology perhaps started mythically when Adam ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. At that moment, mankind said "we can do it on our own and we want to understand the meaning of it all".'³⁸⁶ Bauwens' argument is similar to Ward's above in that both see ownership of all the world's knowledge as equivalent to godlike status. However while Ward sees the Internet as the source of all knowledge and thus godlike, Bauwens envisions humans taking that knowledge for themselves, and with it, becoming divine. In Bauwens' words, 'Some see this condition leading to the invention of a Machine-God, a Deus Ex Machina, in direct competition with a concept of a Supreme Being'.³⁸⁷

The aspiration to become a god is put into words by Artificial Intelligence (AI) guru Earl Cox and sociologist Gregory Paul, who also believe that like God, humans can become immortal with the aid of cyberspace.³⁸⁸ AI has been defined as 'The branch of computer science that is concerned with the automation of intelligent behaviour'.³⁸⁹ It seeks to create software that can think independently of humans. Cox and Paul claim that because of technological achievements humans have evolved beyond their original design and outdistanced their creator. Referring to the possibility of uploading human brains to a computer where they can be stored as software on an Internet server, where they could live forever, Cox and Paul write that the uploaded minds stored in cyberspace will collectively become more powerful than current concepts of the divine. This could be seen as Cox's and Paul's

³⁸⁵ Michel Bauwens, 'Spirituality and Technology: Exploring the Relationship', <<http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/496/417>>. [Accessed 25/08/2015]

³⁸⁶ Michel Bauwens, 'Spirituality and Technology: Exploring the Relationship', <<http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/496/417>>. [Accessed 25/08/2015]

³⁸⁷ Michel Bauwens, 'Spirituality and Technology: Exploring the Relationship', <<http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/496/417>>. [Accessed 25/08/2015]

³⁸⁸ Earl Cox and Gregory S. Paul, *Beyond Humanity: Cyberevolution and Future Mind* (Cambridge: Charles River Media, 1996) pp. 1-7.

³⁸⁹ G.F. Luger, *Artificial Intelligence: Structures and Strategies for Complex Problem Solving* (Addison-Wesley, 2005), p. 1.1.

version of Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point; unlike Teilhard de Chardin who believed the Omega Point would equate to the one God, they believed humanity could become more powerful than all gods. In a quote remarkably similar to that of Bauwens above, they write, 'Such a combined system of minds, representing the ultimate triumph of science and technology, will transcend the timid concepts of deity and divinity, held by today's theologians'.³⁹⁰ Although this was written in 1996, the idea of uploading a human brain, and with it the personality, was still around in society in 2014 when it formed the basis of the plot of the one hundred million dollar film *Transcendence*, which starred academy award winner Morgan Freeman and academy award nominee Johnny Depp. The film promotional image contained the line, 'Yesterday Dr. Will Caster was only human'.³⁹¹

Hans Moravec, a faculty member of the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, describes how the individual moves into cyberspace: The brain is connected by cables to a computer. As the brain withers with age, the computer assumes its functions. In time the brain dies and the person goes on living in the computer. As long as enough back-up copies are made, death is unlikely.³⁹² Moravec defines body-identity and pattern-identity. Pattern-identity he writes, defines the essence of a person as the pattern and process going on in their head and body, not the machinery supporting that process. Strongly echoing Descartes' *Cogito* and Ryle's 'ghost in the machine', he states 'If that process is preserved, I am preserved. The rest is mere jelly'.³⁹³ Moravec is echoing the dualism described in Chapter Two, where the soul is seen as superior to the body. He merely differs in calling the superior element the 'pattern and processes'. It is also similar to Bell's

³⁹⁰ Earl Cox and Gregory S. Paul, *Beyond Humanity: Cyberevolution and Future Mind*, pp. 1-7.

³⁹¹ Wally Pfister, 'Transcendence', (Warner Brothers Pictures and Summit Entertainment, 2014), p. 119 minutes.

³⁹² Hans Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1988) pp. 121-24.

³⁹³ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 82; Gilbert Ryle and Daniel C. Dennett, *The Concept of the Mind*, pp. 11-12; Hans Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*, p. 116.

description of the physical machinery of the Internet supporting the separate space called cyberspace.³⁹⁴

McFadden challenges the belief that a human can be stored in a computer program, and asks 'Can human experience be reduced to the information model?'³⁹⁵ Diane Currier, discussing Moravec, points out that inherent in Moravec's ideas is the concept of information processing as the principle function and defining mode of existence for a subject, to the detriment of embodied existence.³⁹⁶ Here again can be heard echoes of Descartes' identification with the mind at the expense of the body and the association between the mind and cyberspace.

In the examples of cosmological dualism reviewed in Chapter Two, travelling between the two worlds was something that happened after death with, both Plato and Descartes, according to Pakaluk, associating dualism with immortality.³⁹⁷ Durkheim had written, in 1915, that the break in continuity between the worlds of the sacred and the profane is so great that passing from one to the other implies a veritable metamorphosis and often requires initiation rites that symbolise a death and rebirth.³⁹⁸ However, with cyberspace, people can now pass between the two while still alive. In 1993, Heim wrote that because of cyberspace, passing between the two worlds was now possible and he believed this gave human beings godlike powers. He wrote that because of cyberspace's dualistic nature, for the first time it was possible for people to enter the heavenly world, once accessible only when dead, while still alive and return at will. He wrote 'What better way to emulate God's knowledge, than to generate a virtual world constituted by bits of information? Over such a cyber world human beings could enjoy a 'god-like instant access'.³⁹⁹ Heim's argument is not that cyberspace is God, but that by giving people

³⁹⁴ David Bell, *Cyberculture Reader*, pp. 1-2.

³⁹⁵ Tim McFadden, *Notes on the Structure of Cyberspace*, p. 338.

³⁹⁶ Dianne Currier, 'Assembling Bodies in Cyberspace: Technologies, Bodies, and Sexual Difference', in *The New Media and Cybercultures Anthology*, ed. by Pramod K. Nayar (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 254-67, p. 256.

³⁹⁷ Michael Pakaluk, 'Degrees of Separation in the "Phaedo"', p. 95.

³⁹⁸ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, pp. 38-39.

³⁹⁹ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 69.

the power to enter this digital heaven and return at will, it empowers humans to become like God. Almost twenty years later, in 2006, Partridge observed the same theme being expressed in the literature,

Transcending the bodily, the geographical, and the temporal, the digital world is the sphere of the spirit, where time and space no longer limit what is possible. The twenty-first century spiritual seeker can experience the eternal now - virtually.⁴⁰⁰

The idea of godlike powers could still be found in 2013. Both Chester and Detweiler wrote of omniscience in connection with social networks. Referring to his Facebook friends as his 'chosen people', Chester wrote 'But social media allows us to play God and create our own chosen people. And we are at the centre of this chosen circle'.⁴⁰¹ He continued 'Facebook, however, promises to connect us with everyone everywhere at any time. It promises omniscience (knowing everything) and omnipresence (being everywhere)'.⁴⁰² Detweiler also expressed the view that the technology of Facebook is 'godlike' in that people now have all the information in the world at their fingertips. However he does not see this in a positive light, as he believes people no longer know how to use this information. He believes we have become overwhelmed by all this data, and 'our hard drives (our brains) are full and threatening to crash.'⁴⁰³

Just as the heavens of Plato, the Gnostics, and Christianity represented salvation, a place where people could live forever, so too, according to Heim, does cyberspace. He argues that the world is facing the end of nature as we know it, and points out that we created cyberspace in a world where there were holes in the ozone layer, toxic waste in the water, and we are running out of fossil fuels.⁴⁰⁴ The achievement of immortality involves winning the battle with death of the physical body and a

⁴⁰⁰ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 135.

⁴⁰¹ Tim Chester, *Will You Be My Facebook Friend?: Social Media and the Gospel* (Amazon Kindle Edition) (Leyland: 10 Publishing, 2013) loc 153

⁴⁰² Tim Chester, *Friend*. loc 216

⁴⁰³ Craig Detweiler, *Igods*. loc 314

⁴⁰⁴ Michael Heim, *Virtual Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 149-55.

planet in difficulties. While Heim believes that cyberspace offers an escape from a toxic Earth, Deborah Lupton believes that the desire for an evolutionary transformation of the human has shifted. Once, she claims humans viewed outer space as the place to which they could escape from a dying planet, but now she believes the journey will be to the inner space of the computer.⁴⁰⁵ In these statements, as suggested by Lupton, can be heard echoes of Plato who claimed that the philosopher was happier when dead as it freed the soul from the body, and of the Gnostics who, like Heim, saw the Earth as an undesirable residence and sought to escape up through the planetary spheres.⁴⁰⁶

In addition to transmundane sacred places, some theorists have likened cyberspace to mythical places on earth. One example is Healy's description of cyberspace as a new version of the American Wild West.⁴⁰⁷ This metaphor is also used by Barlow in title of the organisation he co-founded, 'The Electronic Frontier Foundation'.⁴⁰⁸ Timothy Leary used the frontier metaphor in 1991, and in 1995 Stockton called the cyberpunk a latter-day version of the 'American cowboy'.⁴⁰⁹ Noting that cyberspace theorists are predominantly American, Karaflogka points out that, not only is the Internet an American invention, but cyberspace as a place is an American concept, in that it was created by an American (Gibson), and the majority of the early (first wave) cyberspace theorists were American.⁴¹⁰ In 2006 Jonathan Sterne argued that the continued use by cyberpunk writers of the term 'pioneer' to describe themselves, shows that the frontier analogy is still with us.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁵ Deborah Lupton, 'The Embodied Computer/User', in *The Cybercultures Reader*, ed. by David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 477-88, p. 479.

⁴⁰⁶ Plato, *Phaedo*, 63b-c; *The Teachings of Silvanus*. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

⁴⁰⁷ Dave Healy, *Cyberspace and Place*, p. 55.

⁴⁰⁸ John Perry Barlow, "Electronic Frontier Foundation," <http://homes.eff.org/~barlow>. [Accessed 03/06/2015]

⁴⁰⁹ Timothy Leary, 'The Cyberpunk: The Individual as Reality Pilot', in *The Cybercultures Reader*, ed. by David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 529-39, p. 245; Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 588.

⁴¹⁰ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 19.

⁴¹¹ Jonathan Sterne, 'The Historiography of Cyberculture', in *Critical Cyberculture Studies*, ed. by David Silver, Adrienne Massanari, and Steve Jones (New York and London: NYU Press, 2006), pp. 17-28, p. 18.

Barlow also compares cyberspace to the American Wild West in terms of its lawlessness and freedom:

Cyberspace, in its present condition, has a lot in common with the 19th Century West. It is vast, unmapped, culturally and legally ambiguous, verbally terse, hard to get around in, and up for grabs. Large institutions already claim to own the place, but most of the actual natives are solitary and independent, sometimes to the point of sociopathy. It is, of course, a perfect breeding ground for both outlaws and new ideas about liberty.⁴¹²

Following the protests at the US Government's 1995 Communications Decency Act, which attempted to limit the freedom of the Internet, Barlow issued 'A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace', addressed to 'Governments of the Industrial World', containing the lines:

We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one, so I address you with no greater authority than that with which liberty itself always speaks. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us.⁴¹³

Barlow's concept of cyberspace as a space or place where, like in the human mind, the laws of the physical world did not apply, became known as 'Barlovian cyberspace'.⁴¹⁴ Two years later, in 1997, the act was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² John Perry Barlow, "Crime and Puzzlement,
http://w2.eff.org/Misc/Publications/John_Perry_Barlow/HTML/crime_and_puzzlement_1.html
(accessed 21/6/2010)

⁴¹³ John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace,"
<http://homes.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>.(Accessed 21/6/2010)

⁴¹⁴ M. Featherstone and R. Burrows, *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1996),p. 5.

⁴¹⁵ John Naughton, *A Brief History of the Future*, p. 42.

Stockton argued that the myth of the cowboy exploring new territory and finding great wealth contributed to the idea that cyberspace was a place to make money. She wrote,

Like the hacker cowboys and sundogs of cyberpunk, this PC user is in one way or another a pirate-adventurer; surely what he is doing in the other place has to do with wealth. Perhaps he is now hacking into Dow, or is putting a new marketing campaign together, or is just working miracles with the family finances. In any case, we have the sense that when he emerges from the computer, he will have brought back with him something of great wealth, something that has perhaps been taken from someone else – not in a gesture of thievery but in the spirit of the populist pirate ethic of cyberspace, where the man with the initiative deserves the spoils of the day.⁴¹⁶

The view of cyberspace as a place where people can become rich, began in the 1980s in Gibson's trilogy where Case, in *Neuromancer*, and Bobby Newmark, in *Count Zero*, both became wealthy from cyberspace activity, and continued into the twenty-first century.⁴¹⁷ Mosco argued that myth that cyberspace is a place where people can become rich is the most popular myth of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In cyberspace, he claims, where the rules of the offline world do not apply, people could make lots of money.⁴¹⁸ The belief that there were different laws for cyberspace to those of the offline world also continued. Julie Cohen, an American legal academic wrote in 2007 that the idea that the laws of the physical world are not relevant in cyberspace still existed even in some legal circles.⁴¹⁹ Cohen believes that the spatial metaphors used when discussing cyberspace contributed to the perception of cyberspace as a separate place, whose

⁴¹⁶Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 592.

⁴¹⁷ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*; William Gibson, *Count Zero* New edn (HarperCollins, 1995)

⁴¹⁸ Vincent Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2005 (2004)),p. 3.

⁴¹⁹ Julie E. Cohen, 'Cyberspace as/and Space', *Columbia Law Review*, Vol. 107, Iss. 1 (2007), pp. 210-56, p. 210

property and information could not be subject to the same laws as their offline counterparts.⁴²⁰

The human fascination with technology, according to David Noble, dates back to the Middle Ages. Noble claims that the quest for salvation or godlike powers has always been at the root of this attraction.⁴²¹ The idea of cyberspace as a god or as a bringer of a sense of godlike powers to people, began with the first wave of Internet research but can still be found in the third wave writers such as Chester and Deitweiler.

Community

From the earliest cyberspace literature of the 1980s, and most notably in Howard Rheingold's 1993 *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, cyberspace has been depicted as a venue for and facilitator of online communities.⁴²² These claims, which have met with mixed responses, are discussed in this section. The section starts with a definition of community, followed by the literature on the Internet's potential in the area of community. A review of the debate on the nature of community and online communities then follows.

The absence of an agreed-upon definition of community is discussed in much of the literature on the topic.⁴²³ Some authors, such as Bell and Newby, identify elements common to most definitions, for example, they all deal with people, while others attempt to identify the criteria necessary for a sense of community to develop.⁴²⁴ In 1986, after a study of several years aimed at developing a theory of community,

⁴²⁰ Julie E. Cohen, 'Cyberspace as/and Space', p. 212.

⁴²¹ David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology : The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* 1st edn (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997) pp. 3-6.

⁴²² Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993)

⁴²³ For example Malcom R. Parks, 'Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities', in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. by Zizi Papacharissi (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 105-23, p. 106.

⁴²⁴ Howard. Newby and Colin. Bell, *The Sociology of Community: A Selection of Readings* (London: Cass, 1974)

McMillan and Chavis proposed four criteria for a definition. They concluded that a sense of community required:

- A sense of membership
- Influence or a sense of mattering to the group
- Integration with the group
- A shared emotional connection.⁴²⁵

They noted that there are two major uses of the term community: one based on territorial and geographic location and the other based on relationships between people without reference to physical location. These two uses are not mutually exclusive; their criteria for a definition of community, they stated, applied equally to both.⁴²⁶ Philip E. Agre formulated a definition which can also be applied to both types of community: 'a set of people who occupy analogous locations in social or institutional structures'.⁴²⁷ He also added the requirement for ongoing communication between the community members, whether they are in a shared physical space or whether their physical locations are distant from each other.⁴²⁸

Internet technology makes it possible for people from different parts of the world to connect with each other online, discuss and share information, and thus potentially form the second type of community identified by McMillan and Chavis: community based on relationships between people without reference to physical location. The technology has given rise to groups of people with shared interests coming together over the Internet and, it is argued, for example by Rheingold, finding in the online communities the emotional support and fulfillment identified by McMillan and Chavis as one of the criteria for community.⁴²⁹ These groups are

⁴²⁵ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory', *Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 14, Iss. (1986), pp. 6-23, p. 4

⁴²⁶ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 3.

⁴²⁷ Philip E. Agre, 'Designing Genres for New Media: Social, Economic, and Political Contexts', in *Cybersociety 2.0: Revisiting Computer-Mediated Communication and Community*, ed. by Steven G. Jones (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 1998), pp. 69-99, p. 71.

⁴²⁸ Philip E. Agre, *Designing Genres for New Media: Social, Economic, and Political Contexts*, p. 72.

⁴²⁹ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*.

sometimes referred to as virtual communities, a term coined in 1993 by Rheingold.⁴³⁰ Rheingold, one of the pioneers in the field, defined virtual communities as 'social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace'.⁴³¹ He refers to his interaction with a virtual community as 'living contact with old and new friends, strangers and colleagues'.⁴³²

Rheingold's definition emphasises emotional fulfilment, a point observed by Nancy K. Baym who wrote that writers on virtual communities often 'position themselves as participants as well as observers and often emphasize emotion in their use of "community"'.⁴³³ Rheingold was an active participant in the virtual community about which he wrote, and later stated that his experiences of friendship, shared events and emotional support that he received from this community prompted him to challenge the then current view that 'only socially crippled adolescents would use the Internet to communicate with other people'.⁴³⁴ The 1993 version of the book has been termed utopian by some of the later authors such as Wellman and, to a certain extent, by Rheingold himself in an additional chapter at the end of the revised 2000 edition.⁴³⁵ In that final chapter he explains that he was identifying, not advocating, a utopian view of certain elements of online life.⁴³⁶

Differing views on community and virtual communities appear in the literature. One view is that the idea of community has changed because technology has enabled community among people based on shared interests and/or emotional

⁴³⁰ Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000 (1993)), p. xxiv.

⁴³¹ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 5.

⁴³² Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. xvii.

⁴³³ Nancy K. Baym, 'The Emergence of on-Line Community', in *Cybersociety 2.0: Revisiting Computer-Mediated Communication and Community*, ed. by Steven G. Jones (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 1998), pp. 35-68, p. 36.

⁴³⁴ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 324.

⁴³⁵ Barry Wellman, 'The Road to Utopia and Dystopia on the Information Highway', *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 26, Iss. 4 (1997), pp. 445-49, pp. 445-46

⁴³⁶ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 376.

connections, regardless of their physical location. This contrasts with traditional communities which were based purely on a shared physical location and whose members were not members by choice. Challenging this is the view that while communities based on a shared location did and still exist, communities based on shared interests, with or without a shared location, also existed in the past and did not suddenly arrive with the birth of computer networks.

Arguing that the concept and nature of community has been radically changed by technology, Wilbur writes 'an increasing number of people are finding their lives touched by collectivities which have nothing to do with physical proximity'.⁴³⁷ This view is shared by Campbell, who argues that the emergence of community groups online has challenged the traditional, and what she calls the 'nostalgic', notion that community is tied to the boundaries of geography and social institution.⁴³⁸ She wrote:

As computer networking has become an increasingly important way for individuals to maintain social relations, it cannot be overlooked that these actions may be redefining contemporary conceptions of community.⁴³⁹

However, Campbell also disputes what she calls the 'loss of community thesis'. In her opinion, the belief that new technologies brought about a rejection of the traditional, location-based sense of community assumes that life was better in the past than it is now. She writes that it 'invokes images of life where community was stronger and social relationships were healthier'. It disregards, she continues, the unpleasant characteristics of traditional societies, such as structural oppression and disparity of wealth.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁷ Shawn P. Wilbur, 'An Archeology of Cyberspaces: Virtuality, Community, Identity', in *Cybercultures Reader: A User's Guide*, ed. by David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 45-55, p. 45.

⁴³⁸ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 38.

⁴³⁹ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 38.

⁴⁴⁰ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 29.

Supporting the idea that technologically-enabled communities, where membership is by choice, can provide emotional support, Wellman states:

Although community was once synonymous with densely knit, bounded neighborhood groups, it is now seen as a less bounded social network of relationships that provide sociability, support, information, and a sense of belonging.⁴⁴¹

Similarly van Dijk writes:

Virtual communities are communities which are not tied to a particular place or time, but which still serve common interests in social, cultural and mental reality ranging from general to special interests or activities.⁴⁴²

Questioning whether traditional communities ever actually existed in the way they are being portrayed and arguing that communities based on common interests or skills existed before the prevalence of computer networks, McMillan and Chavis point out that Durkheim wrote that modern society develops community around interests and skills more than around locality.⁴⁴³

In contrast to Rheingold's allegedly utopian views are those of other authors who argue that virtual communities do not merit the term community. One of the reasons given for this view is that Internet users can never be sure of the identity of their online contacts. Others challenge the fundamental concept of online community. For example, Foster questions 'the degree to which the traditional idea of community is in fact present in "virtual communities"'.⁴⁴⁴ He believes that communication has been equated with community; but communication alone, he

⁴⁴¹ Barry Wellman, Janet Salaff, Dimitrina Dimitrova, Laura Garton, Milena Gulia, and Caroline Haythornthwaite, 'Computer Networks as Social Networks: Collaborative Work, Telework, and Virtual Community', *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 22, Iss. (1996), pp. 213-38, p. 2013<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083430>.

⁴⁴² Jan A.G.M. van Dijk, 'The Reality of Virtual Communities', *Trends in Communication*, Vol. 1, Iss. 1 (1998), pp. 39-63, pp. 40-41

⁴⁴³ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (London: Collier McMillan, 1964), p. 27; David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community'.

⁴⁴⁴ Derek Foster, 'Community and Identity in the Electronic Village', in *Internet Culture*, ed. by David Porter (New York London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 23-38, p. 24.

argues, does not have the necessary sense of collective identity that he believes is a criterion for community.⁴⁴⁵ Lockard also challenges the existence of virtual communities and believes that the fact that online communication is considered community reflects an impoverished view of community in the United States at the end of the twentieth century.⁴⁴⁶ Campbell, however, puts more emphasis, as did Agre, on the importance of communication.⁴⁴⁷ She writes 'What makes a group a community is the ability to contact and interact with other members, either through posting messages to the entire group or through personal interaction with other subscribers'.⁴⁴⁸

Some authors appear to view online communities as some kind of substitute for traditional communities. For example, Wilbur writes that virtual communities have opened up on the Internet at a time when traditional communities are under attack.⁴⁴⁹ Even Rheingold believed that the popularity of online communities is a 'response to the hunger for community that has followed the disintegration of traditional communities'.⁴⁵⁰ Quoting Rheingold's statement, Parks claims that yearnings for the 'assumedly deeper connections and greater belonging of the past still emanate from contemporary discussions of virtual community'.⁴⁵¹ He believes this to be so because the term community evokes feelings of friendliness, trust and belonging that may be deemed lacking in the world.⁴⁵²

In some comparisons between virtual and offline communities, offline communities are sometimes referred to as 'real' communities, with virtual communities often being seen as poor substitutes. For example, Baym claims 'the dominant concern

⁴⁴⁵ Derek Foster, *Community and Identity in the Electronic Village*, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁴⁶ Joseph Lockard, 'Progressive Politics, Electronic Individualism and the Myth of the Virtual Community', in *Internet Culture*, ed. by David Porter (New York London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 233-52, p. 224.

⁴⁴⁷ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 42; Philip E. Agre, *Designing Genres for New Media: Social, Economic, and Political Contexts*, p. 72.

⁴⁴⁸ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 42.

⁴⁴⁹ Shawn P. Wilbur, *Archeology*, p. 45.

⁴⁵⁰ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 62.

⁴⁵¹ Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 107.

⁴⁵² Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 107.

underlying most criticism of on-line community is that in an increasingly fragmented off-line world, on-line groups substitute for "real" (i.e., geographically local) community, falling short in several interwoven regards'.⁴⁵³ Supporting this view, she states that the most serious of these charges are homogeneity and lack of moral commitment. She argues that unlike the real world, it is very easy for virtual community members to walk away with the click of a mouse, rather than deal with any issues or diversity that arise online.⁴⁵⁴ Van Dijk's view on this topic is that the tendency to refer to traditional communities as 'real communities' implies that virtual communities are not real. Arguing against the idea that virtual communities are a substitute for offline communities, he describes the use of the word 'real' in connection with offline communities as 'a bias in favour of face-to-face communication', terms it a 'reality bias', and believes it prevents unprejudiced research of virtual communities.⁴⁵⁵

Some studies have found that online communities are often an extension of offline communities, with users befriending, online, people with whom they already have offline ties. For example, Baym argues that online communities' styles are shaped by a range of preexisting structures, including external contexts, temporal structure, system infrastructure, group purposes, and participant characteristics.⁴⁵⁶ She concludes that online communities can be used to enhance geographic local communities.⁴⁵⁷ Parks concludes that geographically proximal offline communities are frequently the foundation for "virtual" online communities. He writes 'Although it is widely assumed that computer-mediated communication frees individuals from the limits of physical proximity, it appears social connections in online settings may depend on offline contact'.⁴⁵⁸ He also points out the WELL, the online community in which Rheingold was a participant and elevated to what Parks termed 'iconic status', actually depended on regular face-to-face gatherings of its San Francisco-

⁴⁵³ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 36.

⁴⁵⁴ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 36.

⁴⁵⁵ Jan A.G.M. van Dijk, 'Reality', pp. 44-45.

⁴⁵⁶ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 38.

⁴⁵⁷ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 38.

⁴⁵⁸ Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 120.

based members. He concluded 'It may be more accurate to say that virtual communities are often simply the online extension of geographically situated offline communities'.⁴⁵⁹

The debate about the differences between traditional and modern, technologically enabled communities is reminiscent of the space and place debate. For example, van Dijk calls virtual communities 'the separation of community from geography' and believes it to be part of 'the ongoing liberation of the restraints of space and time in human communication'.⁴⁶⁰ His statement parallels and supports Giddens' statement that modernity tears space away from place.⁴⁶¹ However the debates differ in that, in the space and place debate, place almost invariably tended to be viewed as more meaningful than space, as in the argument by Trubshaw; in the community debate, as in the above statement by Campbell and the allegedly utopian views of Rheingold, virtual communities are often, though not always, portrayed as more meaningful due to the fact that they are populated by people with common interests who are there by choice rather than an accident of geography.⁴⁶²

The advent of social networks has increased the potential for community in that it offers the possibility of easy connections to people all over the world. According to Facebook, the world is at its most connected. Research on user demographics has been carried out by Facebook's own research team, in collaboration with the Università degli Studi di Milano, on 721 million Facebook users who were active in May 2011.⁴⁶³ These users had sixty-nine billion friendships among them. Using as a basis Stanley Milgram's 1960s 'small world experiment', which tested the idea that any two people in the world are separated by only a small number (5.74) of intermediate connections, or 'six degrees of separation', they found that among

⁴⁵⁹ Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 120.

⁴⁶⁰ Jan A.G.M. van Dijk, 'Reality', p. 40.

⁴⁶¹ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 18.

⁴⁶² Robert Trubshaw, *Sacred Places*, p. 1.

⁴⁶³ Paolo Boldi Lars Backstrom, Marco Rosa, Johan Ugander, and Sebastiano Vigna, "Four Degrees of Separation," Cornell University Library, <http://arxiv.org/abs/1111.4570>, p. 4.

active Facebook users the degree of separation is less than four (3.74). They point out that when considering any person, anywhere in the world, 'a friend of your friend knows a friend of their friend, on average'. Backstrom also claims elsewhere that this number is shrinking as Facebook grows.⁴⁶⁴ Backstrom, et al., found that the average number of friends is 190, 84% of connections are between users in the same country, and there is a strong tendency for people of all age groups to have friends around their own age. Discussing the Facebook and the University of Milan study which, they point out, comprised more than ten per cent of the world's population, Ugander, et al., observed, 'As individuals bring their social relations online, the focal point of the internet is evolving from being a network of documents to being a network of people'.⁴⁶⁵

Cortés and Lozano believe that the third wave of Internet research is the body of literature that has emerged on the use of social media.⁴⁶⁶ Included in this growing corpus is extensive research on the use of Facebook, and on the issue of virtual community on Facebook. Just as with the earlier virtual communities, SNS communities are often an online representation of an existing offline community. Rheingold, in 1993 and again in 2000, assumed that users of online communication tools and environments would be connecting with others based on shared interests rather than geography, thus producing communities that were limited to online communication.⁴⁶⁷ If they resulted in face-to-face meetings, the directionality was online communication that resulted in offline communication. He describes social gatherings of people who had first met online, and attending their marriages and funerals.⁴⁶⁸ However the literature suggests that the reverse might be true for SNSs. Lampe, et al., found that profile fields that were hard to fake, like hometown,

⁴⁶⁴ Lars Backstrom, "Anatomy of Facebook," <https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-data-team/anatomy-of-facebook/10150388519243859>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

⁴⁶⁵ Brian Karrer Johan Ugander, Lars Backstrom, Cameron Marlow, "The Anatomy of the Facebook Social Graph," <http://arxiv.org/pdf/1111.4503v1.pdf>. [Accessed 20/12/2014]

⁴⁶⁶ J.A.Cortés and J.O.Lozano, 'Social Networks', p. 63.

⁴⁶⁷ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. xvi.

⁴⁶⁸ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. xvi.

were most important in creating large networks of connections on the site.⁴⁶⁹ They wrote 'This suggests that Facebook users may be more likely to use online information to find others with whom they share some kind of offline connection, as opposed to finding others based on common interests like music or movies'.⁴⁷⁰ This is supported in another study by Ellison, et al., which found that people are most likely to connect with existing friends, distant acquaintances, or latent ties, than they are to use the site to meet new people.⁴⁷¹ boyd and Ellison have also studied the role of SNSs in creating a sense of community among users.⁴⁷² They concluded that SNSs create a unique type of online community, as they enable users to articulate and visualise real-life social networks. The primary goal is not to make new connections (as in older online communities), but to nurture existing ones. They state that participants are not necessarily looking to meet new people but that 'they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network'.⁴⁷³ Communicating with people they already knew, Gosling found, was the most common motivation for using Facebook.⁴⁷⁴ He speculates that the popularity of Facebook may be due to the ease with which it allows individuals to satisfy a desire to monitor other network members and maintain social bonds.

Just as Graham argued that there was not one cyberspace but multiple cyberspaces, Parks concludes that SNSs are not communities in any singular sense; rather, they function as social venues in which many different communities may

⁴⁶⁹ Nicole Ellison, Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe, 'The Benefits of Facebook 'Friends': Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 12, Iss. 4 (2007), pp. 1143-68, <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue4/ellison.html>.

⁴⁷⁰ Nicole B. Ellison, Cliff Lampe, Charles Steinfield, and Jessica Vitak, 'With a Little Help from My Friends: How Social Network Sites Affect Social Capital Processes', in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. by Zizi Papacharissi (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 124-45, p. 133.

⁴⁷¹ Nicole B. Ellison, Cliff Lampe, Charles Steinfield, and Jessica Vitak, *With a Little Help from My Friends: How Social Network Sites Affect Social Capital Processes*.

⁴⁷² danah m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, 'Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship'.

⁴⁷³ danah m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, 'Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship'.

⁴⁷⁴ Sam Gosling, "The Ancient Psychological Roots of Facebook Behavior," HBR Blog Network /Now, New, Next <http://blogs.hbr.org/now-new-next/2009/03/the-ancient-psychological-root.html>.

form.⁴⁷⁵ According to Parks, the community metaphor continues to influence the way the social Internet is thought about and studied. He writes, 'The community metaphor was so successful that it effectively banished alternative metaphors of the day (e.g., "information superhighway").⁴⁷⁶ He believes that nowhere is this more apparent than in SNSs.⁴⁷⁷

Identity

A much-discussed feature of the Internet is that it allows individuals to conceal their real-world identity and take on any identity or identities they wish. In an ethnographic and clinical study that lasted for more than ten years, Sherry Turkle observed how people negotiate the virtual and the real as they represent themselves over the Internet. She notes that people can have several different online personae and this gives them the opportunity to explore multiple aspects of the self in parallel.⁴⁷⁸ Wilbur also writes from the point of view of the person taking on multiple identities, and reports that many computer users experience entering cyberspace as an unshackling of real life constraints. In his view this suggests the possibility of stepping outside oneself and yet remaining oneself in a virtual identity play.⁴⁷⁹ However many of the examples in the literature of people using multiple identities report that other users express anger when they discover someone has used an identity that does not correspond with their offline identity. Boler, as mentioned above, describes the anger demonstrated by users who have been 'deceived' about another user's identity and states that it is the offline identity that people appear to consider the 'true' identity.⁴⁸⁰ Stone gives an example of a middle-aged man who successfully played the part of a woman in cyberspace for several

⁴⁷⁵ Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 118.

⁴⁷⁶ Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 105.

⁴⁷⁷ Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 105.

⁴⁷⁸ Sherry Turkle, 'Cyberspace and Identity', *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 28, Iss. 6 (Nov. 1999), p. 643.

⁴⁷⁹ Shawn P. Wilbur, *Archeology*, p. 48.

⁴⁸⁰ Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, pp. 185-86.

years; again, there was not just an expression of anger from the people who had known him as a woman online, but also a sense of betrayal.⁴⁸¹

SNSs brought about changes in the use of online identities, with most of their users tending to use their offline identities, and portraying themselves much as they do in the offline world.⁴⁸² Identity presentation is the process by which individuals share part of the self with others. In Facebook it centres on the user profile, which users personalise by entering information about themselves. The earlier literature, such as that of Turkle and Stone, mentioned above, discussed the issues around the concealment of real world identities on cyberspace; SNSs, where people frequently connect to their offline friends, support the use of real world identities through the existence of the user profile. More than that, as boyd states, the profile is central to the functioning of the social network site.⁴⁸³ According to boyd, profiles represent the individual and serve as a locus of interaction. She describes profile generation as an explicit act of writing one's offline self into being in a digital environment. Profiles are a place where people gather to converse and share. Other users can comment on an individual's profile, so participants do not have complete control over their self-representation, although they can determine who can see what and how.⁴⁸⁴

Studies on whether or not users' profiles conveyed accurate impressions of their owners found that they generally did. Waggoner, Smith, and Collins, in 2009 found that although some self-enhancement may occur, profile owners generally portray a fairly accurate representation of their offline identity.⁴⁸⁵ Wilson, et al., speculated that the veracity of information given by profile owners occurs because online

⁴⁸¹ Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁸² S. Gaddis and S. Vazire Sam Gosling, 'Personality Impressions Based on Facebook Profiles', Paper presented at International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media (2007).

⁴⁸³ danah boyd, *Networked Publics*, p. 43.

⁴⁸⁴ danah boyd, *Networked Publics*, p. 43.

⁴⁸⁵ A. S. Waggoner, E. R. Smith, and E. C. Collins, 'Person Perception by Active Versus Passive Perceivers', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 45, Iss. (2009), pp. 1029-31,

friends tend to be offline friends before becoming Facebook friends.⁴⁸⁶ Hargittai and Hsieh reached the same conclusion and pointed out that, unlike earlier online spaces where users used avatars, on SNSs users' identities are often anchored in physical proximities, institutions and shared personal relationships in daily life, thereby often mirroring offline aspects of peoples' lives.⁴⁸⁷ It was for this reason, Donath and boyd suggested, that displaying an extended network of friends may serve to validate identity information presented in the person's profile.⁴⁸⁸ In addition to validating their profile, the number and characteristics of an individual's friends appears to affect how they are perceived by other users. According to Walther, et al., this is particularly the case with friends who write on the wall of the user.⁴⁸⁹

According to boyd, the list of friends is both political and social.⁴⁹⁰ In choosing who to include as a friend participants frequently consider the implications of excluding or explicitly rejecting a person as opposed to the benefits of including them. For most participants it is more costly to exclude individuals who have power over them, such as parents or bosses, than to include them. If their online behaviour is being viewed by authority figures, individuals may feel a need to modify their behaviour to a mode which would be deemed acceptable.

The Second and Third Waves of the Internet

Simultaneous with the development of Web 2.0 and user participation, some writers such as Nathan Jurgenson, Robinson, Alex Soojung-Kim Pang and Mark

⁴⁸⁶ Samuel D. Gosling and Lindsay T. Graham Robert E. Wilson, 'A Review of Facebook Research in the Social Sciences', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, Vol. 7, Iss. 3 (2012), pp. 203-20, p. 210.

⁴⁸⁷ Eszter Hargittai and Yu-Li Patrick Hsieh, 'Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities', in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. by Zizi Papacharissi (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 146-68, p. 148.

⁴⁸⁸ danah boyd and Judith Donath, 'Public Displays of Connection', *BT Technology Journal*, Vol. 22, Iss. 4 (2004), pp. 71-82,

⁴⁸⁹ Joseph B. Walther and Jeong-Woo Jang, 'Communication Processes in Participatory Websites', p. 210.

⁴⁹⁰ danah boyd, *Networked Publics*, p. 44.

Graham, began to report changes in how the Internet was viewed.⁴⁹¹ Nathan Jurgenson, a social media theorist and author, wrote in 2011,

And some have a bias to see the digital and the physical as separate; what I am calling digital dualism. Digital dualists believe that the digital world is “virtual” and the physical world 'real'... I fundamentally think this digital dualism is a fallacy. Instead, I want to argue that the digital and physical are increasingly meshed, and want to call this opposite perspective that implodes atoms and bits rather than holding them conceptually separate, augmented reality.⁴⁹²

Reasons given for these changes include the uses to which the Internet was being put, its integration into everyday life, and the use of mobile devices with Internet access. Authors have given different names to this development. Robinson differentiates between what she terms the first and second waves of the Internet and cyberspace; Alex Soojung-Kim Pang coined the term 'The end of cyberspace', while Espen Aarseth claimed that instead of cyberspace, the Internet had become 'business as usual'.⁴⁹³ Also possibly contributing to the change of view of cyberspace is the fact that these second wave authors differ from the first wave authors like Benedikt, Heim and Stenger, in that they wrote about a different technological environment than the first wave authors. By the time the second wave authors were writing, it was clear that the Internet had not, at least yet, become a fully immersive Gibsonian cyberspace, whereas first wave writers

⁴⁹¹ Nathan Jurgenson, "Cyborgology," <http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/02/24/digital-dualism-versus-augmented-reality/#more-1347>; Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*; Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, 'Mobility, Convergence, and the End of Cyberspace', in *Integration and Ubiquity: Towards a Philosophy of Telecommunications Convergence* ed. by János Kristóf Nyíri (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2008), pp. 55-62; Mark Graham, Matthew Zook, and Andrew Boulton, 'Augmented Reality in Urban Places: Contested Content and the Duplicity of Code', *Transactions - Institute of British Geographers* (1965), Vol. 38, Iss. 3, pp. 464-79, p. 96

⁴⁹² Nathan Jurgenson, "Cyborgology," <http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/02/24/digital-dualism-versus-augmented-reality/#more-1347>. [Accessed 11/08/2015]

⁴⁹³ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 55-56; Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *End of Cyberspace*, p. 57; Espen Aarseth, 'How We Became Postdigital: From Cyberstudies to Game Studies', in *Critical Cyberculture Studies*, ed. by David Silver and Adrienne Massanari (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 37-46, p. 37.

believed it was 'under construction', a 'full-blown, public, consensual virtual reality that will indeed be cyberspace', or 'a technology very nearly achieved'.⁴⁹⁴

Robinson refers to the cyberculture of the 1990s as the first wave of cyberculture, with the second wave beginning in the second half of the 2000s.⁴⁹⁵ She identifies the first wave with Gibson and the theorists who wrote about how cyberspace was viewed at that stage, and the second wave with what she calls 'Online life'. She believes that cyberspace, as an extension of offline lives, supports offline activities. Included in 'Online Life' are online shopping, mobile devices that allow people to be online anywhere and the convergence between the computer, the television, music players, and mobile phones. In a statement that is somewhat of a mirror image of boyd's 'writing one's offline self into being in a digital environment', Robinson writes 'our cyberselves have been materialized'.⁴⁹⁶ She claims that everyday use of the Internet has changed the way it is viewed. What she believes brought about this change were developments in technology, particularly browsers, the e-commerce explosion and the use of the Internet in the flow of news into peoples' homes at a time when the news was all bad.⁴⁹⁷ However by suggesting that the Internet offered an escape from the bad news of the real world, she is actually proposing the same theory as Heim in 1990, who believed we created the Internet to escape from a toxic world, a view that is clearly cosmologically dualistic.⁴⁹⁸

Second wave literature frequently challenges the first wave dualistic view. For example, Graham wrote that cyberspace had become an extension of and part of the material world. He argues that virtual worlds will not substitute for real worlds; rather they become part of a global-local world comprised of the material world

⁴⁹⁴ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, pp. 124, 31.

⁴⁹⁵ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 55-56.

⁴⁹⁶ danah boyd, *Networked Publics*, p. 43; Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 56-57.

⁴⁹⁷ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 55-56.

⁴⁹⁸ Michael Heim, *Realism*, pp. 149-55.

and the virtual world.⁴⁹⁹ Aarseth also claimed that the widespread and everyday use of the Internet and what it is being used for has changed the way it is viewed. She wrote that there was less hype and discussion about cyberspace because it has become the norm, 'The feeling of excitement and wonder about all things cyber- that characterised the 1990s has been replaced by familiarity and business-as-usual.⁵⁰⁰

Pang believes the end of the first wave of cyberculture, or as he terms it, 'the end of cyberspace', has been brought about by the development of mobile computing with devices such as tablet computers and smart phones.⁵⁰¹ He believes that because they are small, mobile, personal and always on, they change the relationship between users, information and the world. The Internet and personal documents can be accessed anywhere. Because they are hand-held, users develop more complex and personal relationships with them. They collapse a distinction between 'here and there, the world and cyberspace'. In his words, 'Always-on networks collapse the temporal space between users and the web, and undermine a sense of whatever is waiting online as living in a separate world'.⁵⁰² Because they are hand-held, there is a sensual relationship with the device. In the cyberspace era, he argues, the process of getting online, which was much more complex and deliberate, reinforced the sense of cyberspace as elsewhere. The growth of mobile devices that are both perpetually connected to the internet and intimately connected to their users reduces the psychic distance between the real and online worlds. As that gap closes, the idea of cyberspace, he claims, will become an anachronism, then a curiosity, and finally a memory.⁵⁰³

The authors in the last two paragraphs have rejected the dualistic view of the Internet and cyberspace and are proposing a unified view, such as Graham's global-

⁴⁹⁹ Stephen Graham, 'The End of Geography or the Explosion of Place? Conceptualising Space, Place and Information Technology', in *The New Media and Cybercultures Anthology*, ed. by Pramod K. Nayar (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 90-108, p. 96.

⁵⁰⁰ Espen Aarseth, *How We Became Postdigital: From Cyberstudies to Game Studies*, p. 37.

⁵⁰¹ Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *End of Cyberspace*, p. 55.

⁵⁰² Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *End of Cyberspace*, p. 55.

⁵⁰³ Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *End of Cyberspace*, pp. 55-60.

local world comprised of the material world and the virtual world.⁵⁰⁴ This proposal mirrors the attempts by Lefebvre and Soja, who both argued for a unified theory of space. Lefebvre's perceived space, mental space and social space can be roughly mapped to the Internet, cyberspace and Graham's global-local world. Similarly Soja's Thirdspace, which he called a 'composite of all spaces', also sounds similar to Graham's global-local world.⁵⁰⁵

The argument that the end of the notion of cyberspace has been brought about by mobile devices and convergence is supported by Jim Benson and Karl Schroeder. Benson, the CEO of a management consultant agency, an author and a blogger, argues that the concept of cyberspace was facilitated by the technology of the personal computer (PC) and, when the PC began to be replaced by mobile devices, the idea of cyberspace began to be simultaneously replaced by a world that contained both cyberspace and the physical world. He wrote in his blog,

The PC is the domain of cyberspace. It exists through the screen, the look, the assumption that there is a single device that equates with connection to the net. That the "net" itself is a single location you arrive at through the browser... We had to go to cyberspace to cooperate - how inconvenient...This says to me that Web 2.0 combined with pervasive computing devices have integrated the combination of computing, data and communications directly into our daily lives.⁵⁰⁶

Schroeder, an author, is of the same view as Benson,

My personal theory is this: when the only way to use a computer was to sit still and look through a little window (the screen) *into* a virtual space, the cyberspace metaphor worked best for us. But with cell phones, PDAs and geographical applications such as store-finders and the proposed "taxi" key for cell phones (which simply summons

⁵⁰⁴ Stephen Graham, *End of Geography*, p. 96.

⁵⁰⁵ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11.

⁵⁰⁶ Jim Benson, "Evolving Web,"

http://ourfounder.typepad.com/leblog/2005/10/web_20s_oedipal.html. [Accessed 11/08/2015]

the nearest cab when you press it), we're no longer staring through a window into cyberspace. The window's been broken, and the cyber world has spilled out into our own space.⁵⁰⁷

Schroeder concluded that 'cyberspace was no longer the right metaphor to use to think about our computing environment'.⁵⁰⁸ Like Jurgenson, above, he believes that that honour now belongs to the concept of augmented reality,

It's this overlay of the virtual over the real that makes the cyberspace metaphor obsolete. Cyberspace, after all, is conceived as something like the astral plane--a digital reality that exists "elsewhere." But it's precisely this "elsewhere" that's being eroded by applications like Davison and Reid's augmented reality system. Increasingly, the digital world is being married to the real world, with surprising results... The virtual and the embodied blend. How cool is that?⁵⁰⁹

Graham's 'global-local world', Aarseth's 'business as usual', Pang's 'always-on network', and Robinson's materialised cyberselves, are views of the Internet. Like Soja's 'thirdspace' they are another way of thinking.⁵¹⁰ However augmented reality is not just a way of thinking. It is an attempt to actually create a new type of space, as was Benedikt's 1990 cyberspace.

When writing in 2006, Robinson believed that the third wave would consist of blogs, podcasting and convergence.⁵¹¹ Since then, as stated above, the spread of social media has brought about Web 3.0, the semantic web with its ability to tag and connect pieces of online information. It is scholarship on the semantic web and

⁵⁰⁷ Karl Schroeder, "Karl Schroeder's Science Fiction," http://www.kschroeder.com/archive/1107529092/index_html.html. [Accessed 11/08/2015]

⁵⁰⁸ Karl Schroeder, "Karl Schroeder's Science Fiction," http://www.kschroeder.com/archive/1107529092/index_html.html. [Accessed 11/08/2015]

⁵⁰⁹ Karl Schroeder, "Karl Schroeder's Science Fiction," http://www.kschroeder.com/archive/1107529092/index_html.html. [Accessed 11/08/2015]

⁵¹⁰ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11.

⁵¹¹ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 56-57.

the impacts of social media that later authors, such as Cortés and Lozano, believe will comprise the third wave of cyberculture.⁵¹²

However perceptions of cyberspace as a separate world and as omnipotent never completely disappeared and with the advent of social media and social networks have begun to reappear in the literature. Chester claims that on Facebook users recreate their world.⁵¹³ He writes that he finds Facebook addictive because '[...]on Facebook I can escape the limitations of my body'.⁵¹⁴ He continues 'Cyberspace offers an escape from the limitations of the body. And this version of 'salvation by Facebook' is the latest embodiment (pun intended) of the ancient heresy of Gnosticism'.⁵¹⁵ On the same topic Detweiler refers to the Internet as 'a gnostic ascent into virtual kingdoms'. While Pang believed that mobile devices brought about the end of the first wave and its associated dualism, Detweiler claims it had the opposite effect, and states 'With a smartphone in our pocket, we can transcend the bodily limits of space and time'.⁵¹⁶

Writing in 2015, Jonveaux argues that the idea of cyberspace as a separate world can differ depending on what a person is doing online, and whether or not what they do has consequences in the offline world.⁵¹⁷ She gives the example of a marriage on Second Life which is not binding in the offline world, and compares it to online shopping which does have offline consequences. She also argues that the potential for anonymity in cyberspace contributes to it being viewed as apart from the offline world.⁵¹⁸

Both Chester and Detweiler have also written of cyberspace in terms of omnipotence. Referring to his Facebook friends as his 'chosen people', Chester wrote 'But social media allows us to play God and create our own chosen people.

⁵¹² J.A.Cortés and J.O.Lozano, 'Social Networks', p. 63.

⁵¹³ Tim Chester, *Friend*.loc 139.

⁵¹⁴ Tim Chester, *Friend*.loc 216.

⁵¹⁵ Tim Chester, *Friend*.loc 240.

⁵¹⁶ Craig Detweiler, *Igods*.loc 306, loc 131.

⁵¹⁷ Isabelle Jonveaux and Gabrielle Varro, 'Virtuality as a Religious Category?', p. 31.

⁵¹⁸ Isabelle Jonveaux and Gabrielle Varro, 'Virtuality as a Religious Category?', p. 31.

And we are at the centre of this chosen circle'.⁵¹⁹ He continued 'Facebook, however, promises to connect us with everyone everywhere at any time. It promises omniscience (knowing everything) and omnipresence (being everywhere)'.⁵²⁰ Detweiler also expressed the view that the technology of Facebook is 'godlike'. However he does not see this in a positive light. He wrote 'Becoming like God has fried our brains. To use the metaphor of our era, our hard drives are full and threatening to crash'.⁵²¹

Similarly the idea of Barlovian cyberspace where the people have control can be found, for example, in Jay Rosen. Rosen claims that the change in the user experience from one of passively receiving content, to that of a creator of the content, has brought about a shift in power from the former broadcasters of information to the people.⁵²² Now, he continues, blogs give the printing press to the people, podcasts (sound files that can be downloaded and played), give radio broadcasting to them, social media sites like YouTube give them television, and new technologies allow people to choose what they want to hear and ignore what they do not want to hear. While once people were on the receiving end of a media system running one way, now information and data flows horizontally from citizen to citizen and, he argues, the people have taken control and will not give it back.⁵²³ In view of the idea of an association between the divine and knowledge, such as is found in Plato and the Gnostics, there is a sense in Rosen's claims of people rejecting the old divine authorities and taking that power for themselves.

Chapter Conclusions

Both primary and secondary literature on cyberspace highlight issues of dualism as a possible key feature of cyberspace: a non-physical cyberspace versus a physical space. Much of the discussion centres around whether cyberspace exists as a

⁵¹⁹ Tim Chester, *Friend*.loc 153.

⁵²⁰ Tim Chester, *Friend*.loc 216.

⁵²¹ Craig Detweiler, *Igods*.loc 314.

⁵²² Jay Rosen, 'The People Formerly Known as the Audience', in *The Social Media Reader*, ed. by Michael Mandiberg (New York; London: New York University Press, 2012), pp. 13-16, p. 13.

⁵²³ Jay Rosen, *Audience*, pp. 13-14.

separate entity from the real world. Comparisons have been made between the separate world of cyberspace and other mythical and mystical worlds. The concept of cyberspace as a separate world perseveres through all three waves of academic Internet literature.

A further important topic is whether or not online communities can fill the needs of users in the same way that offline communities can. The advent of social networks has brought with it more possibility for online community. Social networks have also made changes in the area of online identities, with most users now using their offline identities while online.

Chapter Four will review the literature on the use of the Internet for religious purposes.

Chapter Four - Literature Review: Religion and the Internet

Introduction

This chapter will examine the literature in the area of Internet use for religious purposes. It begins with the different views on how religion should be defined and what constitutes religion as opposed to 'nonreligion'. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to a review of the literature on the use of the Internet for religious purposes. As discussed in Chapter Three, the cyberspace literature has been classified into three waves that roughly correspond to technological developments and changes in use of the Internet. The literature in the area of online religion has been similarly classified, and the classifications will be discussed in the review of the literature.

As one of the aims of this thesis is to identify the impact on astrology, if any, of Internet use for astrological purposes and, as will be explored further, astrology is arguably a vernacular religion, this chapter will include a large focus on the literature concerning the impact of the Internet on religion. Also significant for astrology and the Internet are online astrological communities; for that reason, a section on online religious communities has also been included. According to Urban, the religion with possibly the earliest and most widespread use of the Internet is Paganism, so a section examining Pagan use of the Internet concludes the chapter.⁵²⁴

What is Religion?

The problem of arriving at an agreed-upon definition of religion is discussed in the literature, with theorists disagreeing about what a belief system or ideology must incorporate in order for it to be classified as a religion. While some favour a broad

⁵²⁴ Hugh B. Urban, 'The Devil at Heaven's Gate: Rethinking the Study of Religion in the Age of Cyber-Space', *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, Vol. 3, Iss. 2 (2000), pp. 268-302, p. 273

definition that includes non-traditional belief systems, others exclude from their definitions belief systems they consider to be 'nonreligion'. For example, Stark and Bainbridge believe that a religion must involve the supernatural. In their words, 'A religion lacking supernatural assumptions is no religion at all'.⁵²⁵ They argue that a definition must be general enough to include all religions involving supernatural powers and at the same time not so broad as to include 'ideologies that seem better excluded'.⁵²⁶ Yinger, who uses a functional definition and defines religion as 'a certain kind of effort to perform various functions', points out that a primary difficulty with a functional definition is that there is no obvious point on the religion-nonreligion continuum at which one may draw a line and say 'here religion ends and nonreligion begins'.⁵²⁷

The boundary between religion and nonreligion is contested. McGuire claims that modern religion, which is characterised by institutional specialisation and a standardised worldview, is distinguishable from popular or folk religion and other nonofficial religious elements as a result of a historical process of institutional differentiation.⁵²⁸ She believes that the failure of sociology to question the social construction of religious boundaries laid down by official religious groups has led to the inadvertent support of these boundaries, as well as official religions' definitions of their beliefs and practices as 'pure' and linked with the 'sacred': that which is to be protected from the profane world of everyday life. The residual category of 'popular religion', she continues, came to be identified as a tainted or impure form of religion or worse, as downright pagan. Official religion was linked with the sacred and popular religion with the profane.⁵²⁹ Therefore, she argues, sociology should reject the radical disjunction of official and nonofficial religion because not only the content, but the very definition of religion is a social construct.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁵ Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 3.

⁵²⁶ Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*, p. 4.

⁵²⁷ J Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1970), p. 6.

⁵²⁸ Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context, Fifth Edition* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press Inc., 2002), p. 99.

⁵²⁹ Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion*, pp. 113-14.

⁵³⁰ Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion*, p. 114.

McGuire uses the terms 'official religion' and 'nonofficial religion'. Official religion she defines as:

A set of beliefs and practices, prescribed, regulated and socialized by organized, specifically religious groups. These groups set norms of belief and action for their members, and they establish an official model of what it means to be 'one of us'.⁵³¹

Nonofficial religion she describes as follows:

Alongside or overlaying official religion is another pattern of religious belief – nonofficial religion. Nonofficial religion is a set of religious and quasi religious beliefs and practices that is not accepted, recognized, or controlled by official religious groups. Whereas official religion is relatively organised and coherent, nonofficial religion includes an assortment of unorganized, inconsistent, heterogeneous and changeable sets of beliefs and customs. Nonofficial religion is sometimes called "common," "folk," or "popular" religion because it is the religion of ordinary people rather than the product of religious specialists in a separate organizational framework.⁵³²

Folk religion is defined by Yoder as follows,

Folk religion is the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion.⁵³³

Yoder states that he differentiates folk religion from organised religion, and claims that it exists, 'in a complex society in relation to and in tension with the organized religion(s) of that society. Its relatively unorganized character differentiates it from

⁵³¹ Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion*, p. 104.

⁵³² Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion*, p. 113.

⁵³³ Don Yoder, 'Towards a Definition of Folk Religion', *Western Folklore*, Vol. 33, Iss. 1 (1974), pp. 2-15, p. 14

organized religion.⁵³⁴ Primiano, however, claims that Yoder's definition is residualistic in its reliance on a two-tiered model for dichotomizing 'official' and 'unofficial' religion.⁵³⁵ Like McGuire he believes that the two-tier model has created distinct categories separating the folk or popular religion of the faithful from official or institutional religion administered by hierarchical elites through revealed or inspired oral and written texts. He also writes, again like McGuire, that the term 'folk religion', implies that it exists separately from a pure form of religion.⁵³⁶ Calling for a study of folk religion that pays attention to both theoretical analysis and people's lived experiences, he offers the term 'vernacular religion', which could be viewed as a religious version of Lefebvre's social space and Soja's thirdspace. Primiano defines vernacular religion as,

Religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret and practice it. Since religion inherently involves interpretation, it is impossible for the religion of an individual not to be vernacular.⁵³⁷

Like social space and thirdspace, Primiano's definition of vernacular religion seeks to avoid dichotomising the mental, theoretical view and the material lived experience. Instead it encompasses both of them. It emphasises the validity and uniqueness of an individual's set of beliefs and practices.⁵³⁸ Marion Bowman calls vernacular religion 'The practice as opposed to the theory of religion, that is, religion as it is lived'.⁵³⁹ Bowman's definition resembles Primiano's in that it emphasises the human experience.

⁵³⁴ Don Yoder, 'Towards a Definition of Folk Religion', p. 11.

⁵³⁵ Leonard Norman Primiano, 'Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife', *Western Folklore*, Vol. 54, Iss. (1995), pp. 37-56, pp. 39-40

⁵³⁶ Leonard Norman Primiano, 'Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife', p. 39.

⁵³⁷ Leonard Norman Primiano, 'Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife', p. 44.

⁵³⁸ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 2-3; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11; Leonard Norman Primiano, 'Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife', p. 51.

⁵³⁹ Marion Bowman, 'Vernacular Religion and Nature: The "Bible of the Folk" Tradition in Newfoundland', *Folklore* Vol. Vol. 114, Iss. 3 (2003), pp. 285-95, p. 286

Religion on the Internet

A frequent beginning to articles and books about religion and the Internet is a statement about the relationship between religion and technology, often containing historical examples. Cowan, for example, states that religion has always been in the vanguard of social movements that have made use of new and innovative communication technologies.⁵⁴⁰ More examples come from Henderson, Brasher, and O'Leary, who draw a parallel between the Internet and the invention of the printing press. They argue that just as the printing press brought great changes to religion by helping bring about the Protestant Reformation through the spread of information, so too will the Internet.⁵⁴¹ According to Henderson,

There is every reason to believe that world shaking forces of similar proportion and power to those unleashed at the time of the Protestant Reformation are being set loose once again, and shall have equally profound effects upon the way in which people practice faith, as well as communicate with each other and with God.⁵⁴²

Brasher also gives a more recent example of religious use of technology, in this case television, claiming that groups that have been socially marginalised, such as Christian evangelicals, 'garnered cultural prominence for their movement and accrued political power'.⁵⁴³

Much of the literature comments on the widespread use of the Internet for religious purposes. In 2006 Karaflogka stated that the Web was 'hosting the e-

⁵⁴⁰ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), p. 5.

⁵⁴¹ Charles Henderson, 'The Emerging Faith Communities of Cyberspace', *Computer Mediated Communication Magazine*, (1997) <<http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/mar/hend.html>>. [Accessed 06/07/2015]; Brenda E. Brasher, *Give Me That Online Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004 [2001]) pp. 14-15; Stephen D. O'Leary, 'Computers as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks', in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. by Douglas E. Cowan Lorne L. Dawson (New York ; London: Routledge, 2004 [1997]), pp. 37-58, pp. 43-44.

⁵⁴² Charles Henderson, 'The Emerging Faith Communities of Cyberspace', <<http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1997/mar/hend.html>>. [Accessed 06/07/2015], cited in Campbell, 'Community', p. 69.

⁵⁴³ Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*, p. 16.

presences of almost all—if not all—religious expressions, understandings and interpretations'.⁵⁴⁴ The growth since then in the number of Internet users from 1,023 million (15.7% of the world's population) in 2006 to over 3,079 million by the end of 2014 (42.4% of the world's population), has brought with it an increase in the number of potential users of these sites.⁵⁴⁵ In 2010 a Pew Internet report listed religion as one of the top uses of the Internet by people in the United States, with thirty-two percent of people over eighteen years of age using the Internet to find religious information.⁵⁴⁶

The Three Waves of Research

As discussed in Chapter Three, technological developments and changes in how the Internet has been used have led to the classifications Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and Web 3.0. Robinson, as also stated in Chapter Three, in 2006, divided the study of the Internet, or cyberculture, into two separate waves, with the first wave consisting of the early cyberspace literature and the second wave being associated with what she calls 'Online Life'.⁵⁴⁷ At the time of writing, Robinson believed that the third wave would consist of blogs, podcasting, and convergence. Later writers, such as Cortés and Lozano, have suggested that the third wave is the body of literature currently growing in the area of social media.⁵⁴⁸

Alongside these waves of cyberculture, three waves of research in the area of religious use of the Internet have been identified by Morten T. Højsgaard and

⁵⁴⁴ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 5.

⁵⁴⁵ Anon, 'Social Networking: The UK as a Leader in Europe', ed. by Office for National Statistics (Cardiff: Office for National Statistics, 2013). [Accessed 11/07/2015]; Anon, "World Internet Statistics," <http://www.internetworldstats.com/emarketing.htm>. [Accessed 11/07/2015]

⁵⁴⁶ Kathryn Zickuhr, "Major Trends in Online Activities," Pew Internet, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2010/12/16/major-trends-in-online-activities/>. Available at www.pewinternet.org/~media/Files/Reports/2010/PIP_Generations_and_Tech10.pdf (Accessed 26/01/2010)

⁵⁴⁷ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 56-57.

⁵⁴⁸ J.A.Cortés and J.O.Lozano, 'Social Networks', p. 63.

Margit Warburg.⁵⁴⁹ They associate the first wave with the research that began in the mid-1990s which, they state, embraced the subject with enthusiasm. It was, they claim, filled with either utopian fascination or dystopian anxieties about the surreal potentials of the new digital communication medium, and they identify O'Leary as being the first and most influential of the first wave theorists. They believed they were in the second wave at the time of writing - 2005 - and they wrote that it tended to be more reflexive and less unrealistic, tending to emphasise the diversity of the field and the need to put new findings into a broader historical and social perspective. In their view the volume in which these statements appear, was indicative of the second wave. The third wave, they speculated, 'may be just around the corner'.⁵⁵⁰ Literature that came after Højsgaard and Warburg's volume has tended to support and build on their classification, and identify and discuss the third wave. Campbell terms the three waves - the descriptive, the analytical and the theoretical - and makes the comparison between them and the three waves of Internet research, a point also made by Cheong.⁵⁵¹ Campbell and Radde-Antweiler viewed the first wave of literature in the area of religious use of the Internet, as dealing with the practices of life online, the second containing a critical analysis of life online, and the third dealing with the relationship between online and offline life in a networked society.⁵⁵²

Much of the first wave of literature on online religion describes use of the Internet by individual religions, with the second wave focusing more on the potential effects the authors have observed on that specific religion. The different religious uses

⁵⁴⁹ Morten T. Højsgaard and Margit Warburg, 'Introduction: Waves of Research', in *Religion and Cyberspace*, ed. by Morten T. Højsgaard and Margit Warburg (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2005).(Kindle Edition)

⁵⁵⁰ Morten T. Højsgaard and Margit Warburg, *Waves of Research*.(Kindle Edition)

⁵⁵¹ Heidi Campbell, 'Community', in *Digital Religion : Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. by Heidi Campbell (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 57-71, pp. 60-61; Pauline Hope Cheong, 'Authority', in *Digital Religion : Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. by Heidi Campbell (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 72-87, p. 74.

⁵⁵² Heidi Campbell, *Community*, pp. 61-63; Kerstin Radde-Antweiler, 'Authenticity', in *Digital Religion : Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. by Heidi Campbell (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 88-103, pp. 89-90.

made of cyberspace are detailed by both Karaflogka and Campbell.⁵⁵³ Campbell's list of religious uses includes the provision of religious information, worship in cyberchurches, online rituals such as virtual pilgrimages, online missionary activities and religious online communities.⁵⁵⁴ One of the earliest authors to explore the potential impact that the Internet could have on different religions was Zaleski who, in 1997, investigated the use of cyberspace by Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism.⁵⁵⁵

However many authors, frequently within the same piece of writing, overlap between the waves. For example, much of Campbell's work has tended to overlap between the second and third waves, even before the third wave was identified. Her 2005 *Exploring Religious Communities Online* both analysed the effects of the Internet on the concept of community and communities themselves and also examined the relationship between online and offline communities.⁵⁵⁶ The following section, as stated in the introduction to the chapter, examines the literature concerning the impact of the Internet on religion. While the origin of the claims may originate in the first wave, much of the literature discussed below is from the second and third waves; it analyses what is happening for religion on the Internet, and looks at the relationship between what is happening on the Internet and offline religion.

Online Religion and Religion Online

The literature on religion on the Internet, in general, frequently distinguishes between religion online and online religion, in writings, for example by Ally Ostrowski, Dawson and Cowan, and Karaflogka.⁵⁵⁷ This distinction was first made by

⁵⁵³ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, pp. 4-5; Heidi Campbell, 'Religion and the Internet', *Communication Research Trends*, Vol. 25, Iss. 1 (2006), pp. 1-43,

⁵⁵⁴ Heidi Campbell, 'Religion and the Internet'.

⁵⁵⁵ Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives*

⁵⁵⁶ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*.

⁵⁵⁷ Ally Ostrowski, 'Cyber Communion: Finding God in the Little Box', *Journal of Religion & Society*, Vol. 8, Iss. (2006), p. 2 <https://dspace.creighton.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10504/64523/2006-10.pdf?sequence=1>; Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2004), p. 7; Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 145.

Helland in 2000, who termed the provision of information about, and/or services related to, various religious groups and traditions 'Religion Online', whereas 'Online Religion', he considered, invites Internet visitors to participate in religious practices.⁵⁵⁸ In 2004 Dawson and Cowan called this 'One of the most useful conceptual distinctions made about religion on the Internet'.⁵⁵⁹ Also in 2000, Karaflogka made a similar differentiation using the terms 'Religion on Cyberspace' which equates to Helland's 'Religion Online' and 'Religion in Cyberspace', equating to 'Online Religion'.⁵⁶⁰ However, writing alone in 2005, Cowan wrote that since Helland made that distinction between the two, it had become clear that, rather than identifiable positions in empirical space, these represented the theoretical endpoints along a continuum.⁵⁶¹

Glenn Young also queries what he calls the 'religion online and online religion dichotomy'. He argues that online religion often uses offline religion as its primary reference, in that it describes an online expression of pre-existing offline religious traditions, pointing out that many websites incorporate elements of both online and offline religion.⁵⁶² In his words 'religion on the Internet includes a multiplicity of activities that fall at various places along the spectrum that extends between information and participation', and gives examples of religious websites that contain elements of both.⁵⁶³ Answering the points made by Young and Cowan, Helland, in 2005, agreed that there had been changes in the area of religion and the Internet since he had first distinguished between online religion and religion online.⁵⁶⁴ While he believed the distinction was still applicable, he accepted that it

⁵⁵⁸ Christopher Helland, 'Online-Religion/Religion-Online and Virtual Communitas', in *Religion on the Internet : Research Prospects and Promises*, ed. by Jeffrey K. Hadden and Douglas E. Cowan (Amsterdam and London: JAI, 2000), pp. 205-25, pp. 205-25.

⁵⁵⁹ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 7.

⁵⁶⁰ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 14.

⁵⁶¹ Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 19.

⁵⁶² Glenn Young, 'Reading and Praying Online: The Continuity of Religion Online and Online Religion in Internet Christianity', in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. by Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 93-106, pp. 93-94.

⁵⁶³ Glenn Young, *Reading and Praying Online*, pp. 95-96.

⁵⁶⁴ Christopher Helland, 'Online Religion: Methodological Issues in the Study of Religious Participation on the Internet', *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* Vol. 1, Iss. 1 (2005), p. 2 <http://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/religions/article/view/380>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

had to continually develop to keep pace with changes in use of the Internet. Campbell, in 2013, revisited Helland's classification and stated that the initial categories helped scholars distinguish the type of practice they were studying and played an important role in many studies of religion and the Internet.⁵⁶⁵ While accepting Helland's later reformulation of his polarisation, she still believes that the distinction between online religion and religion online serves as 'an important tool for mapping nuances and different strategies employed by religious groups and users in their online activities'.⁵⁶⁶

Challenges to Traditional Religious Authorities

Changes brought about by the Internet to religion in general, are much discussed, for example, by Dawson and Cowan, Helland, Brasher, and Berger and Ezzy.⁵⁶⁷ One frequent discussion in the literature concerns the view that religious authority is undermined by the Internet.⁵⁶⁸ For example, Dawson and Cowan believe that the Internet is changing the face of religion worldwide.⁵⁶⁹ One reason for this is that information not approved by the religious hierarchies can be published on the Internet by anyone and may appear authoritative. They wrote:

Because there is no mechanism by which information posted to or claims made on the Internet may be vetted beforehand, the World Wide Web produces what some have either lauded or deplored as the phenomenon of 'instant experts'.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁵ Heidi Campbell, *Intro to Digital Religion*, p. 3.

⁵⁶⁶ Heidi Campbell, *Intro to Digital Religion*, p. 3.

⁵⁶⁷ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 1-14; Christopher Helland, 'Popular Religion and the World Wide Web: A Match Made in (Cyber) Heaven', in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. by Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan (New York ; London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 23-35, pp. 33-34; Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*; Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy, 'The Internet as Virtual Spiritual Community: Teen Witches in the United States and Australia', in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. by Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan (New York ; London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 175-88.

⁵⁶⁸ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁹ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 1.

⁵⁷⁰ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 2.

They believe that, rather than the Internet appearing unreal, continued exposure to the virtual sites may make people doubt the absolute claims of sacredness and permanence of real-world religious sites.⁵⁷¹ According to Berger and Ezzy this has the potential to change religions by decreasing the importance of hierarchies, increasing individual autonomy, and creating an international community of believers who do not necessarily have face-to-face interaction.⁵⁷² Helland describes the development and use of forums by individuals who wish to express their religious beliefs and concerns. He describes the forums as computer-generated, unofficial, religious environments. He wrote 'there was no central authority online to limit the discussion, censor contributors, or set boundaries on the religious participation that was taking place'.⁵⁷³

The challenges to traditional religious hierarchies, it is claimed, can manifest in the form of alternative sects within traditional religions or in alternative new religions. For example, Brasher believes that the Internet challenges traditional religious authority because it creates a space where new, alternative religions compete for respectability with traditional religions.⁵⁷⁴ Helland views, as the more problematic of these two sources of challenge to official religions, the potential for members of religions such as the Roman Catholic Church to establish their own personal religious and spiritual websites, the content of which might be seriously at odds with official doctrine and teachings. He believes, as Rosen also argued, that there is potentially a radical shift in who is in control of information.⁵⁷⁵ He writes:

Doctrines and teachings that were once centralized and controlled can now be openly challenged, contradicted, or ignored through a medium that is accessed by hundreds of millions of people every day.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷¹ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 3.

⁵⁷² Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy, *Teen Witches*, pp. 176-77.

⁵⁷³ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁷⁴ Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*, p. vii.

⁵⁷⁵ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, p. 30; Jay Rosen, *Audience*, p. 13.

⁵⁷⁶ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, p. 30.

That the Internet facilitates the growth of alternative or unofficial religions is claimed by several writers, such as Miczek, Zaleski, and Helland.⁵⁷⁷ Miczek argues that since 'ordinary' people can now set up web pages and have their voices heard, the Internet allows previously unheard religious traditions to be seen and heard.⁵⁷⁸ Zaleski wrote that since the Web is organised laterally rather than vertically or radially, with no central authority and no chain of command, 'it's possible that in the long run the Internet will favor those religions and spiritual teachings that tend towards anarchy and that lack a complex hierarchy'.⁵⁷⁹ Using McGuire's definitions of official and nonofficial religions, Helland argues that individuals using the Internet for popular or unofficial religion have embraced this medium as a new environment where freedom of religious expression rules supreme.⁵⁸⁰ Helland believes that the unofficial religions' websites pose a significant challenge to official religious traditions, simply by the very fact that they exist, firmly established and thriving in cyberspace.⁵⁸¹

The concept of the Internet as a tool for recruitment by unofficial religions and New Religious Movements (NRMs) is challenged by Dawson and Hennebry.⁵⁸² They argue that while the Internet does make it cheaper for NRMs to disseminate their beliefs over a large area and to a potentially much larger audience, it is unlikely that it has intrinsically changed the capacity of NRMs to recruit new members. In the first place, they claim, Web pages (at time of writing—2004) differ little in content or function from more traditional forms of religious publication and broadcasting. Second, there is no real evidence that Internet users are any more prone to convert

⁵⁷⁷ Nadja Miczek, "'Go Online!' Said My Guardian Angel": The Internet as a Platform for Religious Negotiation', in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. by Heidi Campbell (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 215-22, p. 215; Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives* pp. 111-12; Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, p. 30.

⁵⁷⁸ Nadja Miczek, "Go Online!", p. 215.

⁵⁷⁹ Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives* pp. 111-12.

⁵⁸⁰ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, p. 23.

⁵⁸¹ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, p. 30.

⁵⁸² Lorne L. Dawson and Jenna Hennebry, 'New Religion and the Internet: Recruiting in a New Public Space', in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. by Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 151-74, p. 153.

to a new religion than other young and well-educated people in the Western world.⁵⁸³

However, recent literature has raised arguments against the views outlined in the last few paragraphs, the claims that the Internet promotes a level of democracy in the promotion of religious beliefs. The advent of Web 2.0 applications such as blogs has, according to Teusner, increased the number of democratic online spaces, where anyone with online access can, potentially, have an equal voice.⁵⁸⁴ However Teusner also points out that online marketing tools allow some voices to be heard more than others, and he concludes that Web 2.0 is not a level playing field.⁵⁸⁵ Evgeny Morozov also argues that the Internet can just as easily be used to spread the views of oppressors as it can to spread those of disseminators of information and supporters of freedom.⁵⁸⁶ This view is supported by Cheong in relation to online religion; she points out that the Internet can and is, used effectively by traditional hierarchical religions such as the Roman Catholic Church to spread their message as much as, if not more, than alternative religions or alternative voices within established religions.⁵⁸⁷ Thus the teachings of established religions potentially reach substantially more people than they would have done in the pre-Internet era.

Online Rituals

Ritual is described by Helland as 'purposeful engagement with the sacred (whatever the sacred may be for those involved)'.⁵⁸⁸ Examples of rituals that were traditionally celebrated offline, now taking place in cyberspace, are described in the first wave literature, often with a discussion on the potential changes the move from offline to

⁵⁸³ Lorne L. Dawson and Jenna Hennebry, *Recruiting*, p. 164.

⁵⁸⁴ Paul Emerson Teusner, 'Formation of a Religious Technorati: Negotiation of Authority among Australian Emerging Church Blogs.', in *Digital Religion : Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. by Heidi Campbell (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 182-89, p. 182.

⁵⁸⁵ Anon, "Technorati," <http://technorati.com>. [Accessed 09/07/2015]

⁵⁸⁶ Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011)

⁵⁸⁷ Pauline Hope Cheong, *Authority*, p. 79.

⁵⁸⁸ Christopher Helland, 'Ritual', in *Digital Religion : Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, ed. by Heidi Campbell (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 25-40, p. 27.

online can bring to the ritual, and how it is experienced by the participants. For example, O'Leary compares an online Neopagan ritual to the Christian Eucharist where virtual bread, salt, and candles were just as acceptable as their physical equivalents.⁵⁸⁹ With echoes of Eliade's statement that by embodying the sacred, any object becomes something different from its surrounding cosmic milieu, O'Leary concluded that 'It is the declarative act of setting the space apart that sacralizes the acts within that space, which turns further uses of ordinary language into performative speech acts - for those who take the ritual seriously'.⁵⁹⁰ Writing in 2013, Helland asked if online rituals are real rituals and if the person needs to be bodily present to be a participant in a religious ritual.⁵⁹¹ He concluded that it was intention of the individuals that made the ritual 'real'. Citing O'Leary's conclusions, he also concluded that, 'People in these new online environments created places where ritual could occur and through their own construction, shared narratives and similar vision, they perceived these places to be special, set apart, and even sacred.'⁵⁹² Like O'Leary and Eliade, he reasons that it is possible to create a virtual sacred space that is qualitatively different from the surrounding space.⁵⁹³

Online Religious Communities

Second wave studies of religious communities online have tended to focus on whether or not an online church or community can fulfil their spiritual or religious needs. For example Ally Ostrowski's research into the UK-based online Christian church, Church of Fools, investigated why a participant in a virtual Christian church would feel satisfied with an online religious experience, how they feel about their connection with other worshippers in a virtual manner, and whether they feel that the online church fulfills their spiritual needs to the point where they can be separated from the "real" church.⁵⁹⁴ She concluded that their attitude towards the Internet in general was a crucial ingredient in whether they feel the bond in an

⁵⁸⁹ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, pp. 49-50.

⁵⁹⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 12; Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, p. 52.

⁵⁹¹ Christopher Helland, *Ritual*, p. 26.

⁵⁹² Christopher Helland, *Ritual*, p. 30.

⁵⁹³ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 12.

⁵⁹⁴ Ally Ostrowski, 'Cyber Communion', p. 2.

online community or need physical contact with other worshippers. This view was shared by both Helland and MacWilliams, who found that people engaged with the online space differently if they believed that virtual meant unreal or illusionary rather than a real, albeit different, space.⁵⁹⁵ According to Ostrowski, people need to believe that online communion is a viable act, that online rituals are efficacious, and that online relationships can be as strong as those offline.⁵⁹⁶

Campbell, as part of the third wave, in 2013, discussing the relationship between online and offline religious communities, argued, as did Robinson and Graham, that Internet users conceptually and practically connect their online and offline social lives, rather than seeing them as separate or disconnected spheres.⁵⁹⁷ This also applies to religious communities where the online religious network often reflects the offline counterpart. She states that the exploration of the relationship between online and offline social involvement that is typical of the third wave of cyberculture is echoed in studies of online religious community.⁵⁹⁸

Paganism

The first religious groups to establish their presence on the Internet were Wiccans and other Pagans.⁵⁹⁹ In 2005 Cowan stated that 'Many modern Pagans are using the Internet in sincere attempts to create new forms of community'.⁶⁰⁰ His research discovered 'a plethora' of modern Pagan Web sites on the Internet, everything from elaborate information sites to dedicated search engines and cyberstores, from

⁵⁹⁵ Ally Ostrowski, 'Cyber Communion', p. 8; Christopher Helland, *Ritual*, p. 32; Mark W. MacWilliams, 'Virtual Pilgrimages to Ireland's Croagh Patrick', in *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, ed. by Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan (New York ; London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 223-38, p. 224.

⁵⁹⁶ Ally Ostrowski, 'Cyber Communion', p. 8.

⁵⁹⁷ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 56-57; Stephen Graham, *End of Geography*, p. 96; Heidi Campbell, *Community*, p. 64.

⁵⁹⁸ Heidi Campbell, *Community*, p. 64.

⁵⁹⁹ Hugh B. Urban, 'The Devil at Heaven's Gate', p. 273.

⁶⁰⁰ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. x.

attempts at fully formed cybercovens to very plain examples of 'my Wiccan Web page'.⁶⁰¹

According to York, there is little mutual agreement on the definition of Paganism. For some it is a nature religion while for others it is a form of atheism or even Satanism. He describes Paganism in the following way: 'Paganism is an affirmation of interactive and polymorphic sacred relationship by individual or community with the tangible, sentient and/or nonempirical'.⁶⁰² Elsewhere York estimated that by 2000, 6% of the world's population would be Pagan.⁶⁰³ Wicca is described by Pearson, Roberts, and Samuel as 'a contemporary version of a continuing Pagan tradition of witchcraft', who claim it has many thousands of followers in the UK and elsewhere.⁶⁰⁴ Pearson states elsewhere that Wicca 'is made up of hugely varied networks of autonomous covens into which members are initiated. A coven is thus composed of a group of witches who have been initiated into that coven and meet regularly for religious festivals and for training'.⁶⁰⁵

As stated in Chapter One, in the 1990s and the early part of the 2000s a body of literature was produced that claimed that Pagans have a particular affinity with the Internet. Even as late as 2005, Cowan claimed that many modern Pagans see computers as an integral part of their 'magickal pathworking'.⁶⁰⁶ Some see them as having energy of their own and some see them as 'a mirror of the universe, showing us that we are all connected together'.⁶⁰⁷ According to Luhrmann, 'both magic and computer science involve creating a world defined by chosen rules, and playing

⁶⁰¹ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. x.

⁶⁰² Michael York, "Defining Paganism," <http://www.michaelyork.co.uk/Domus/CV/confpapers/CP-38.html>.(Accessed 26/01/2014)

⁶⁰³ Michael York, *Pagan Theology: Paganism as a World Religion* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2003),p. 6.

⁶⁰⁴ Richard H Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel Joanne Pearson, *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998),p. 2.

⁶⁰⁵ Joanne Pearson, *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Milton Keynes: The Open University Press, 2002),p. 3.

⁶⁰⁶ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 66.

⁶⁰⁷ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 66.

within their limits'.⁶⁰⁸ This is quoted by Davis who claims that 'Pagans were online, and in force, long before the World Wide Web, and the Net continues to house a disproportionate amount of information on occult subjects'.⁶⁰⁹ This view is shared by Dawson who believes that there may be an affinity between Neopagan practices and the character of computer-mediated communication that cannot be as readily assumed for other religions. His rationale is that in neo-pagan circles, members create their own and constantly changing versions of the rituals and are often compelled to work alone.⁶¹⁰

The term 'Technopagans' began to be used to describe a group within the Pagan community who were technically inclined and who choose to practice their Paganism via technology. According to O'Leary, Technopagans refuse 'to accept any simple dichotomies of nature versus technology' and, in 1995, Davis wrote that Technopagans are 'driven by an even more basic desire to honor technology as part of the circle of human life, a life that for Pagans is already divine'.⁶¹¹ However, Davis later qualified this statement and claimed that Technopagans were unrepresentative of the Pagan community as a whole and that 'Paganism is an earth religion, after all, and its practitioners seek sacred communion on the material plane'.⁶¹² The type of Technopagan just described by Davis, Partridge classifies as low church Technopagans, who focus on 'dance, music, visual arts, mystical experiences, indigenous religion, tribal community and so on'.⁶¹³ Partridge has observed that there are two types of Technopagans: the low church type just described and a second type which he considers more 'high church, technologically oriented, Gnostic in orientation'.⁶¹⁴ It is perhaps Partridge's high church Technopagans about whom Davis was writing, whom he claims the Internet attracts, and he also considers them 'the antinomian mages who occupy the darker

⁶⁰⁸ T. M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 106.

⁶⁰⁹ Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 220.

⁶¹⁰ Lorne L. Dawson, *The Mediation of Religious Experience in Cyberspace*. loc 544-547

⁶¹¹ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, p. 49; Erik Davis, 'Technopagans'.

⁶¹² Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 221.

⁶¹³ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 159.

⁶¹⁴ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 159.

bands of the contemporary occult spectrum'.⁶¹⁵ Pesce, the creator of VRML introduced in Chapter Three, is also a Technopagan who has been interviewed by both Davis and Zaleski, who devotes a complete chapter of *The Soul of Cyberspace* to their interview.⁶¹⁶ In the interview with Davis in 1994, Pesce stated 'Both cyberspace and magical space are purely manifest in the imagination. Both spaces are entirely constructed by your thoughts and beliefs'.⁶¹⁷

Some of the later literature, for example Cowan, describes the Pagan websites and their content.⁶¹⁸ Others tend to analyse the quality of online Paganism. For example, Dawson and Cowan, Berger and Ezzy discuss how online covens differ from those offline. Dawson and Cowan point out that, unlike offline covens, online covens do not require potential members to undergo preparation and training in the art. They are also not restricted to the traditional membership of thirteen people. In one example they cite, members are not required to disclose any personal information, even gender. They argue that cybercovens can be created by anyone regardless of experience and can include as many people as wish to join; they can exist as little more than chatty discussion lists rather than the serious religious working groups that are found offline. They ask if the meaning of the concept of a coven has been irretrievably compromised.⁶¹⁹ Berger and Ezzy point out that for teenagers there is no need to learn from their elders; they are able to create their own forms of Witchcraft or Paganism although, in reality, there is a great deal of similarity, as individuals use the same sources for inspiration and understanding. They believe that the information available on the Internet and in books and journals has separated knowledge of Wicca from a community within a particular time and place.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁵ Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 221.

⁶¹⁶ Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives* pp. 255-78.

⁶¹⁷ Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 229.

⁶¹⁸ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. x.

⁶¹⁹ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 2.

⁶²⁰ Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy, *Teen Witches*, p. 177.

A frequently discussed area is the concept of cyber-ritual. The suitability of cyberspace for cyber-ritual, due to the fact that both of them are concerned with being outside of space and time, is argued by both Arthur and Brasher.⁶²¹ Arthur, in 2002, argued that this was the reason for the growing popularity of cyber-rituals.⁶²² He claims that the placelessness of cyberspace has an obvious parallel to a Wiccan understanding of sacred space. Reminiscent of Eliade and in common with Jacobs (above), he claims that 'the parts of cyberspace that Wiccans utilise are being appropriated by them and taken out of the ambiguous virtual realm into a created pseudo-simulation of real space'.⁶²³ This same point is made by Cowan who described how the space in which the online ritual occurs, a chat room, can be sacralised and thus made separate from the larger enclosing space.⁶²⁴

Parallels have been drawn with other types of virtual ritual or virtual space, for example by Arthur and by O'Leary.⁶²⁵ Arthur points out that while cyberspace rituals take place in the realm of thought, so do other forms of ritual such as visualisation and meditation.⁶²⁶ O'Leary draws parallels with the granting of a plenary indulgence to participants in a televised Catholic Mass.⁶²⁷ According to O'Leary and later confirmed by Helland, the preparation for the rituals, or what Helland terms 'the script', is the means for actually creating the space, and it is the ritual itself which turns cyberspace into a place where the ritual could occur.⁶²⁸ Similarly, Cowan states 'It is the psychic and imaginative connection established by their shared ritual world that allows for the blessings to occur'.⁶²⁹ He continued, 'Online modern Pagan ritual is, by and large, a theatre of the mind. It "takes place" in the imaginations of the participants'.⁶³⁰ He argues that this does not make it 'less

⁶²¹ Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*, pp. 47-56; Shawn Arthur, 'Technophilia and Nature Religion: The Growth of a Paradox', *Religion* Vol. 32, Iss. 4 (2002), pp. 303-14, p. 305

⁶²² Shawn Arthur, 'Technophilia and Nature Religion', p. 305.

⁶²³ Shawn Arthur, 'Technophilia and Nature Religion', p. 307.

⁶²⁴ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 138.

⁶²⁵ Shawn Arthur, 'Technophilia and Nature Religion', p. 306; Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, p. 48.

⁶²⁶ Shawn Arthur, 'Technophilia and Nature Religion', p. 306.

⁶²⁷ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, p. 48.

⁶²⁸ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*; Christopher Helland, *Ritual*, p. 30.

⁶²⁹ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 134.

⁶³⁰ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 138.

real, less efficacious, or less significant for its participants because of this than those rituals that take place in more traditional venues.⁶³¹

It is claimed that the Internet has facilitated the growth of the solitary witch or Pagan: for example, Circle of the Solitaries.⁶³² Cowan differentiates between 'solitaries' and 'group practitioners'. Solitaries are:

those modern Pagans who, for a variety of reasons, choose to work either primarily or exclusively alone; group practitioners, on the other hand, locate their religious practice and ritual either primarily or exclusively in a communal context.⁶³³

According to Cowan a lot of modern Pagans work alone. One of the reasons he gives for this is the fear of the reaction of other people. As he put it, 'A number of solitaries online report that this choice is motivated at least in part by the dominance of conservative Christianity in the areas where they live'.⁶³⁴ He writes that the distinction between the solitary practitioner and the ritual group worker is perhaps the most basic organisational distinction among modern Pagans. He believes that a tension is growing between 'those who are initiated and trained by a coven or other ritual working group and those who are self-initiated and auto-didactic'. Many solitaries, he claims, believe that coven witches consider them 'second-class Pagans', and somehow less authentic or less committed to the modern Pagan path. Some tell stories of rejection and aloofness encountered at the hands of 'legitimate' modern Pagans when they try to participate in public rituals. He believes that it is the solitaries who benefit most from online presence and interaction.⁶³⁵ Cowan concludes that online covens 'provide a venue and a mechanism for interested parties to try on the identity of a modern Pagan. For

⁶³¹ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 138.

⁶³² Anon, "Circle of the Solitaries," www.circleofthesolitary.org. (Accessed 26/01/2014)

⁶³³ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 82.

⁶³⁴ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 45.

⁶³⁵ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, pp. 82-84.

some, the persona fits and participants become more and more identified, both internally and externally, as modern Pagans'.⁶³⁶

Chapter Conclusions

There are two reasons to consider the scholarship on online religion. Firstly, Campion defined astrology as a vernacular religion, and secondly, the same methodologies applied to religious groups are easily applied to astrologers. Yet, the definition of religion is contested. A debate exists concerning the dichotomisation of religion and non-religion, and there are claims that the terms official and non-official have contributed to the belief that official religion is a more pure and more authoritative form of religion. Primiano proposed the term vernacular religion, borrowed by Campion, which encompasses the theoretical view of religion and people's lived experiences, as a solution to this problem.

Similarly the dichotomy between religion online or the provision of information about religious groups and traditions, and online religion, or online participation in religious practices, has been challenged. Many websites contain elements of both.

It is claimed that the Internet has affected institutional religions as their traditional authority is challenged by the alternative religions' presence on the Internet. Chapter Five will introduce astrology and review the academic literature on that topic.

⁶³⁶ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 109.

Chapter Five - Literature Review: Astrology

Introduction

This chapter will examine the literature on astrology and how astrologers currently use the Internet. It will define what is meant by astrology, for the purpose of this thesis, contain brief descriptions of the more common activities carried out by astrologers and include a discussion of recent scholarship in the area.

Chapter One introduced astrology as a growing area of scholarly interest, and differentiated between Sun sign astrology and 'real' astrology. Chapter Five explains what real astrology involves and what a real astrologer actually does before an astrological consultation. Part of my research consists of discovering astrologers' views on the appropriateness of the Internet or cyberspace as a venue for an astrological consultation. For that reason, recent scholarship on the astrological consultation is discussed in this chapter.

Literature Review of Astrology

While there is a vast body of literature devoted to the practice of astrology, until the last decade modern academic work on the topic tended to focus on its history or its role in earlier cultures. Radermacher points out that the literature devoted to the practice of astrology consists mainly of textbooks, and suggests that this reflects the fact that astrologers themselves tend towards a pragmatic mode, rather than a reflective one.⁶³⁷ Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman argue that vernacular religion in general tends to be neglected as a field of study, which they say is a way of demoting it and dismissing it as not worthy of study.⁶³⁸ However, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the body of literature focusing on astrology in today's world has begun to expand. PhD theses by Campion, Bird, Brady, Brockbank, and Munk, and an MPhil by Radermacher all focus on modern-day astrology as their subject matter. Their areas include belief in astrology, astrology in

⁶³⁷ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. ii.

⁶³⁸ Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 5.

education, fate and determinism among astrologers, an examination of the theoretical foundations of astrology, an examination of the dialogue that takes place within an astrological consultation, and the ways in which people in the modern Western world experience astrology as a meaningful practice.⁶³⁹

What is Astrology?

The lack of an agreed-upon definition for astrology is discussed in the literature by, for example, Brady and Campion; as Brady puts it, the definitions vary considerably along with the personal views of their authors.⁶⁴⁰ Brady points out that many definitions assume that astrology seeks to be one of the sciences. Thus, when astrology does not fit the scientific model it is considered, by science, to be a superstitious remnant from earlier times whose continued existence is a failure on behalf of modern science to educate people.⁶⁴¹ Campion observes that while science and religion both view astrology as having a supernatural element, religious critics believe this possible and science critics believe it impossible, and both see it as dangerous for this reason.⁶⁴² He further writes that while dictionary definitions tend to portray an astrology where the planets and stars are believed to have a causal effect on earthly events, astrologers' definitions tend to talk about a correlation between celestial activity and human affairs.⁶⁴³ As a working definition he uses Curry's 1995 view of astrology as a relationship between the celestial realm and events on Earth, 'the practice of relating the heavenly bodies to lives and events on Earth, and the tradition that has thus been generated'.⁶⁴⁴

⁶³⁹ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology'; Alison Gwendy Bird, 'Astrology in Education: An Ethnography'; Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate'; James Brockbank, 'The Responsive Cosmos: An Enquiry into the Theoretical Foundation of Astrology', (University of Kent, 2012); Kirstine Munk, 'Signs of the Times: Cosmology and Ritual Practice in Modern, Western Astrology', (University of Southern Denmark, 2007); Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination'.

⁶⁴⁰ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 19; Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 9.

⁶⁴¹ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', pp. 9-10.

⁶⁴² Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 19.

⁶⁴³ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 21.

⁶⁴⁴ Patrick Curry, 'Astrology', in *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing*, ed. by Kelly Boyd (Chicago and London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1999), p. 55; Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 21.

As stated above, Campion claims that astrologers' definitions of astrology tend to talk about the correlation between celestial activity and human affairs.⁶⁴⁵ Bird, an astrologer, begins by defining astrology as 'the attribution of correspondence between the sublunary sphere and the sublunary world'.⁶⁴⁶ She concludes by defining it as a 'magico-religious' practice.⁶⁴⁷ However Campion's and Bird's theses were completed in 2004 and 2006 respectively. A decade later astrologers, if they offer a definition at all on their websites—as many do not—appear to be avoiding both causality and correspondence. For example, British astrologer Claire Chandler defines astrology as:

Astrology is a rich, sophisticated, symbolic language that can be used explore a wide variety of areas: it is the study of the nature of time as measured by the motions of the planets.⁶⁴⁸

Another British astrologer, Cat Cox, defines astrology as 'the art of seeing patterns and interpreting their meaning'.⁶⁴⁹ The Faculty of Astrological Studies (FAS), a UK-based astrological school with students all over the world, makes no reference (like Curry) to either causality or correspondence and uses the words 'connection' and 'relationship'. The definition from their website is 'Astrology explores the meaningful connection between mankind and the wider cosmos, the relationship between the movements of the planets and the inner world of human consciousness and motivation'.⁶⁵⁰

When asked about the fundamental nature of astrology as part of a questionnaire issued by Campion at two separate astrology conferences, the most popular answer

⁶⁴⁵ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 21.

⁶⁴⁶ Alison Gwendy Bird, 'Astrology in Education: An Ethnography', pp. 7, 66.

⁶⁴⁷ Alison Gwendy Bird, 'Astrology in Education: An Ethnography', p. 79.

⁶⁴⁸ Claire Chandler, "What Is Astrology?," www.clairechandler.com/astrology/what-is-astrology. [Accessed 30/04/2014]

⁶⁴⁹ Cat Cox, "Why Study Astrology?," <http://www.astrology.org.uk/why-study-astrology>. [Accessed 30/04/2014]

⁶⁵⁰ Anon, "Why Study Astrology?," Faculty of Astrological Studies, <http://www.astrology.org.uk/why-study-astrology/>. [Accessed 14/07/2015]

was 'a psychological tool', with more than 60% of the astrologers surveyed agreeing with this statement.⁶⁵¹ Much of the astrological literature also describes astrology in this way; for example, American astrologer Donna Cunningham wrote the following:

Astrology has two helpful functions. One is to identify the strengths and abilities we have which we can capitalize on [...] The second function [...] is to help us identify the ways we create our own problems and cause unhappiness for ourselves and those around us.⁶⁵²

Another example from the FAS is:

The birth chart can help to illuminate facets of our nature which have hitherto lain dormant and to symbolise parts of ourselves in a language that connects us to the wider cosmos.⁶⁵³

Scottish astrologer Jane Ridder-Patrick describes it as follows: 'Astrology is a powerful tool to gain insight into both physical and psychological processes that leads to greater freedom of choice through greater self-knowledge'.⁶⁵⁴

Dualism in Astrology

The issue of dualism in astrology was investigated by Brady. Her rationale for the exploring the possibility of a dualism within astrology was the enduring existence of dualism in Western culture.⁶⁵⁵ Brady considered an astrologer to have a dualistic view if they believed that the horoscope was only a partial or incomplete view of the self and their life story, leaving a separate realm of existence not covered by

⁶⁵¹ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 243.

⁶⁵² Donna Cunningham, *Healing Pluto Problems* (Reno: CRCS Publications, 1978), p. 10.

⁶⁵³ Anon, "Why Study Astrology?", <http://www.astrology.org.uk/why-study-astrology/>. [Accessed 14/07/2015]

⁶⁵⁴ Jane Ridder-Patrick, "Bio," <http://www.janeridderpatrick.com/bio/>. [Accessed 30/04/2014]

⁶⁵⁵ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 93.

astrology.⁶⁵⁶ She sought to discover the extent of dualism within astrology and also the nature of that dualism and asked, 'Do present-day astrologers accept Aquinas' solution and embrace dualism, either Cartesian or Platonist?'⁶⁵⁷ What she termed 'Aquinas' solution' was the notion that the celestial bodies could influence the body but not the soul. He affirmed the existence of an individual's free will.⁶⁵⁸ Aquinas's position, applied to astrology, she viewed as 'The fate or determinism of the horoscope is not applicable to their entire being, for a part of them, normally the will, soul and/or spirit, is separate from the horoscope'.⁶⁵⁹

As stated in Chapter One, Brady found that roughly half the astrologers involved in her research believed the chart could reflect the body but not necessarily the mind; in other words, that they accepted Aquinas's solution. The most common dualism found among the astrologers was Platonic in nature. In Brady's words, 'These astrologers considered that the soul, the holder of the will, therefore engaged in a mortal body for the soul's "evolution"'.⁶⁶⁰ She also found a small amount of Cartesian dualism, where astrologers believed in a soul that is independent from the body and thus, as in Aquinas's solution, the chart.⁶⁶¹

Classification of Astrology

The above quotes from Cunningham, Ridder-Patrick and the FAS refer to natal astrology or the astrology of the individual, which involves interpreting a chart cast for the moment and place on earth of a person's birth.⁶⁶² Natal astrology is one of four categories of modern Western astrology, the other three being electional, horary, and mundane. Electional astrology is concerned with finding the best time, astrologically speaking, for a particular event. It is frequently used to find dates and

⁶⁵⁶ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 284.

⁶⁵⁷ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 119.

⁶⁵⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3.91.92.cited in Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 85.

⁶⁵⁹ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', pp. 122-23.

⁶⁶⁰ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 292.

⁶⁶¹ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 256.

⁶⁶² Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. iii.

times for marriages or new business ventures.⁶⁶³ Horary astrology is a form of divination whereby a chart is cast for the moment someone asks a specific question. The interpretation of the chart is believed to reveal the answer to the question.⁶⁶⁴ Mundane astrology is the astrology of the collective. It involves using charts to represent nations or cities, events such as the moon landings, the foundation of NATO or astronomical events such as the winter solstice set for a specific location on Earth.⁶⁶⁵

Use of the Internet for Astrology

Astrological websites include those providing astrological information, details of services provided by individual astrologers and organisations, and online shops where people can purchase astrological services and materials. There are websites from schools which provide course material to enrolled students and forums for members only, numerous Facebook groups, videos that have been uploaded to YouTube, daily tweets from astrologers on Twitter, and astrological blogs and forums which allow access to the public. Other uses of the Internet by astrologers include communication with clients, students and other astrologers using email, online conferences, and astrological consultations with clients using Skype.

Facebook tends to be used by astrologers for either promotion or discussion. It can be used by individual astrologers to promote their services and by astrological schools and organisations to advertise conferences and events, and to raise their profile among online astrologers. Facebook users can set up pages to represent a product, business, organisation, person or anything for which the person wants to create it. They can then invite their Facebook friends to 'Like' the page, after which the friend will see status updates from the page on their timeline. There are also separate group pages where discussion on astrological topics takes place.

⁶⁶³ Diane Marcus-Paige, *Module 8, 4.1 - an Introduction to Electional Astrology* (London: Faculty of Astrological Studies, 2007),p. 1.

⁶⁶⁴ Derek Appleby, *Horary Astrology* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1985),p. 9.

⁶⁶⁵ Carole Taylor, *Module 8, 2.1 - Introducing Mundane Astrology* (London: Faculty of Astrological Studies, 2007),p. 1.

Promotion and discussion tend not to overlap as most groups do not allow promotion.

Practicing astrologers frequently use their personal Facebook Timeline to promote their work, often intermingling it with other non-astrological posts. For example, one astrologer posts several times a day, with approximately 90% of posts being non-astrological but often containing material of a spiritual nature, or highlighting articles that portray the world in a positive light, such as an article from the *Irish Independent* website, 'To Russia With Love: Irish Charity Brings Hope to Orphans in Need'.⁶⁶⁶ The astrological content ranges from discussions on celestial positions to promotion of her work.

Online Astrology and Astrology Online

Helland, in 2000, distinguished between 'Religion Online' which provides information about religions and religious services, and 'Online Religion', which involves the actual participation in religious practices over the Internet.⁶⁶⁷ The separation of 'Online Religion' and 'Religion Online' was later challenged by Young and Cowan, as websites more and more contained elements of both, along with elements that could not easily be classified as one or the other.⁶⁶⁸ In 2005, Helland himself agreed that his distinction between online religion and religion online, needed to continually develop to keep pace with ongoing changes in the area.⁶⁶⁹ Young, discussing Helland's distinction between 'Online Religion' and 'Religion Online', stated that there is a multiplicity of activities on the Internet that fall at various places along the spectrum that extends between information and participation.⁶⁷⁰

⁶⁶⁶ Anon, "Facebook Page," <https://www.facebook.com/xxxxxxx> (name removed for ethical reasons).[Accessed 04/05/2014] - Permission given to quote

⁶⁶⁷ Christopher Helland, *Online-Religion/Religion-Online and Virtual Communitas*, pp. 205-25.

⁶⁶⁸ Glenn Young, *Reading and Praying Online*, pp. 93-94; Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 19.

⁶⁶⁹ Christopher Helland, 'Methodological Issues', p. 3.

⁶⁷⁰ Glenn Young, *Reading and Praying Online*, pp. 93-94.

Considering Helland's distinction in relation to astrology, Young's argument is also relevant for astrology. For example, at the astrology online end of the information-participation spectrum are sites like that of astrologer Clare Martin which simply provides information and contact details, and at the online astrology end, the participation end, is the use of Skype for a one-to-one astrological consultation between astrologer and client.⁶⁷¹ In between the two are astrological equivalents of Young's multiplicity of activities falling at various places along the spectrum. For example, is a Facebook astrology group discussing the 2015 solar eclipse 'Astrology Online' or 'Online Astrology', or where on the spectrum does it fall? The same question can be asked about an astrologer posting comments on his/her Facebook page about current celestial activity as a form of self-promotion or about using a website with chart calculation functionality to cast a chart, such as Astro Dienst.⁶⁷²

Astrological Consultations and Eliade's Hierophany

According to Eliade, the sacred manifests itself as something wholly different from the profane.⁶⁷³ He terms the manifestation of the sacred a 'hierophany' and calls it, 'a reality that does not belong to our world', that 'continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu'.⁶⁷⁴

Darrellyn Gunzburg and Radermacher both wrote about the space created in an astrological consultation, that is separate from astrologer and client.⁶⁷⁵ Astrologer Maggie Hyde who, like Radermacher, sees astrology as a form of divination, has termed this space 'Divinatory space'. She sees it as the space that is opened up by a divinatory ritual and describes it as follows,

⁶⁷¹ Clare Martin, "Clare Martin: Consultant Astrologer," <http://www.claremartin.net/astrological-consultation>. [Accessed 07/08/2015]

⁶⁷² Anon, "Astro Dienst," <http://www.astro.com>. [Accessed 07/08/2015]

⁶⁷³ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 11.

⁶⁷⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁷⁵ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 176; Darrellyn Gunzburg, 'How Do Astrologers Read Charts?', in *Astrologies: Plurality and Diversity: The Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Conference of the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture*, ed. by Nicholas Campion and Liz Greene (Ceredigion: Sophia Centre Press, 2011), pp. 181-200, pp. 182-83.

Divinatory space is the precondition for a spontaneous liberation in thinking, enabling the issue enquired about to be seen in a different light. In this mental and emotional clearing, truth and falsehood may become unequivocally apparent.⁶⁷⁶

Radermacher describes an astrological consultation as normally taking place over a specified period of time in a reasonably private place with a fee paid to the astrologer. It usually involves a discussion of the client's situation, motivation, state of mind, and possibly a current question or decision for which the client is seeking guidance. Where it differs from a non-astrological consultation, such as a counselling or therapy session, is by the presence of the client's birth chart as the point of reference in the discussion.⁶⁷⁷ She views the birth chart as a 'third party' in the encounter and, as a third party the birth chart has agency.⁶⁷⁸ She claims it is the active physical presence of the birth chart in the consultation that turns the consultation from a dyad of astrologer and client into a triad involving a dialogue with the divine.⁶⁷⁹ She explains a dialogue with the divine as 'when the astrologer has a strong sense of being in touch with something outside the parameters of normal human experience'.⁶⁸⁰ She writes that the divine is encountered in the space that is created in the consultation between astrologer and client,

We are, then, validating the interpersonal as potentially a space for the transpersonal. This underlines the vital link between religion and astrological divination which has, in my view, not been acknowledged.⁶⁸¹

The divine encounter, she claims, is characterised by an element of surprise, and sometimes of shock. It is as if the 'other', in whatever form it is described, takes the

⁶⁷⁶ Maggie Hyde, 'Pigs and Fishes: Inner Truth in Divination', (2005), p. 2.

⁶⁷⁷ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', pp. 124-25.

⁶⁷⁸ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', pp. 138, 58.

⁶⁷⁹ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 156.

⁶⁸⁰ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 126.

⁶⁸¹ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 176.

initiative and speaks to the astrologer: the address comes from the other and is not, therefore, within the control of the astrologer.⁶⁸²

Gunzburg carried out research with professional astrologers about what actually happens during an astrological consultation. She writes, 'In talking with practicing astrologers, most agree that when they read a chart for a client at its best something happens in the consultation space that is unutterable and inarticulate'.⁶⁸³ While Gunzburg's interviewees may or may not see astrology as a form of divination, their experiences of the space created during a consultation are strikingly similar to those of Hyde, and particularly Radermacher, in terms of the agency of the chart and the experience of meeting with something out of the ordinary. While Gunzburg is arguing that the experience is part of the creative process, and concludes that the reading of a chart is a 'secular creative endeavour', she admits that the astrologers believed their experiences to be 'mysterious or divine'.⁶⁸⁴

The experience of the chart having agency and being a space separate from the surrounding space, was reported by several of Gunzburg's interviewees. In her interview with professional astrologer and author Darby Costello, speaking about interpreting a chart, Costello said to Gunzburg, 'The person hands me the key to their inner landscape and I go into their inner landscape with my particular eye...'⁶⁸⁵ What Radermacher, above, referred to as 'a space for the transpersonal', Costello called 'their inner landscape'. She continued, describing the passing of time in the space, 'Beautifully. The most beautiful place. No matter how frightened or tormented I am, once I'm there, there's nothing else except there. It's another time, it's completely central.'⁶⁸⁶ Gunzburg also quotes astrologer Demetra George who

⁶⁸² Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 127.

⁶⁸³ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, pp. 182-83.

⁶⁸⁴ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, p. 198.

⁶⁸⁵ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, p. 183.

⁶⁸⁶ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, p. 194.

calls it, 'space for the presence of the transcendent'.⁶⁸⁷ Astrologer Evelyn Roberts said, 'It's a space that doesn't exist anywhere else [...] but when I got into the space of doing a reading it's like something else takes over and [...] it's a very joyful place for me'.⁶⁸⁸

Similarly, Gunzburg's interviewees reported their experiences of Radermacher's 'meeting with the divine'. One astrologer described the chart as an entity with its own agency, which could 'leap out and grab you by the throat'.⁶⁸⁹ Another astrologer described the end of the reading, 'You come out of the space and come back to the real world feeling exhausted, but happy and productive...'.⁶⁹⁰

What Gunzburg's astrologers and Radermacher are describing in the astrological consultation is an example of Eliade's hierophany.⁶⁹¹ All describe a meeting with something sacred, in a space that is created and which is qualitatively different from the surrounding space. Radermacher refers to it as the space created between the astrologer and client, whereas Eliade calls it a 'break in the homogeneity of space'.⁶⁹² Radermacher likens the space created to Corbin's 'mundus imaginalis', in that both are what she calls 'interworlds', arguing that both can bring the power of the imagination into 'the faculty of knowledge'.⁶⁹³

The Internet or cyberspace has, in Chapter Three, been called a sacred space and considered qualitatively different from mundane space. The question of whether or not the space described by Radermacher can occur in cyberspace forms part of my research.

⁶⁸⁷ Demetra George, *Astrology and the Authentic Self: Traditional Astrology for the Modern Mind* (Lake Worth, Florida: Nicolas-Hays, Incorporated, 2008), p. 251. Quoted in Gunzburg, 'How Do Astrologers Read Charts?', p. 183.

⁶⁸⁸ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, p. 196.

⁶⁸⁹ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, p. 189.

⁶⁹⁰ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, p. 194.

⁶⁹¹ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 11.

⁶⁹² Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 176; Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 21.

⁶⁹³ Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 2; Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 91.

Chapter Conclusions

The definition of astrology, like that of religion, is contested. Yet there are certain important conclusions arising from recent scholarship. In particular, Brady found that almost half the astrologers involved in her research had a dualistic view of astrology. The most frequently found dualism among the astrologers was Platonic, with only a small number of astrologers being considered Cartesian dualists in terms of their astrology.⁶⁹⁴

In addition, Radermacher and Gunzburg found that in an astrological consultation astrologers believe that a space, qualitatively different from the surrounding space, opens up. Many of the astrologers describe this occurrence using religious terminology. There may therefore be similarities between the ways in which astrology has been considered in academic studies, and the language used to describe space.

Chapter Six will discuss my methodology.

⁶⁹⁴ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 256.

Chapter Six - Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give an account of the methodology used to gather information about astrologers' use of the Internet and to discuss methodological issues. The chapter begins by outlining the aims of my research and the background for my research, followed by a section on research in online religion. The next section of the chapter discusses the literature on the research methodologies relevant to my research, including Internet research, and is followed by a section discussing my methodological choices based on the recommendations in the literature.

As stated in Chapter One, the research consisted of both questionnaires and interviews. Two sets of questionnaires were issued, one in 2009 and one in 2012. The interviews took place between 2012 and 2015. Over that period, sixty-five professional astrologers were interviewed. Ten of those interviewees were administrators or admins of astrology groups on Facebook. The final section of this chapter details the rationale behind the questions on the questionnaires and the approach taken at the interviews. The results of the questionnaires and interviews will form the content of Chapters Seven and Eight.

The Aim of My Research

The aim of my research was to discover astrologers' perception of the Internet, how they use the Internet for astrology, and if they believe that astrology has been affected or changed in any way because of the Internet. These effects, if any, will be compared, in later chapters, to the effects of the Internet on religion, as detailed in the review of online religion literature in Chapter Four.

Chapter Five contained details of astrological websites and their content, indicating what is being done by the providers of astrological information on the Internet. One of the aims of my research was to examine this, by questioning the users of the

information and discovering their views on what is provided and what online astrology facilities they use.

Chapter Three introduced the cyberspace literature and the themes found in the earlier works on cyberspace. While some of these themes are less discussed in the later literature, others, such as the concept of communities forming online, were still considered relevant, for example, by boyd.⁶⁹⁵ The first stage of my research investigated astrologer's views on these themes, and asked if they considered them relevant to their Internet use. As discussed in Chapter Five, the academic study of the culture of astrology is still in its infancy, and the academic study of astrologers' use of the Internet was virtually non-existent at the start of this enquiry. This resulted in a lack of reliable information about the level and type of Internet use by astrologers that would be needed before beginning any research into their perceptions and views of cyberspace. For this reason it was necessary to begin by querying the astrologers' level of use of, and overall familiarity with, the area of Internet applications. An initial inquiry into their views and perception of cyberspace, particularly in connection with the various themes discussed in the previous chapter, could be carried out at the same time. Once these details were established, they provided the basis for further research involving a deeper exploration of astrologers' uses and views of the Internet.

Background

As stated in Chapter One, my research was carried out in two phases. The first round of research took place in 2009, but by 2012 significant changes had occurred in how the Internet was being used. While Web 2.0 applications such as social media were in existence in 2009, the years between 2009 and 2012 saw a huge increase in their usage worldwide. By the end of 2011, the number of Facebook users was just under 800 million compared to the 150 million users reported at the

⁶⁹⁵ danah boyd, *Networked Publics*, p. 39.

beginning of 2009.⁶⁹⁶ Also significant for this study, was a 2010 report by Pew Internet that the number of social network users in the over-fifty age group had doubled since 2009, with half of the fifty to sixty-four age group (in the U. S.) now using social network sites.⁶⁹⁷ As will be reported in Chapter Seven, the average age of the respondents of the 2009 questionnaire had been fifty-five, so there was a possibility that there had been a large growth in their use of social media. Therefore, social media use by astrologers needed to be investigated to a much greater extent than it had been in 2009, along with any potential impact such use might have. In the 2009 study the most widely used Web 2.0 application by astrologers had been Facebook followed by Twitter and YouTube. This supports a study by Fabio Giglietto, Luca Rossi, and Davide Benatto who point out that while social media is a large research field, it is composed of a small group of very big actors, namely Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.⁶⁹⁸ The use of these sites by astrologers would therefore need to be re-investigated to discover if they were still the most widely used sites by astrologers.

Between 2009 and 2012 the number of groups, including astrological groups, on social network sites like Facebook had multiplied considerably, potentially introducing new astrological use of the Internet. Given the findings of boyd and Ellison on the potential of SNS to foster a sense of community, the issue of online community needed to be explored in more depth.⁶⁹⁹ As the area under exploration was the perception of the astrologers, this would be an area of research more suited to interview. In addition to investigating astrologers' relationship with, and perception of, the Internet in general, I decided to devote a section of the

⁶⁹⁶ Anon, "World Internet Statistics," <http://www.internetworldstats.com/facebook.htm>. [Accessed 09/09/2014]; Anon, "Facebook Surpasses 175 Million Users, Continuing to Grow by 600k Users/Day," Inside Facebook, <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2009/02/14/facebook-surpasses-175-million-users-continuing-to-grow-by-600k-usersday/>. [Accessed 09/09/2014]

⁶⁹⁷ Mary Madden, "Older Adults and Social Media," Pew Internet Research Project, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2010/08/27/older-adults-and-social-media/>. [Accessed 07/09/2014]

⁶⁹⁸ Fabio Giglietto, Luca Rossi, and Davide Bennato, 'The Open Laboratory: Limits and Possibilities of Using Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube as a Research Data Source', *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, Vol. 30, Iss. 3-4 (2012), pp. 145-59, p. 146 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15228835.2012.743797>.

⁶⁹⁹ danah m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, 'Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship'. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

interviews to the concept of astrological communities online, including Facebook groups. To ensure more comprehensive research results, the views of members of some online groups would need to be included.

Online Religion

Helland coined the terms 'Religion Online' which provides information about religions and religious services, and 'Online Religion', which involves the actual participation in religious practices over the Internet.⁷⁰⁰ These terms have come to be seen as opposite ends of a spectrum, with online religious activities falling at various places on the spectrum.⁷⁰¹ In Chapter Five, the terms 'Astrology Online' and 'Online Astrology' were coined by applying Helland's terms to the astrological information and activity that is found on astrological websites. As with online religious information and activities, many online astrological activities fall at different points along the spectrum between the provision of astrological information and the online practice of astrology. One of the aims of the research is to uncover how astrologers are using the Internet for astrology and this was reflected in the questions on both the 2009 and 2012 questionnaires, as will be discussed below. The different online activities carried out by the astrologers would fall on different points on the spectrum. The research needed to differentiate between their views on the different points of the spectrum.

In their study of online religion, Dawson and Cowan identified six research areas:

We need more and better studies of who is using the Internet for religious purposes, how they are using it and why. In this regard we need longitudinal studies to detect any changes that are happening with the passage of time and increased experience online.

We need studies of the nature and quality of people's experiences doing religious things online. In this regard we

⁷⁰⁰ Christopher Helland, *Online-Religion/Religion-Online and Virtual Communitas*, pp. 205-25.

⁷⁰¹ Christopher Helland, 'Methodological Issues', p. 3.

need surveys and interviews of users and case studies of groups, Web sites, or particular activity.

We need studies of the relationships between people's religious activities online and offline, as well as their religious activities online and offline and other kinds of activities online and offline. We need to gain a better grasp of the overall social context of cyber-religiosity.

We need detailed and comparative studies of the specific religious activities online. How is the Internet being used to engage in such things as prayer, meditation, ritual, education, and organizational tasks, and to what effect?

We need studies of how the features of the technology itself are being utilized in the service of religious ends and with what consequences for the intrinsic and the social aspects of religious life. What are the actual and potential implications of hypertextuality for religion, for example? Are there special interface issues affecting the religious uses of this technology? How can the technology be changed or improved to facilitate its religious utilization?

We need to discern whether the technological and cultural aspects of the Internet are better suited to the advancement of one style or type of religion over another. Is the preponderance of Neopagan activities online, for example, coincidental? Or is the Internet better suited, for instance, to the practices and organizational structure of Hinduism than Catholicism? What is the case, why, and with what implications for the future?⁷⁰²

Dawson and Cowan's research areas are still relevant despite technological changes. While they were penned before the spread of SNSs, they are not limited to specific technologies or applications; therefore they can be used to research all astrological Internet use, including social media and social networks. As discussed in

⁷⁰² Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 10-11.

Chapter One, the thesis will include an ongoing comparison of online astrology with online religion. Much of the literature on online religion discussed in Chapter Four deals with the areas of research identified by Dawson and Cowan, so it is proposed to use their areas as a framework for the research into the views of astrologers.

Dawson and Cowan's research areas were identified in 2004. As Bunt pointed out in 2014, there have been many changes and developments in the area of online religion since the middle of the decade that began in 2000, that have yet to appear in the literature.⁷⁰³ However, since Dawson and Cowan's research areas are not concerned with specific technologies, but with who uses the Internet, how they use it and for what purposes, they can be equally applied to a person accessing an information website using a laptop in 2004, or an astrologer creating an astrological chart using an app on their smart phone in 2015. These areas, as will be discussed below, were taken into account when designing the questions for both the 2009 and the 2012 questionnaires.

Methodological Issues

Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Descriptions in the literature of qualitative and quantitative research describe quantitative research as being concerned with numeric data, generalisations and beginning with a hypothesis. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is seen as emphasising understanding and meaning, with hypotheses arising from the analysis of the data rather than being stated at the outset. For example, Alan Bryman describes quantitative research as a strategy that emphasises quantification in the collection and analysis of data, whereas qualitative research, he claims, emphasises words rather than quantification, and embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals' creation.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰³ Gary Bunt, 'Is It Possible to Have a 'Religious Experience' in Cyberspace?', Paper presented at 'The Study of Religious Experience in Lampeter' (2014).

⁷⁰⁴ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods 2nd Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) pp. 19-20.

However, while Bryman outlines qualitative and quantitative research methodologies as two apparently opposing set of characteristics, he goes on to argue that the distinction between the two approaches is not a hard and fast one, and the differences between the two have been exaggerated.⁷⁰⁵ This view is shared by Robert Stake, who states that every study will contain elements of both, and that the distinction between the two is a matter of emphasis.⁷⁰⁶ In his experience each qualitative study, while emphasising words, will have an element of enumeration in it and each quantitative study will contain natural language descriptions and the interpretation of the researcher.⁷⁰⁷ Bryman believes that not only can both methods be combined within an overall research project but that, when both are jointly pursued, much more complete accounts of social reality can ensue.⁷⁰⁸ This view is also held by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, who believe researchers should avoid the polarisation of quantitative and qualitative methods that existed in the past.⁷⁰⁹

Qualitative research is frequently described as an umbrella term that includes different methods of research. For example, David Silverman lists observation, analysing texts and documents, interviews, and recording and transcribing as the four major methods of qualitative research.⁷¹⁰ Silverman believes observation is 'fundamental to understanding another culture'.⁷¹¹ He sees as its aim the gathering of firsthand information about social processes in a naturally occurring context, with the focus on what people do rather than what they think they do.⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁵ Alan Bryman, *Methods*, p. 21; Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2001),p. 93.

⁷⁰⁶ Robert Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (London: Sage, 1995),p. 36.

⁷⁰⁷ Robert Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, p. 36.

⁷⁰⁸ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, p. 126.

⁷⁰⁹ Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, *The Practice of Qualitative Research* 2nd ed. edn (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2011),p. 8.

⁷¹⁰ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction, 2nd Edition* (London: Sage Publications, 2002),p. 11.

⁷¹¹ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 12.

⁷¹² David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 14.

Interviews, he claims, offer a deeper picture than can be obtained using quantitative methods.⁷¹³

A frequently used method for collecting quantitative data is a survey carried out by issuing a questionnaire. Both Judith Bell and Tim May claim that surveys are, in May's words, 'a rapid and relatively inexpensive way of discovering the characteristics and beliefs of the population at large'.⁷¹⁴ May differentiates between factual surveys and attitudinal surveys.⁷¹⁵ Factual surveys seek information about the material situation of the respondents while attitudinal surveys investigate peoples' thoughts and beliefs. He classifies the actual questions in a similar manner as closed questions which have a limited range of possible answers and open questions where the respondent can enter whatever they wish in the space provided.⁷¹⁶ May recommends open questions as a useful follow-up to closed questions where the respondent is asked to explain why they chose a particular answer.⁷¹⁷ He goes on to make a further distinction between surveys that seek to test specific theories and those which aim to construct theories, although, he states, all surveys begin with at least some theoretical assumptions which usually come from the researcher's familiarity with the subject under investigation.⁷¹⁸

When a study requires both quantitative and qualitative research, Creswell advocates the use of the mixed methods methodology. He defines mixed methods as,

Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical

⁷¹³ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 18.

⁷¹⁴ Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project* (Maidenhead and New York: Open University Press, 2002), p. 119; Tim May, *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process, Third Edition* (Maidenhead and New York: Open University Press, 2001), p. 89.

⁷¹⁵ Tim May, *Social Research*, p. 89.

⁷¹⁶ Tim May, *Social Research*, p. 102.

⁷¹⁷ Tim May, *Social Research*, p. 103.

⁷¹⁸ Tim May, *Social Research*, p. 91.

frameworks. The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone.⁷¹⁹

Creswell outlines several different types of mixed methods approach, but the one he believes is most useful when the researcher is conducting research in a new field, where there is no existing quantitative or qualitative data, is the explanatory sequential mixed methods approach.⁷²⁰ He explains this approach as one in which the data collection takes place in two distinct phases.⁷²¹ The researcher first conducts quantitative research, analyses the results, and then builds on the results to explain them in more detail with qualitative research. He states it is considered explanatory because the initial quantitative data results are further explained with the qualitative data, and is considered sequential because the initial quantitative phase is followed by the qualitative phase.⁷²² The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach includes steps for analysis and discussion of the data which will be detailed in Chapter Seven.

The Insider/Outsider Debate

The terms 'emic' and 'etic' research were coined by Kenneth Pike to represent research from inside a particular system (emic) and from outside a system (etic).⁷²³ Pike then makes the following points:⁷²⁴

- He describes etic research as cross-cultural, external to the system being researched, with the researcher's standpoint alien to the culture they are researching.

⁷¹⁹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* Vol 4, (London; Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014),p. 4.

⁷²⁰ John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, Vol 4, p. 224.

⁷²¹ John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, Vol 4, p. 224.

⁷²² John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, Vol 4, pp. 15-16.

⁷²³ Kenneth L Pike, Thomas N. Headland, and Marvin Harris, *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate* (Newbury Park, Calif: Sage Publications, 1990),p. 28.

⁷²⁴ Kenneth L Pike, Thomas N. Headland, and Marvin Harris, *Emics and Etics*, pp. 28-30.

- The relevance of etic research is external to the system, and the data gathered will be fragmented or partial.
- Emic research, on the other hand, is focused on one specific culture with the researcher's standpoint describing an internal view, a view of someone familiar with the system who knows how to function within it.
- Emic research is relevant to the internal functioning of the system, and the data will be complete and holistic as the researcher will have knowledge of the bigger picture and will know what is relevant.

According to Pike, the etic researcher can see different components of the system but cannot know how they fit together.⁷²⁵ Pike believes the opposite applies to emic research. In his words, 'The value of emic study is, first, that it leads to an understanding of the way in which a language or culture is constructed, not as a series of miscellaneous parts, but as a working whole'.⁷²⁶ He adds that the emic researcher knows and understands what he calls, 'the individual actors in such a life drama-their attitudes, motives, interests, responses, conflicts, and personality development'.⁷²⁷

A potential problem for the etic researcher, identified by Joanne Pearson, David Hufford and Gustav Jahoda, is that in order for people to answer openly and honestly to questions about their beliefs, they first need to trust the researcher.⁷²⁸ According to Pearson, a lack of trust can occur when a culture is being researched by an outsider - a problem she experienced when she carried out research within the Wiccan community in the UK. She describes how the Wiccan community believed they had been deceived and betrayed by a previous researcher, Tanya Luhrmann, and were cautious and somewhat reluctant to trust another

⁷²⁵ Kenneth L Pike, Thomas N. Headland, and Marvin Harris, *Emics and Etics*, p. 30.

⁷²⁶ Kenneth L Pike, Thomas N. Headland, and Marvin Harris, *Emics and Etics*, p. 32.

⁷²⁷ Kenneth L Pike, Thomas N. Headland, and Marvin Harris, *Emics and Etics*, p. 32.

⁷²⁸ Jo Pearson, *Going Native*, pp. 103-04; T. M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991 [1989]) ; David J. Hufford, *The Scholarly Voice*, p. 300; G. Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition*, pp. 133-34.

researcher.⁷²⁹ The issue of trust is also addressed by Hufford, who believes that people are cautious when asked questions about their beliefs, as they are concerned about having their spiritual and religious beliefs portrayed as credible.⁷³⁰ Jahoda also discussed the problems associated with research in the area of beliefs. He argues that when faced with a strange interviewer, they are cautious about what beliefs they will admit to, and will often give a negative response to a question about their beliefs, regardless of what they actually believe.⁷³¹

Pearson had been initiated into Wicca eighteen months before she began an academic study of the religion, which led her to ask herself, 'Could I, as an insider, maintain the required objective stance required to produce an effective study?'⁷³² She concluded that absolute objectivity cannot exist, that the research will always be filtered by the researcher's views.⁷³³ Hufford, on the same topic, makes the point that an etic researcher is not necessarily any more objective than an emic researcher; to put it another way, a non-believer is not necessarily any more objective than a believer. Discussing research into areas of belief such as spiritual beliefs, he argues that disbelief is not an objective stance. He continues,

If impartiality in belief studies cannot consist of having no personal beliefs, then impartiality must be a methodological stance in which one acknowledges one's personal beliefs but sets them aside for scholarly purposes. Recognizing that each of us has a personal voice, for research purposes we choose to speak instead with our scholarly voice.⁷³⁴

Setting aside personal beliefs and speaking with a scholarly voice may be even more necessary when researching astrology whether the researcher is a believer or a non-believer. Radermacher states that in her view, many outsiders have no desire

⁷²⁹ Jo Pearson, *Going Native*, pp. 103-04; T. M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft*.

⁷³⁰ David J. Hufford, *The Scholarly Voice*, p. 300.

⁷³¹ G. Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition*, pp. 25-26.cited in Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limiter, 2012), pp. 133-134

⁷³² Jo Pearson, *Going Native*, p. 105.

⁷³³ Jo Pearson, *Going Native*, p. 106.

⁷³⁴ David J. Hufford, *The Scholarly Voice*, pp. 61-62.

to be 'on the inside' of an astrological experience, because they share the general perception of astrology as an esoteric subject that often arouses strong and critical reactions in non-astrologers.⁷³⁵ Radermacher, an astrologer, is an emic researcher addressing the issue of researching astrology as an insider. As stated in Chapter One, the last decade has seen growth in the area of the academic study of astrology and these studies have frequently been conducted by insiders. Bird and Brady, both insiders and academics, have addressed the issue of researching astrology as insiders in their doctoral theses. Both classify themselves as emic, as described by Pike. However Brady argues that her role as a qualitative researcher and an academic affords her a certain amount of etic status, thus avoiding the pitfall, also described by Pike, of producing work relevant only within the closed circle of astrology.⁷³⁶ She believes that the combination of emic and etic, 'contribute to providing both knowledge of my research community while at the same time providing some separation from the researched community'.⁷³⁷ She further notes that her position on the emic-etic spectrum is not fixed but can shift during the research and must be monitored to balance the needs of both ends of the continuum.⁷³⁸ Campion, like Brady, believes that the emic and etic positions are not mutually exclusive and a researcher in an emic situation 'is also bound simultaneously to be part of a real, etic, external world'. He therefore argues that a person can adopt emic and etic positions at different points in the research.⁷³⁹

Bird argues that her knowledge as an insider in the world of astrology was an advantage during her research. She believes that her familiarity with the language and mode of expression of astrology equipped her to embark on her anthropological study of astrology and astrologers. She further asserts that this insider knowledge, which cannot be quickly learned by an outsider, is an essential prerequisite to the academic study of astrology. She believes that the very fact that

⁷³⁵ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. viii.

⁷³⁶ Kenneth L. Pike, 'Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behavior', in *Language and Thought*, ed. by D.C. Hildum (Princeton NJ: D.van Norstrand Company, 1967), p. 29.

⁷³⁷ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 38.

⁷³⁸ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 39.

⁷³⁹ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', pp. 10-11.

becoming proficient in astrology takes a significant period of time (she does not give an exact length of time), had led to astrology, in the past, being ignored as a serious subject for ethnographic research.⁷⁴⁰

Taking into account the views of Brady and Bird, as well as Pike and Pearson, leads to the conclusion that there are advantages to studying astrology as an insider, the most important being knowledge of the subject and the community and the likelihood of being trusted by the members of the astrological community. These advantages carry with them the need for the insider to maintain an awareness of their position on the emic-etic continuum identified by Campion, and an awareness of how that position filters their perception of the data. But given Radermacher's conclusion that many non-astrologers have no wish to be on the inside of an astrological experience, a study with the advantages listed by Brady, Bird, Pike, and Pearson, would need to be undertaken by an astrologer.

As detailed in Chapter One, I am an astrologer, IT professional and a web designer and developer. Thus my research could be classified as research by an insider to both astrology and to the world of the Internet. However the research takes place in the world of astrology so it is my position as an insider in the world of astrology that this section addresses.

As an emic researcher I already knew, from nearly three decades involvement with astrology, what Pike calls 'the system' and 'the individual actors'.⁷⁴¹ As was the case for Bird with her research, astrologers participating in my research had no need to explain to me the astrological terms used or the world of modern Western astrology.⁷⁴² Most of the astrologers I interviewed knew me personally or knew of me through my work with the Astrological Association and the Faculty of Astrological Studies, and knew I shared many of their beliefs. This, as stated by Pearson, Hufford and Jahoda, helped avoid a lack of trust that can arise when

⁷⁴⁰ Alison Gwendy Bird, 'Astrology in Education: An Ethnography', p. 6.

⁷⁴¹ Kenneth L Pike, Thomas N. Headland, and Marvin Harris, *Emics and Etics*, p. 32.

⁷⁴² Alison Gwendy Bird, 'Astrology in Education: An Ethnography', p. 6.

people are questioned about their beliefs by someone who does not share them.⁷⁴³ As I am also known as a computing person in the astrological world, one who actively studies the Internet and cyberspace, it was hoped that the interviewees would also feel able to mention, without fear of ridicule, their views not only of astrology, but also their views of the statements in the cyberspace literature that might appear unusual when first encountered, such as the association between the Internet and God.

My position as an astrologer differed from Pearson's in terms of time, as I had been an astrologer for twenty years before I began this project; this potentially, makes me a more embedded insider than she, and her question to herself about maintaining objectivity during her research was something I also had to consider about myself and my research. Accepting Pearson's argument that absolute objectivity cannot exist, and Hufford's, that an etic researcher is not necessarily any more objective than an insider, I also accepted Brady's point that a researcher in the world of astrology, moving among non-researching astrologers, automatically takes on a certain amount of etic status.

Internet Research

A much-discussed problem when it comes to online research is whether or not methods devised for researching the offline world can be used for a different environment. Markham and Baym, discussing this issue, write, 'Novel research terrain brings with it novel difficulties'.⁷⁴⁴ They ask, 'Can we still draw on theories that were developed in an earlier epoch to frame our inquiry and explain our findings?'⁷⁴⁵ Writing in 2009 they claimed that there was a lack of methodological standards in the field of Internet research.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴³ Jo Pearson, *Going Native*, pp. 103-04; David J. Hufford, *The Scholarly Voice*, p. 300; G. Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition*, pp. 133-34; T. M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft*.

⁷⁴⁴ Nancy K. Baym and Annette N. Markham, *Internet Inquiry: Conversations About Method* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2009), p. xiii.

⁷⁴⁵ Nancy K. Baym and Annette N. Markham, *Internet Inquiry: Conversations About Method*, p. xiii.

⁷⁴⁶ Nancy K. Baym and Annette N. Markham, *Internet Inquiry: Conversations About Method*, p. xiv.

When being used for any Internet research or research of Internet data, much of the literature recommends modifications to the traditional methodologies. For example, Fay Sudweeks and Simeon J. Simoff argue that the classical quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, such as those detailed by Bryman and other authors, were not designed for the Internet age and may need certain adaptations before being used for Internet research.⁷⁴⁷ While Bryman states that a combination of qualitative and quantitative produces a more complete result than either method on its own, Sudweeks and Simoff believe that, when used for Internet research, each type has its own benefits and will yield very different results. They write, 'In reality, however, the qualitative and quantitative analyses are usually distinct, mutually exclusive components of the research...The result is an integrated view that narrowly focuses on a particular social phenomenon.'⁷⁴⁸ Thus, they advocate using a method that employs quantitative methods to extract reliable patterns, whereas qualitative methods are incorporated to ensure capturing of the essence of phenomena.⁷⁴⁹

The literature reports that research focusing on social media sites faces specific problems. Some authors, for example Christine Hine, cover the difficulties inherent in researching social media and the inadequacies of traditional research methodologies in this area, and again recommend that the traditional methodologies must be adapted to suit the new environment of social media.⁷⁵⁰ This is frequently argued about the ethnographic approach. While some authors, such as Stine Lomborg, conclude that the interactive and communicative nature of social media requires the ethnographic technique of participant observation, a commonly agreed-on problem is the vast amount of data available; the researcher is faced with the difficult task of which pieces of data to select for analysis and

⁷⁴⁷ Fay Sudweeks and Simeon J. Simoff, 'Complementary Explorative Data Analysis: The Reconciliation of Quantitative and Qualitative Principles', in *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*, ed. by Steve Jones (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 1999), pp. 29-55, p. 32.

⁷⁴⁸ Fay Sudweeks and Simeon J. Simoff, *Complementary Explorative Data Analysis*, p. 37.

⁷⁴⁹ Fay Sudweeks and Simeon J. Simoff, *Complementary Explorative Data Analysis*, p. 41.

⁷⁵⁰ Christine Hine, *Ethnography for the Internet*, p. 41.

which to reject.⁷⁵¹ As discussed below, some authors argue against the approach for this reason, while others seem to view it as the best, if imperfect, option.

Giglietto, Rossi, and Bennato advise against ethnographic approaches in the study of Facebook because, apart from public pages whose sheer amounts of data make them unsuitable for an approach based on in-depth observation, the only profiles and posts a person can see are those of their friends, risking biased results.⁷⁵² They believe research of an application like Facebook is best conducted using a computational approach that can gain access to meta-data on non-friends. However this requires working with a dataset provided by Facebook itself. For this reason studies of this type are usually only done in partnership with Facebook.⁷⁵³ The issue of biased results is also addressed by Lomborg who claims the choices of what to include and exclude from the vast amount of available data is a purely subjective decision on the part of the researcher.⁷⁵⁴ However she believes that the risk of biased results is ever-present in any type of research as the researcher's decision of what data to include is highly subjective.⁷⁵⁵ She considers the technique of web-archiving, which she admits requires a high level of programming skills and the assistance of the research participants owing to the requirement of a login and password by most social media platforms. Considering both sides of the issue, she states,

On the one hand, reliance on a complete record of naturally occurring activities, created through unobtrusive measures, rather than field notes, which are necessarily selective records of data, seen through an ethnographer's prism, arguably provides a stronger basis for systematic and close analyses of the natural organization of communicative practices in social media. On the other hand, the ethnographer's participatory engagement provides for a unique sensitivity to context and to the real-time flow of

⁷⁵¹ Stine Lomborg, 'Researching Communicative Practice: Web Archiving in Qualitative Social Media Research', *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, Vol. 30, Iss. 3-4 (2012), pp. 219-31, p. 225 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15228835.2012.744719>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

⁷⁵² Fabio Giglietto, Luca Rossi, and Davide Bennato, 'Open Laboratory', p. 150.

⁷⁵³ Fabio Giglietto, Luca Rossi, and Davide Bennato, 'Open Laboratory', p. 154.

⁷⁵⁴ Stine Lomborg, 'Communicative Practices', p. 223.

⁷⁵⁵ Stine Lomborg, 'Communicative Practices', p. 225.

events on and across social media that is lost in the web archive.⁷⁵⁶

Lomborg concludes from the above that a participant observation approach is needed.⁷⁵⁷ Kendall also recommends that for interactive online environments all research should include participant observation.⁷⁵⁸ However Kozinets believes that this is insufficient and more direct interaction with group members is needed. He argues that what he terms 'unobtrusive downloads without any social contact' result in 'only a shallow and cursory understanding'.⁷⁵⁹

Kozinets advocates an open and exploratory approach in the research of Internet cultures and communities, that will allow for the continually evolving environment.⁷⁶⁰ He recommends Creswell's approach to qualitative research, which recommends the choice of broad questions.⁷⁶¹ A core part of researching an online environment involves knowing the environment and interacting with the members of the community being researched. As part of the planning process, Kozinets recommends that the researcher familiarise themselves with several online communities, their members, language, interests, and practices.⁷⁶² At the data collection stage, which he states does not happen in isolation from analysis, he prescribes communicating with members of the culture or community which involves engagement, contact, interaction, communion, relation, collaboration, and connection with community members.⁷⁶³

⁷⁵⁶ Stine Lomborg, 'Communicative Practices', p. 227.

⁷⁵⁷ Stine Lomborg, 'Communicative Practices', p. 227.

⁷⁵⁸ Diane F. Witmer, Robert W. Colman, and Sandra Lee Katzman, 'From Paper-and-Pencil to Screen-and-Key-board: Toward a Methodology for Survey Research on the Internet', in *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*, ed. by Steve Jones (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 1999), pp. 145-61, p. 147; Lori Kendall, 'Recontextualizing "Cyberspace": Methodological Considerations for on-Line Research', in *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*, ed. by Steve Jones (London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 1999), pp. 57-74, p. 57.

⁷⁵⁹ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, pp. 96-97.

⁷⁶⁰ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 78.

⁷⁶¹ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, pp. 80-81.

⁷⁶² Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 79.

⁷⁶³ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 95.

My Research

Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Accepting the view of Bryman that not only could qualitative and quantitative research methods be used in the same research project, but that using both would produce a more complete account of social reality than using either method on its own, I decided that both qualitative and quantitative approaches were necessary to my research.⁷⁶⁴ Determining astrologers' use of the Internet required a quantitative approach best suited to a questionnaire, while an investigation into their beliefs about cyberspace and its effects on astrology required qualitative research with its emphasis on words and meaning. The qualitative approach would involve observation and interviews, following Silverman's statements that observation is fundamental to understanding a culture, and that interviews offer a deeper picture than quantitative studies.⁷⁶⁵

My questionnaire was designed to yield mainly quantitative data about use of the Internet, and the numbers of astrologers who supported the claims made by the early cyberspace theorists, as discussed in Chapter Three. Within this quantitative approach, a small number of the questions were qualitative in nature as it was hoped that the responses to them could be used as the basis of qualitative analysis and further investigation in the interviews. For example, following May's recommendations, some of the questions that required quantitative answers also asked the respondents to explain their answers which, it was hoped, would elicit replies that could be explored in interviews.⁷⁶⁶ It was expected that the interviews would yield a different type of information than that of the questionnaires, with more detail of the personal experiences and what Bryman termed the 'view of the world' of the interviewees, which he claims is best investigated through interviews.⁷⁶⁷ In keeping with the characteristics of qualitative research as listed by Bryman, Silverman, and McLeod, there was no hypotheses to test with the

⁷⁶⁴ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, p. 126.

⁷⁶⁵ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, pp. 12-18.

⁷⁶⁶ Tim May, *Social Research*, p. 103.

⁷⁶⁷ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, pp. 124-25.

interviews.⁷⁶⁸ Instead, they consisted of open-ended questions asking astrologers' views on the Internet and the themes found in the cyberspace literature or identified by the questionnaire respondents, and on the impact, if any, of the Internet on astrology. As will be discussed later in this chapter, because of the increase in the use of social media by astrologers, a proportion of the interviews would have to focus on its use for astrology and any effects this use might have.

Because my study required both quantitative and qualitative research, with the qualitative research following the quantitative research and attempting to expand on and explain the results of the quantitative research, I decided to follow Creswell's explanatory sequential mixed methods approach.

Internet Research

To investigate the astrology taking place over social media, I decided to carry out research of the Facebook astrology groups. This section of my research involved reviewing the qualitative and quantitative methods outlined above, that had been created for offline research and, as stated by Sudweeks and Simoff, needed some adaptations in order to take into account the online environment. For example, to obtain quantitative data about astrologers' membership of Facebook groups, I had considered issuing an online questionnaire to members of the Facebook group pages. This would have allowed a comparison between the results of the online and offline questionnaires. However, Robert W. Coleman, Sandra Lee Katzman, and Diane F. Witmer found that Internet-based survey research often results in inadequate levels of responses.⁷⁶⁹ Added to that was the fact that some members of the online groups had also been present at the conferences where the offline questionnaires had been issued and had completed one. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the results of the 2012 questionnaire showed that almost 100% of the astrologers surveyed use the Internet for astrology, and 40% of the astrologers

⁷⁶⁸ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 12; John McLeod, *Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy* (London: SAGE, 2001), p. 133; Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, p. 96.

⁷⁶⁹ Diane F. Witmer, Robert W. Colman, and Sandra Lee Katzman, *Doing Internet Research*, p. 147.

surveyed use Facebook for astrology. These results led me to conclude that offline and online astrologers are not two discrete groups. If questionnaires were issued to astrologers who use the Internet for astrology, or more specifically, those who use Facebook for astrology, it could result in data duplication that might not be possible to identify, as not all the offline questionnaire respondents had given their names. For this reason I decided to focus on gathering qualitative data from the Facebook groups.

Taking into account Gigletto et al's findings concerning the vast amount of data available on Facebook pages, and bearing in mind the large number of Facebook astrology groups, I decided that participant observation was not a practical approach. Following Kozinets' recommendation against downloading data without content, I decided that the social media component would comprise qualitative research consisting of interviews with some group administrators. The interviews would take place after having spent some time observing the Facebook group pages in order to, as recommended by Kozinets, familiarise myself with several online communities and their interests and practices.⁷⁷⁰ The interviews with the group administrators would serve as the engagement with the community that Kozinets also recommends.⁷⁷¹ Because the administrators of the groups were based in different parts of the world, all of the interviews, with one exception, were carried out online using Cisco WebEx, an online meeting software. Kozinets believes that when online interviews have an audio and video connection, as WebEx does, they can be extremely valuable.⁷⁷² The exception was an administrator who also attended an offline conference in the US in September 2014. As I was also present at the conference, it was possible to conduct the interview face-to-face. The interviews took place between September 2014 and March 2015.

⁷⁷⁰ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 79.

⁷⁷¹ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 95.

⁷⁷² Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 46.

boyd recommends when researching social network sites to focus on a sample population rather than a wide group, so four specific groups were chosen.⁷⁷³ The groups were concerned with different areas of astrology and differed in the number of members, ranging from 459 to 2139. To familiarise myself with the online community, I had joined these Facebook groups, among others, at the end of 2012 as recommended by Kozinets above and by Giglietto et al.⁷⁷⁴ Although I did not intend to use any direct quotes from the groups, I informed the group administrators, known as 'admins', that I was researching Facebook groups and asked them to grant me interviews. The results of the social media component of the research are discussed in Chapter Eight.

Ethical Issues

The ethical issues that arose in my research concerned what could and could not be quoted and whether a speaker or writer could or could not be named. As Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan state, 'The Internet' is now an umbrella term for numerous devices, technologies, and social spaces.⁷⁷⁵ Different Internet spaces may necessitate different ethical considerations and Markham and Buchanan believe that each consideration is best addressed and resolved as it arises in the study. They argue that it can be difficult to decide whether something is a piece of data, for example a set of tweets, or if it is a human person, for example a post on a members' only forum.⁷⁷⁶ Added to that, the researcher needs to consider if their classification of the privacy setting of the item is the same as that of the person who posted it. For example a Facebook group could have public settings but there could be group agreement that posts are not discussed anywhere outside the page on which they are posted.⁷⁷⁷ Another issue they highlight is that even when entries on a forum or social media are quoted anonymously, they can contain enough

⁷⁷³ danah boyd, *Networked Publics*, p. 55.

⁷⁷⁴ Fabio Giglietto, Luca Rossi, and Davide Bennato, 'Open Laboratory', p. 155.

⁷⁷⁵ Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, 'Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research', (2012) <<http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>> (p. 3).

⁷⁷⁶ Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, 'Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research', <<http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>>, p. 7.

⁷⁷⁷ Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, 'Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research', <<http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>>, p. 8.

information to identify the person.⁷⁷⁸ Markham and Buchanan state that there are certain groups of people who could be harmed if their identity was revealed, for example, by losing their jobs. Bearing these points in mind and taking into account the recommendations in the 2012 ethical guideline from the Association of Internet Researchers (AIR), I followed the procedures listed below.⁷⁷⁹

Websites and Blogs

Statements made on publicly available websites were quoted and the authors name stated if relevant. Blogs which are publicly available on the Internet are treated as websites in this thesis, and the author named where relevant.

Questionnaires

Questionnaire data tends to be summarised and reported in terms of percentages. In some cases, comments from individual respondents are included anonymously. As stated above by Markham and Buchanan, for some people anonymity is crucial, and this was the case with some of the questionnaire respondents. As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, some astrologers stated that they are not 'out' as astrologers in their local communities, due to the fact that they live in very conservative Christian areas, where astrology is not considered in keeping with Christian values.

Interviews

Each interviewee signed the standard University of Wales Trinity Saint David interview release form, giving permission for their statements to be used in the thesis and in presentations and publications. In Chapter Eight, which analyses the interviews, interviewees are given a number and referred to in the text as Astrologer 1, Astrologer 2, etc. Care is taken to edit any comments that could

⁷⁷⁸ Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, 'Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research', <<http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>>, p. 7.

⁷⁷⁹ Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, 'Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research', <<http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>>.

betray the identity of the astrologer to other astrologers. When this happens it is made clear in the text.

Social Networks

Facebook Pages

Some Facebook pages are public and can be viewed by anyone regardless of whether or not they are a Facebook friend of the page owner. Other pages are viewable by Facebook friends of the page owner only. Regardless of the visibility settings of the page I have treated them all as private. Posts from an individual page are only included in the text with the permission of the page owner and are anonymous. The users were told exactly how the posts would be used and were assured that they would not be identified.

Facebook Groups

Four Facebook groups were singled out for observation in order that I familiarise myself with the environment before interviewing the group administrators. This was done with the written permission of the group administrators. It was agreed that no quotes from group members would be used, even anonymously, without the permission of the individual member concerned. As with posts on Facebook pages, the posters were never identified.

The Questionnaires

Researching Astrologers' Use of the Internet

The first round of data gathering took place in 2009 and a second round began in 2012. Both of these rounds involved the issue of questionnaires. Combined, they comprised the quantitative research section of the explanatory sequential mixed methods research approach.

As discussed in Chapter Three and above, Internet research carries with it the issue of rapid and sometimes radical changes in technology and use of the medium. While most of my research was offline research and did not take place over the

Internet, the rapidly changing Internet and its use were the focus of the research. Sudweeks and Simoff note that constant changes in technology need to be taken into account when researching the Internet.⁷⁸⁰ They claim that the speed of change makes the replication of research experiments in the area difficult if not impossible.⁷⁸¹ Taking this into account, it was accepted at the start of the 2012 research that, in addition to the newly added social media section, it could yield very different results to those of 2009 and, as the research was continuing up to and including 2015, the later results of the second round of research could differ from the earlier results of that round. The questions being posed in the interviews could possibly have to change over the two years to take these changes into account.

2009

In 2009 I issued a questionnaire (Appendix 1) to astrologers in the UK and the USA to investigate the extent of their use of the Internet, as well as their views of and reactions to the concepts written about by the cyberspace theorists. The questionnaire was what May terms 'a self-completion questionnaire', meaning that respondents were asked to complete it themselves and return it.⁷⁸² As recommended by May, the questionnaire was issued with a covering letter from the Sophia Centre at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (then University of Wales, Lampeter), explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and asking for cooperation.⁷⁸³ The questionnaire was followed up with interviews.

The aim of the questionnaire was to discover the extent to which astrologers use the Internet, their attitudes to it and their beliefs about it. Some questions would attempt to find answers to the research areas posed by Dawson and Cowan. Other questions would be based on the themes from the earlier literature; for example, as discussed in Chapter Three, do the respondents perceive the Internet as:

⁷⁸⁰ Fay Sudweeks and Simeon J. Simoff, *Complementary Explorative Data Analysis*, p. 31.

⁷⁸¹ Fay Sudweeks and Simeon J. Simoff, *Complementary Explorative Data Analysis*, p. 38.

⁷⁸² Tim May, *Social Research*, p. 97.

⁷⁸³ Tim May, *Social Research*, p. 97.

- Another world
- An extension of the real world
- A place of freedom
- A community centre
- A mental space
- A place to make money

As stated by Cresswell, finding people or places to study and to gain access and establish rapport so that the participants will provide good data is a crucial step in the data gathering process.⁷⁸⁴ A place was needed where groups of astrologers were gathered, such as an astrology conference. To test Karaflogka's statement that Americans had a particularly strong affinity with cyberspace, it was decided to issue the questionnaire in two lots: at an astrological conference in the USA where, it was hoped, a large proportion of the delegates would be American, and at an astrological conference in the UK, where it was hoped, a large proportion would be from Europe. Permission was sought and gained from both sets of conference organisers for the questionnaire to be issued. The American conference was organised by the International Society for Astrological Research (ISAR) and was held in Chicago, Illinois, from 20th to 23rd August 2009. The conference in the UK was the annual conference of the then, Astrological Association of Great Britain (now The Astrological Association). This was held from the 18th to 20th September 2009 in Wyboston Lakes Conference Centre, Bedford, UK.

Both Bell and May warn against phrasing questions in ways that unintentionally make assumptions, lead the respondents or, for any reason, make it difficult for them to answer honestly.⁷⁸⁵ Care was taken when wording the questions to avoid these pitfalls but, as pointed out above, as I am a double insider, being involved in both the astrological and computing worlds, there were potential dangers, such as

⁷⁸⁴ John W. Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (London: Sage, 1998) pp. 110-11.

⁷⁸⁵ Judith Bell, *Research Project*, pp. 122-24; Tim May, *Social Research*, p. 101.

a lack of awareness of being a researcher and slipping into the insider role.⁷⁸⁶ A frequent recommendation in the literature is to pilot the questionnaire on a small number of the intended recipients to check that the questions are clear, easy to answer and non-offensive. Feedback can also be sought on layout and if the recipients believed any important topic had been omitted.⁷⁸⁷

Pilot

I decided to test the questionnaire on a small group of astrologers before issuing it at the conferences. In March-June 2009, a pilot questionnaire was issued to six United Kingdom based astrologers who gave feedback, via email, on their interpretation of the questions and the physical layout of the questionnaire. Care was taken to choose astrologers with both many years experience in astrology and who used the Internet for astrology. Several changes were made as a result of their feedback. Some questions based on the technologies used to create the astrologers' personal websites were removed and other questions were re-worded. For example the pilot questionnaire asked if the astrologer had a personal website and, if so, what technologies had been used to create it. The aim of this had been to determine the level of technical sophistication of the websites. Two of the astrologers reported a negative reaction to the question about the technologies used to create the website. One answered that the question discouraged her from completing the questionnaire as she did not have a website and she would not be able to answer questions about technologies. Another, who was the only astrologer with a personal website, said that as she did not know what technology had been used, it made her feel 'inadequate'. Based on there being only one astrologer with a website, and the negative response from two of the respondents, I decided to take both questions out of the final questionnaire. In another question - question four - 'Are you an astrologer?' - the potential answers were expanded on the advice of one astrologer. The options in the initial version were: Professional, Amateur or No, but the astrologer pointed out that many part-time astrologers, although working

⁷⁸⁶ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, p. 96.

⁷⁸⁷ Judith Bell, *Research Project*, p. 128.

professionally as an astrologer, could class themselves as amateur because they had a second job, often referred to as 'the day job'. Based on this feedback the options were changed to: Yes - Full-Time, Yes - Part-Time, Yes - Amateur, or No. The questionnaire was finalised by early July 2009 and was issued in August and September of that year.

Rationale of the Questions in 2009 Questionnaire

Section One attempted to find out how astrologers use the Internet and to what extent there is an online astrological community. It was hoped that the respondents would range from those who just browse occasionally to daily users. If it turned out that a large number of astrologers did not use the Internet at all that, too, would be valuable information. The questions in this section were designed to elicit answers to Dawson's and Cowan's research areas one, three, four, five, and six. This was intended to uncover who is using the Internet and why, the nature of their online experiences compared to offline experiences, the actual activities they are carrying out online, and how they use the features of the technology. Using May's classification of survey types listed above, this section contained both factual and attitudinal or opinion questions. The factual questions asked about the respondents' Internet usage and the attitudinal questions about their views on the Internet applications they used.⁷⁸⁸ The factual questions were closed questions where there were a limited number of answers; the attitudinal questions were open questions where the respondents could write whatever they wished.

Section Two sought to investigate if, as reported by both Luhrmann and Davis, that the strong affinity the Pagan community and 'magic users' in general have with cyberspace is shared by astrologers.⁷⁸⁹ A starting point was to determine if astrologers are attracted to cyberspace in the ways in which the earlier literature claimed. The issues of dualism, community and identity, as discussed in Chapter Three, were also explored. This section addressed Dawson and Cowan's research

⁷⁸⁸ Tim May, *Social Research*, p. 89.

⁷⁸⁹ T. M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England*, p. 106; Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 220.

areas one and two about why people use the Internet and the nature and quality of people's experiences online. All the questions in this section were attitudinal or opinion questions which were closed. The respondents chose from a limited range of answers for each question depending on their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of statements.

As stated in Chapter Three, according to Karaflogka, the terms 'Internet' and 'cyberspace' are often used interchangeably:

Thus, the Internet, the Web and cyberspace, albeit entirely distinct from one other, are thought of as closely intertwined, so that often the terms overlap and people refer to the Internet as synonymous with either the Web or cyberspace.⁷⁹⁰

However she sees them as distinct from each other. She describes the Internet as 'the combination of hardware/software tools that form that entity we call the Internet. In essence, it is a planetary compilation of computer networks, collaborating with one another using common software.'⁷⁹¹ Cyberspace however, she calls 'the place where the act of connectivity and interactivity takes place'.⁷⁹² She continues, 'Cyberspace should be understood as a space/place, which although part of the network, is nevertheless completely different from it'.⁷⁹³

Following Karaflogka's dualistic view of the Internet and cyberspace, respondents were told that for the purpose of the survey, there is a difference between the two. They were given the following definitions:

The Internet refers to the physical network of computers and software, while cyberspace refers to a place or space entered when a person logs on. This is where the act of connectivity and interactivity takes place.

⁷⁹⁰ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 25.

⁷⁹¹ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 24.

⁷⁹² Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 25.

⁷⁹³ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 25.

Respondents were told that if they did not wish to answer any of the questions, to leave them blank.

Section One

Question one asks the respondent to specify their age group from a range of age groups.

The first of Dawson and Cowan's research areas seeks to discover who is using the Internet and why. Questions one, two, three, and four in this section seek data on the ages and locations of the respondents and their level of engagement with astrology. As Internet usage differs from country to country and among different age groups, the responses to questions one, two, and three will enable a comparison to be made between the respondent's replies and the average for a person in that age group and country of residence. This will indicate if astrologers use the Internet more or less than the average for a person in that age group from the same part of the world.

Question two asks for the nationality of the respondent and question three, their country of residence.

At the conferences where the questionnaire was being issued, the delegates lists showed that, of the total number of astrologers attending the two conferences approximately one-third were from the United States and one-third from Britain. The remaining third were from various other European and American countries. It is possible that the breakdown of the respondents' countries will follow this pattern.

Based on Karaflogka's statement that cyberspace is an American concept and Healy's association of cyberspace with the American Wild West and its role in the modern American psyche, it is expected that respondents from the United States will have different views about cyberspace, and will have a greater affinity with the concepts discussed above.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹⁴ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 19; Dave Healy, *Cyberspace and Place*, p. 55.

Question four asks if the respondent is an astrologer and if so, whether or not this is their full-time occupation.

The answers to these questions will indicate if full-time astrologers use the Internet more or in different ways to part-time astrologers.

Questions five, six, and seven ask respondents if they have Internet access and queries the extent of their use and how long it is since they first started using the Internet regularly.

The answers to these questions will indicate the extent to which the respondents use the Internet and allow comparisons to be made between the respondents and the general population. This will indicate whether or not astrologers use the Internet more than the population in general.

Davis wrote that 'magic users' were among the first people to colonise the Internet.⁷⁹⁵ This question should reveal whether or not the astrologers who attend conferences and belong to an offline community are the early Internet astrologers. If they are not, then it indicates that there are other groups of astrologers out there whose astrology is mainly online.

Question eight asks about the percentage of online time concerned with astrology.

Dawson and Cowan's third research area asks for studies of the relationships between people's religious activities online and offline. Questions eight to eleven attempt to apply this question to astrology by asking about the respondents' experience of their online astrological activity and contacts compared to those offline.

Question nine asks about the percentage of their astrological time that is spent online.

⁷⁹⁵ Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 220.

This question reveals the extent to which a person is an online compared to offline astrologer.

Question ten asks if respondents consider themselves part of an online astrological community and question eleven asks respondents how they would compare participation in an online astrological community to participation in an offline astrological community.

Wellman and Campbell, as stated in Chapter Three, both argue that computer systems are inherently social and have enabled online relationships, based on shared interests rather than physical geography, that foster a sense of community.⁷⁹⁶ As also stated in Chapter Three, Rheingold writes about the online community of which he is part, and where his emotional bond is as strong as with offline friends.⁷⁹⁷ The purpose of these questions is to indicate if there is an online astrological community that is meeting peoples' astrological and/or emotional needs and how they view it in comparison to any offline astrological communities to which they belong.

Questions twelve and thirteen ask if the respondent uses the Internet to read astrological material such as articles, tutorials, book reviews, etc., and asks them to compare it to reading material offline in terms of which they prefer.

Dawson and Cowan, in research area one, highlight the need to know not just who is using the Internet for religious purposes, but how they are using it and why. Their research question three calls for studies of the relationship between online and offline religious activities. Questions twelve to sixteen of the questionnaire concern different astrological use of the Internet and how the online activities in each area compare to the same activities offline.

The Internet contains literally, millions, of websites containing astrological material, as can be demonstrated by typing the word 'astrology' into a search engine such as

⁷⁹⁶ Barry Wellman, Janet Salaff, Dimitrina Dimitrova, Laura Garton, Milena Gulia, and Caroline Haythornthwaite, 'Computer Networks as Social Networks: Collaborative Work, Telework, and Virtual Community', p. 2013; Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 41.

⁷⁹⁷ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. xvii.

Google. If the responses to this question show that the astrologers read online astrological material, their views on the quality and impact of the online material can be sought in the interviews.

Question fourteen asks respondents to compare their online astrological contacts and friendships with offline friendships in terms of which is most important to them and question fifteen asks if they are with the same people.

Just as with questions ten and eleven, these questions relate to an astrologer's potential sense of online community and a sense of belonging that has been reported in other studies. Responses to a questionnaire issued to Technopagans showed that they felt safer and more accepted online compared to the offline world where they sometimes suffered for their beliefs and were sometimes victimised.⁷⁹⁸ While it is not being assumed that astrologers feel victimized, if it turns out that astrologers' astrological friends are more likely to be online, it raises the question 'Why?'. If in this questionnaire the online and offline friendships were with the same people, then the answer to the question of which is the most important to them becomes even more significant in terms of the information it yields about their relationship with cyberspace.

A 2008 survey of online adults and children by Norton Online Living shows that up to half of online adults have made friends online, with 62% of responding UK adults and 70% of US responding adults having met an online friend in person. In the UK, 43% of online adults enjoy their online relationships as much or more than their offline friendships. In the US this figure is 40%. Caroline Cockerill, Norton Online Safety Advocate for Symantec, said: 'The Norton Online Living Report highlights how the boundaries have blurred between the online and offline worlds and the effect this is having on our families and as individuals'.⁷⁹⁹ This statement supports Agre's view that computing is increasingly about the activities and relationships of

⁷⁹⁸ David Thompson, "The Craft and the Web: Internet Services and the Pagan Community," <http://www.thewellhead.org.uk/Elders/survey.htm>. [Accessed 01/05/2009]

⁷⁹⁹ Caroline Cockerill, 'New Global Report Reveals Startling Statistics About Online Digital Family Behavior', (RealWire, 2008).

real life, and the boundary between the real world and the world of computer-mediated services is steadily eroding.⁸⁰⁰

Question sixteen asks respondents to rate the astrology they practice and teach online in terms of whether it is the same, better or worse than their offline astrology.

Dawson and Cowan's second research area calls for studies of peoples' experiences of carrying out religious activities online. As detailed in Chapter Five, many astrological schools, such as the UK-based Faculty of Astrological Studies or the Mayo School, now teach online and many astrologers offer online consultations.⁸⁰¹ This question queries the respondents' experiences of online teaching and practice - astrological equivalents of Dawson and Cowan's 'doing religious things online'.

Question seventeen asks respondents if they belong to any general social networking websites, like Facebook, Twitter or MySpace.

In 2008 the UK Facebook site had twenty-three million visitors compared with Twitter's 3.8 million over thirty days.⁸⁰² Also in 2009 just under 20% of the population of the U.S. were Facebook users.⁸⁰³ This question seeks to determine the extent of the use of social media by astrologers and aims to answer Dawson and Cowan's question number four concerning peoples' online activity.

Question eighteen asks if astrology plays any part in the online social network.

The answer to this question may also reveal if the astrologers use of online social networks is mainly for astrological use, or if they use them for other reasons.

⁸⁰⁰ Philip E. Agre, 'Life after Cyberspace', *EASST*, (1999) <http://easst.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/review_1999_03.pdf>.[Accessed 15/07/2015]

⁸⁰¹ Anon, "Welcome to the Faculty of Astrological Studies Online Learning Environment," <http://www.astrology.org.uk/study-with-us/online-learning-environment/>.[Accessed 22/03/2015]; Anon, "Becoming Familiar with Distance Learning - Mayo School of Astrology," http://www.mayoastrology.com/astrology_distance_learning.html.[Accessed 22/03/2015]

⁸⁰² Anon, "Facebook Newsroom: Statistics, <http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>.[Accessed 20/02/2015]

⁸⁰³ Pew Internet, "Latest Stats, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Whos-Online.aspx>.[Accessed 17/12/2009]

Question nineteen asks about blogs and the activities in which respondents participate in terms of posting, reading or moderating.

In the US in December 2008, 32% of Internet users had read someone else's blog and in September 2009, 26% had posted a comment. 15% had created or worked on websites or blogs for others and 11% had worked on their own blogs.⁸⁰⁴ In the UK in 2009, 40% of Internet users stated that they had posted to chat sites, blogs and newsgroups.⁸⁰⁵ The answers to this question will allow comparisons to be made between astrologers' use of blogs and that of the general population.

Question twenty asks about Virtual Reality (VR) websites such as Second Life, World of Warcraft or the Google version – Lively.

Cyberspace, as described by Gibson, has not manifested in the way the Internet theorists of the 1990s, such as Benedikt, believed it would.⁸⁰⁶ Virtual Reality sites such as those mentioned in this question, while not experienced with all the senses, are arguably the closest match to Gibson's cyberspace available in 2015. In Second Life the user has a virtual body that he or she can design and control online in the virtual world. Second Life describes itself as, 'The largest-ever 3D virtual world created entirely by its users'.⁸⁰⁷

The aim of this question is to determine how deeply the astrologer is involved in the other-worldly aspect of cyberspace. It has been argued that cyberspace represents another world, the other, transmundane, half of a dualistic cosmos. Astrologer's involvement in Virtual Reality could suggest a desire to escape into the non-material world.

Question twenty-one asks if astrology plays any part in the VR world.

⁸⁰⁴ Pew Internet, "Internet Use over Time," Pew Internet, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Online-Activites-Total.aspx>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

⁸⁰⁵ Anon, *Internet Access: Households and Individuals 2009*, (Office for National Statistics, 2009).

⁸⁰⁶ Michael Benedikt, 'Towards a General Theory of Value: An Interview with Michael Benedikt', <<http://gain2.aiga.org/content.cfm?ContentAlias=michaelbenedikt1>>. [Accessed 31/05/2015]

⁸⁰⁷ Anon, "Second Life," <http://secondlife.com>. [Accessed 29/03/2015]

The answer to this question will yield information about astrologers' reasons for using these tools. If astrology does not play a part, it suggests they are being used for their own sake, which raises further questions about the nature of the experience in light of the theory, found in the first wave literature, of cyberspace as a separate, transmundane world.

Question twenty-two asks if respondents belong to any specialist astrological message boards, forums or instant message-like systems like MSN.

In December 2008, 7% of Internet users in the US had participated in an online discussion. 38% had sent instant messages.⁸⁰⁸ In 2009 less than 2% of the world's population used IM, but this was expected to grow to 23% by 2010.⁸⁰⁹ The purpose of this question is to reveal the extent of astrological use of these technologies.

Question twenty-three asks if respondents use the Internet for research, news, distance education or meetings.

The aim of this question is the same as that of question twenty-two in seeking to discover if astrologers use cyberspace as a means of communication and education. While question sixteen, taking a qualitative approach, asked about respondents experience of online teaching, this question is designed to reveal quantitative data.

Question twenty-four asks if the respondent has a RSS system that they use for news that is likely to be of interest to them as an astrologer.

Dawson and Cowan's research area five calls for studies of how the features of the technology itself are utilised. This question is about astrologers' use of more complex technology, if any, for their astrology.

Question twenty-five asks if respondents use their own or false identities on the Internet, how often and why.

⁸⁰⁸Pew Internet, "Internet Use over Time, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Online-Activites-Total.aspx>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

⁸⁰⁹Pew Internet, "Internet Use over Time, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Online-Activites-Total.aspx>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

The ability of a user to conceal their offline identity in cyberspace is discussed in the literature, with Turkle noting that people can have several different online personae; this gives them the opportunity to explore multiple aspects of the self in parallel.⁸¹⁰ This question is aimed at discovering whether or not astrologers conceal their offline identities when using the Internet for astrology and why.

Section Two

Question twenty-six asks how much the respondents agree or disagree with a set of statements.

The statements are based on the existing literature in cyberspace theory. Each statement in this question represents a claim that the Internet is being perceived in this way. This question checks if that holds true for astrologers. Some of the themes asked in the earlier questions are revisited in later questions in an attempt to take the respondent by surprise, to see if they give the same response.

a. When I log on to the Internet, I enter another world

According to Bell and others, when a person sits in front of a computer screen they enter another world.⁸¹¹ This view of two separate worlds is a form of cosmological dualism. In the early cyberspace literature this world takes many forms and can be religious or secular. The aim of this statement is to firstly reveal if the astrologers have a sense of entering another place and, ultimately, if they believe there is a dualism between cyberspace the material world.

b. When I log on to the Internet, I lose touch with the offline world

Cyberspace has been called both Cartesian and Gnostic. It is claimed that it offers an escape from the physical body. This question seeks to discover if the astrologers view cyberspace in this anthropologically dualistic way or if they believe, as Stone argues, that 'there is always a body attached'.⁸¹²

⁸¹⁰ Sherry Turkle, 'Identity', p. 643.

⁸¹¹ David Bell, *Cyberculture Reader*, p. 3.

⁸¹² Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, p. 111.

c. Cyberspace can be a sacred space

Cyberspace has been compared to the Christian Heaven, the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem, the Garden of Eden, and Utopia.⁸¹³ It has been claimed that it fits the description of Mircea Eliade's sacred space, in that it meets the conditions necessary for a hierophany or irruption of the sacred, that results in the territory, in this case cyberspace, becoming detached from its surroundings and becoming qualitatively different.⁸¹⁴ Helland, O'Leary, and Cowan report use of cyberspace as a venue for religious activity, while astrologers use it as a venue for astrological consultations. This question seeks to identify astrologers' views on the nature of cyberspace, particularly the questions of whether or not it can be an appropriate venue for a sacred activity and if they believe that the sacred can manifest online.

d. There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace

This statement is an extension of the concept being investigated in the previous statement. If cyberspace can be a sacred space, then does it contain a divine presence? According to Ulansey, the gods of the twenty-first century are in cyberspace, and back in the 1980s the cyberspace of Gibson's fiction contained a god.⁸¹⁵ This question asks astrologers if they agree, which should reveal more about their concept of the Internet as a potentially sacred venue.

e. Cyberspace is god

The idea of cyberspace as God has been posited by Ward and Zaleski.⁸¹⁶ Naughton claims that the Internet is no longer under the control of humanity. He concludes that since it is resilient enough to withstand a nuclear attack, it is unlikely that it could be switched off.⁸¹⁷ In this view of cyberspace, it has a conscious existence of

⁸¹³ For example see Michael Benedikt's, 'Cyberspace: Some Proposals', in *Cyberspace: First Steps*, pp. 120-224 or Margaret Wertheim, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace* (London: W.W. Norton & Co. Ltd, 1999), or William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, p. 12.

⁸¹⁴ Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', p. 55.

⁸¹⁵ David Ulansey, 'Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace', <<http://www.mysterium.com/cultural.html>>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]; William Gibson, *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, p. 138.

⁸¹⁶ Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God*, p. xvi; Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives* p. 20.

⁸¹⁷ John Naughton, *A Brief History of the Future*, p. 36.

its own outside human control. This statement is designed to uncover if astrologers support this view and if so, their reaction to it.

f. I feel safe in cyberspace

A study of Technopagans concluded that a lot of them feel safer in cyberspace as they are free from intimidation, physical attack, and discrimination.⁸¹⁸ Astrologers have also been subject to polemical attacks, as described by Campion, so it is possible that they might also share the view of cyberspace as a safe haven where they can practice and discuss astrology with other astrologers.⁸¹⁹

g. I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace

j. In cyberspace I never feel lonely

Statements g and j, have implications for the issue of online community. Rheingold and Wellman have written about the Internet's potential to facilitate a sense of community, while Campbell believes that social networking is not simply a by-product of computer networking, but a prime motivator for the growth and development of the internet.⁸²⁰ The responses to statements g and j will indicate the views of astrologers on this concept.

h. I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace

i. I feel powerful when I'm in cyberspace

k. In cyberspace I feel immortal

l. In cyberspace I can know everything

It has been argued, for example by Heim and Cox and Paul, that cyberspace enables human beings to believe they can collectively become God.⁸²¹ God-like feelings of omnipotence, omniscience and a desire for immortality have all been much

⁸¹⁸ David Thompson, "The Craft and the Web: Internet Services and the Pagan Community, <http://www.thewellhead.org.uk/Elders/survey.htm>. [Accessed 30/04/2014]

⁸¹⁹ Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement*, pp. 106-08.

⁸²⁰ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 41.

⁸²¹ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 69; Earl Cox and Gregory S. Paul, *Beyond Humanity: Cyberevolution and Future Mind*, pp. 1-7.

discussed in connection with cyberspace. Statements h, i, k and l ask respondents if they believe or feel they have god-like qualities when in cyberspace.

m. In cyberspace I can do anything I want

Barlovian cyberspace is the name given to the concept of cyberspace as a space or place where the laws of the physical world did not apply.⁸²² It is named after Barlow who declared cyberspace to be 'naturally independent of the tyrannies you (governments of the industrial world) seek to impose on us'.⁸²³ Statement m is designed to discover if the respondents have this view of cyberspace.

While statements a and b deal directly with dualism, the responses to all the statements are relevant to the issue of dualism. All of the statements start from the position of cyberspace as a separate world, where the astrologer may feel differently to the way they feel when they are offline. A positive response to these statements will suggest a dualistic view of cyberspace.

Interviews

The Aim of the Interviews

It was intended that the results of the questionnaires would form the basis for semi-structured interviews, where astrologers could speak freely about their beliefs. The choice of semi-structured interviews rather than unstructured was to ensure that, in addition to hearing the astrologers' views, certain topics were covered, as recommended by Stake.⁸²⁴ The interviews would cover the concepts of cyberspace discussed in the literature review, particularly the issues of community and dualism.

⁸²² M. Featherstone and R. Burrows, *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk*, p. 5.

⁸²³ John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," <http://homes.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>. (Accessed 21/6/2010)

⁸²⁴ Robert Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, p. 65.

According to Creswell, qualitative researchers need to choose broad questions that ask for 'an exploration of the central phenomenon or concept in study'. He believes that the intent of qualitative researchers should be to explore a complex set of factors surrounding a central phenomenon and then present the varied perspectives or meanings held by the participants experiencing the phenomenon.⁸²⁵

Cresswell recommends:

- Asking one or two central questions followed by no more than seven related sub-questions
- Relating the central question to the specific qualitative strategy of enquiry
- Focusing on a single phenomenon or concept⁸²⁶

The central questions were whether or not astrologers had a dualistic view of the Internet, the extent to which they use the Internet and what effects they believe it could have on astrology. Effects of the Internet on religion include challenges to established religion, an increase in individual autonomy, the concept of 'instant experts' and the potential for religious groups or congregations formed of people from different geographic locations. To compare the effects of the Internet on astrology with those on religion, the sub-questions recommended by Cresswell would be based around these issues in relation to astrology.

As recommended by Stake, each interviewee was given a short list of questions to ensure that they stayed focused on the topic to be discussed, and to give them a clear picture of the agenda.⁸²⁷ While the objective was for the interviewee to speak freely without interruption, the questions were designed to be useful in introducing relevant concepts that the interviewee might not have considered. According to

⁸²⁵ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* 3rd ed. edn (London: SAGE, 2009) pp. 129-30.

⁸²⁶ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, pp. 129-31.

⁸²⁷ Robert Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, p. 65.

Sliverman, interviewees can become inhibited by a lack of participation or response by an interviewer, and this passive approach by the interviewer becomes a powerful constraint on the interview.⁸²⁸ It was hoped that the questions would allow the interviewer to appear to play an active role in the interview, and that the questions would serve to disclose the interviewee's line of thought.

According to Bryman there is a risk of inside researchers losing their awareness of being a researcher and being seduced by the participants' perspective.⁸²⁹ He also describes the sense of being overwhelmed by the amount of information they receive, as everything they hear is potentially data.⁸³⁰ Bearing these risks in mind then, the potential danger was that the content of each interview would be affected by earlier interviews and could stray off the central issues. In an effort to mitigate these risks, the short list of questions for each interviewee, based on the central questions, was compiled before the first interview.

2012-2015

The second round of research took place between 2012 and 2015. It contained three components: questionnaire, interviews and a social media component. The questionnaire was issued at three astrology conferences, the United Astrological Congress (UAC) in New Orleans, USA, in May 2012, the Annual Summer School of the Faculty of Astrological Studies in Oxford, UK, in August 2012, and the Annual Conference of the Astrological Association in Wyboston, UK, in September 2012. Just as in 2009, the questions were predominantly, though not entirely, quantitative in nature. This questionnaire was also piloted. It was issued to twelve astrologers based in the United Kingdom, other parts of Europe, and the United States, and again, changes were made based on their recommendations. The interviews, sixty-five in total including ten admins of Facebook groups, took place over the three year period 2012-2015 and were mostly open-ended, designed to yield qualitative data. The process followed was the same as that of 2009.

⁸²⁸ David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, p. 92.

⁸²⁹ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, p. 96.

⁸³⁰ Alan Bryman, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*, p. 99.

Changes in the 2012 Questionnaire

The main objective of the second questionnaire was to gather information about astrologers' use of and views on social network and social media sites, since the results of the 2009 questionnaire, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven, had indicated a high level of use of these sites by astrologers. As discussed in Chapter Three, the years between 2009 and 2012 had seen changes in the use of the Internet by astrologers, with one of the biggest changes being the growth in the number of astrology groups on Facebook; this supports Kozinets's statement that any investigation involving the Internet will involve changes in the nature and methods of the research during its lifetime.⁸³¹

The growth in social media use by astrologers between 2009 and 2012, particularly Facebook astrology groups, has potential relevance to the issue of online astrological communities. For this reason the 2012 questionnaire, in addition to questioning respondents about their social media use, contains four questions that enquire about the quality of the respondents' experiences in social media. They are:

Question Six

How would you personally compare your online (Internet) astrological social activity to your offline astrological social activity?

Question Seven

How would you personally compare your online (Internet) astrological work to your offline astrological work?

Question Nine

On a scale of zero to ten with zero being 'of no importance' and ten being 'very important', how important are social media/social networks to your astrological social activity?

⁸³¹ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 78.

Question Ten

On a scale of zero to ten with zero being 'of no importance' and ten being 'very important', how important are social media/social networks to your astrological work?

Other changes to the 2012 questionnaire that resulted from responses in 2009 include additional options in multi-choice questions or changes to existing options. For example, in 2009, question twenty-three asked about uses of the Internet with one of the options being 'other uses'. A common answer was that respondents used the Internet for online consultations, so this was added as an option to the same question in 2012.

Several changes to the 2012 questionnaire were made as a result of the feedback from the pilot study. The most frequent comment by the astrologers involved was that the questionnaire was too long. For that reason, questions that were not seen as crucial were omitted. For example, questions about frequency of accessing the Internet were omitted, being seen as unnecessary due to global increases in Internet access and frequency of access, and also because the responses to this question in 2009 showed a high level of frequent access among astrologers.

Questions about personal details such as age and nationality were once more included and a question about gender, not included in the 2009 questionnaire, was added, following feedback. The content of the feedback on the question of gender, was that as the majority of astrologers are women, a point confirmed in the results of Brady's research, while the computing industry is seen, at least by some people giving the feedback, as male dominated, if there was a noticeable difference in their answers it could prove meaningful to the study.⁸³²

⁸³² Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 215.

Another recommendation from the pilot was to change the wording of one of the potential responses to the question asking if the person was a full-time astrologer. In 2009, along with full-time astrologer, and part-time astrologer, one of the options was 'Amateur'. One of the 2012 pilot testers stated that she would interpret that as someone who was still a beginner in astrology rather than the way it was intended. The word 'Amateur' had been used in 2009 because of findings by Champion, in his research of astrology as a profession, where he discovered that astrologers differ about what constitutes professional status.⁸³³ In his 1999 survey of delegates at the AA's annual conference, 159 questionnaires were returned. Of these, seventy-five respondents claimed to be professional astrologers but only three claimed to earn 100% of their income from astrology. The remainder of the professional astrologers claimed to earn varying proportions of their income from astrology, with three stating that they earned 0% of their income from astrology. Similarly the number of clients seen per week, by those claiming to be professional astrologers, varied from zero clients to more than ten.⁸³⁴

I discussed Champion's experience with the tester, and her opinion was that, when following the options 'Full-time astrologer' and 'Part-time astrologer', the option 'Not a professional astrologer' implied that the person did not earn a portion of their living from astrology, and was less likely to be confused with a lack of astrological knowledge. Following her recommendation, the wording of that option in 2012 was changed to 'Not a professional astrologer'.

Section two which asked their views on cyberspace was unchanged.

2012-2015 Interviews

The interviews followed the same semi-structured approach as that of 2009 and were again based on the central questions as recommended by Cresswell. This time they included an emphasis on the possible effects of social media on their astrology

⁸³³ Nicholas Champion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 236.

⁸³⁴ Nicholas Champion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 236.

and astrology in general, compared to the 2009 interviews which had asked about effects of the Internet overall.

Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Approach to the Interviews

A challenge in this strategy is to plan adequately what quantitative results to follow up on and what participants to gather qualitative data from in the second phase. The key idea is that the qualitative data builds on quantitative results.⁸³⁵

The results of both rounds of the research are detailed in Chapters Seven and Eight and the results of the Social Media Research in Chapter Nine.

Chapter Conclusions

This chapter detailed and explained the methodology used in the research. Relying on the relevant literature, it explained my reasons for using both quantitative and qualitative research methods and a focus on social media.

After considering the literature by Pike, Pearson, Hufford, Jahoda, Radermacher, and Bird, I anticipate that my insider status is likely to be of benefit in my research.

Chapter Seven will analyse the results of the two questionnaires.

⁸³⁵ John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, Vol 4, p. 224.

Chapter Seven - Analysis of Questionnaire Results

Introduction

Chapter Seven discusses the results of the questionnaires from 2009 and 2012. As stated in Chapter Six - Methodology, I have followed an adapted version Creswell's explanatory sequential mixed methods approach in my research. Creswell's approach recommends that the qualitative and quantitative data is presented and analyzed separately, with the quantitative data being presented first, followed by the qualitative data, which is then followed by a discussion.⁸³⁶ As predicted by Kozinets, changes occurred in how the Internet was being used during the lifetime of my research, and I was forced to adapt Creswell's methodology to take these changes into account by conducting two rounds of quantitative research.⁸³⁷ My approach differs from Creswell's in that, before the presentation of the qualitative data, I have included a discussion of the results of the two rounds of quantitative data: the questionnaires of 2009 and 2012. The quantitative results of the questionnaires can be found in Appendix 3, and the discussion of the results forms Chapter Seven. The results of the qualitative research and the analysis of those results are in Chapter Eight.

Discussion of the Questionnaire Results

This section discusses the results of the questionnaires, which are listed in Appendix 3. Two different questionnaires were issued, one in 2009 and 2012. Both were issued at astrological conferences in the US and the UK. In 2009, 750 questionnaires were issued and 115 were returned, representing a return rate of just over 15%. In 2012, 1500 questionnaires were issued and 374 were returned, giving a return rate of just under 25%. All the respondents were delegates at the conferences.

In my first study in 2009, question twenty-six asked the users whether or not they agreed with certain statements about the nature of cyberspace and their

⁸³⁶ John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, Vol 4, pp. 224-25.

⁸³⁷ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 78.

relationship with it. In my second questionnaire in 2012, they were asked about the same set of statements in question seventeen. These statements are referred to in Chapters Seven to Nine as 'the cyberspace statements'. This discussion of the questionnaire results is divided into two sections that can be roughly described as quantitative and qualitative, reflecting the two different sections of the questionnaires. The first section, Section A, compares the quantitative results of 2009 with 2012, while the second section, Section B, compares the two sets of responses to the cyberspace questions, and discusses them in connection with the literature reviewed in Chapter Three.

As discussed in Chapter Six, Dawson and Cowan identified six areas of research for the study of online religion. Questions posed by research areas four, five and six, cannot be answered by the questionnaire results, but all six will be discussed in Chapter Nine - Conclusions. This chapter can give some answers to research areas one, two, and three when applied to astrology. For ease of reading they are repeated here:

We need more and better studies of who is using the Internet for religious purposes, how they are using it and why. In this regard we need longitudinal studies to detect any changes that are happening with the passage of time and increased experience online.

We need studies of the nature and quality of people's experiences doing religious things online. In this regard we need surveys and interviews of users and case studies of groups, Web sites, or particular activity.

We need studies of the relationships between people's religious activities online and offline, as well as their religious activities online and offline and other kinds of activities online and offline. We need to gain a better grasp of the overall social context of cyber-religiosity.⁸³⁸

⁸³⁸ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 10-11.

Section A

In the responses to the questions below, the exact numbers are given where applicable. They are followed by the percentage of the total that the number represents. The percentage is always a percentage of 115 for 2009 or a percentage of 374 for 2012, unless explicitly stated otherwise. These figures represent the total number of returned questionnaires for each year, even if some respondents declined to answer the question. Percentages, in most cases, are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

Age and Internet Use

Questionnaire Results

In 2009, the ages of the respondents ranged from the twenty-five to thirty-four age group to the over eighty-five age group, and in 2012 from under twenty-five to eighty-four. In both questionnaires the age group with the highest number of respondents was the fifty-five to sixty-four age group. The age ranges for 2009 and 2012 are shown in *Table 7.1*.

Also shown is the Internet use of the respondents in 2009 for the age groups for the US and the UK, with almost all astrologers having Internet access in both the UK and the USA. Because of the high level of access and the fact that Internet access increased globally, I decided not to ask this question again in 2012.

Age	2009	2012	Internet Use 2009 - USA	Internet Use 2009 - UK
<25	0%	1%	N/A	N/A
25-34	3%	5%	100%	100%
35-44	15%	14%	100%	100%
45-54	23%	22%	100%	100%
55-64	39%	36%	95%	100%
65-74	15%	18%	100%	100%
74-84	3%	4%	100%	100%
>85	1%	0	100%	N/A

Table 7.1 - Age ranges of respondents (2009 and 2012) with Internet use of the respondents per country (2009)

The above sets of figures suggest that astrologers are more likely to use the Internet than the general population whose figures are shown in Chapter Three, in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 on page 51. Unlike the general population, Internet use among astrologers does not appear to decline with age.

Davis and Dawson have claimed that the Pagan community are strongly attracted to the Internet.⁸³⁹ Partridge and Jonveaux believe that the non-physicality of the Internet evokes a sense of transcendence and this gives it a strong attraction for people who are religiously or spiritually inclined.⁸⁴⁰ The figures above suggest that astrologers are also more attracted to the Internet than the general public, which supports Campion's conclusion that astrology is a vernacular religion.⁸⁴¹

Gender

In 2012, 71% of the respondents were female, 24% male, and 5% declined to answer. This question was not asked in 2009 but was introduced into the 2012 questionnaire at the suggestion of one of the members of the pilot study. The result

⁸³⁹ Erik Davis, 'Technopagans'; Lorne L. Dawson, *The Mediation of Religious Experience in Cyberspace*.loc 471-937

⁸⁴⁰ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 135; Cheryl Anne Casey, 'Virtual Ritual, Real Faith: The Revirtualization of Religious Ritual in Cyberspace', *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1 (2006), pp. 73-90, p. 77, <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/6958>. [Accessed 27/08/2015]; Isabelle Jonveaux and Gabrielle Varro, 'Virtuality as a Religious Category?', p. 39. [Accessed 27/08/2015]

⁸⁴¹ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 284.

of this question supports Brady's finding that astrologers are 'predominantly women'.⁸⁴²

Nationality and Country of Residence

Nationality and Country of Residence	Nationality 2009	Nationality 2012	Country of Residence 2009	Country of Residence 2012
US	43%	42%	47%	45%
UK	38%	26%	38%	29%

Table 7.2 - Nationality and Country of Residence

Astrologers

The respondents were asked if they were full-time or part-time astrologers or not professional. The responses differed very little from 2009 to 2012, as shown in *Table 7.3*.

Professional Status	2009	2012
Full-time astrologers	26%	29%
Part-time astrologers	33%	35%
Amateur/Not professional astrologers	34%	35%

Table 7.3 - Respondents astrological professional status

Internet Use

In 2009, 85% of the respondents accessed the Internet at least once a day. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents had been using the Internet for astrology for at least the last ten years. Seven people had been using it for nineteen years or more, i.e., since 1990 or earlier, therefore had been using the Internet prior to the development of the WWW. Two people claimed to have been using the Internet prior to 1983 when it was released to the public. Both of these were American so it is possible, although they did not say this, that they used it in either the academic

⁸⁴² Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 215.

world or the US military, where it had been used before being released to the public.

Davis claimed that members of the Pagan community were among the first people to colonise the Internet.⁸⁴³ In addition to supporting the high level of Internet use among astrologers discussed above, the responses to this question indicate a high level of use of the Internet in its earliest days, which suggests that Davis's theory about early Pagan use of the Internet is also true of astrologers' use of the Internet.

In 2009, the average amount of their time spent on astrology that was spent on online astrological activity, such as reading articles or posts, calculating charts, or communicating with other astrologers, was 27%. Twenty-five percent believed that the astrology they practice, teach, and discuss online and the astrology they practice, teach, and discuss offline were too different to compare, while 26% felt they were generally the same. Eighty-two percent of the respondents said they read astrological material online although 67% of the respondents said they prefer reading offline. Given the high number of astrologers reading online astrological material, their views on the quality of the material and any impact it might have on astrology, merit further investigation in the interviews.

Social Media

In 2009 40% of people in the UK used social network sites.⁸⁴⁴ Facebook was used by six times as many people as Twitter, the second most popular social network site.⁸⁴⁵

In the US in 2009 60% of the population used social network sites, with just under 20% of the population using Facebook.⁸⁴⁶ By 2012 48% of people in the UK used

⁸⁴³ Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 220.

⁸⁴⁴ Anon, *Internet Access: Households and Individuals 2009*, Office for National Statistics.

⁸⁴⁵ Ian Lloyd, "Uk Social Media Statistics - Understanding Your Target Audience," Web Marketing Group, <http://www.webmarketinggroup.co.uk/blog/uk-social-media-statistics-understanding-target-audience/>. [Accessed 17/12/2009]

⁸⁴⁶ Kathryn Zickuhr, "Major Trends in Online Activities," <http://www.pewinternet.org/2010/12/16/major-trends-in-online-activities/>. [Accessed 13/01/2015]; Anon, "World Internet Statistics," <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>. [17/12/2009]

social network sites with the most popular still being Facebook.⁸⁴⁷ In the US in 2012, 67% of Internet users used social media and again, Facebook was the most popular.⁸⁴⁸

In 2009 51% of my respondents stated that they used a social network with Facebook being the most popular site, being used by more than three times as many people as the second most popular site, Twitter. By 2012 the number of respondents using social network sites had risen to 76%, with Facebook, again being the most popular site and Twitter the second-most popular. These figures are shown in *Table 7.4*.

	2009	2012
UK general population	40%	48%
US general population	60%	67%
Questionnaire respondents	51%	76%

Table 7.4 - Use of social network sites

While the respondents' use of social network sites corresponds with that of the general population in terms of popularity of individual sites, use of social network sites by astrologers is significantly greater by 2012. As with the general population the use of social network sites by astrologers had increased between 2009 and 2012; but with the astrologers the rate of increase was greater, rising from 51% to 76%. What also increased was the use of the sites specifically for astrological activity. In 2009, 65% of the astrologers who used social network sites used them for astrology. In 2012 this has risen to 93% of those who stated they use the sites. These figures, shown in *Table 7.4*, indicate a large increase, between 2009 and 2012, in the use of social networks by astrologers for astrology. This high level of usage merited investigation into astrologers' views on the use of social media, particularly Facebook, for astrology.

⁸⁴⁷ Anon, *Social Networking: The UK as a Leader in Europe*, (Office for National Statistics, 2013).

⁸⁴⁸ Anon, "World Internet Statistics, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/facebook.htm>. [Accessed 12/06/2013]; Maeve Duggan and Joanna Brenner, "Social Networking Site Users," Pew Internet, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/02/14/social-networking-site-users/>. [Accessed 13/01/2015]

Other Uses of the Internet

Use	2009	2012
Blogs - use for any purpose	41%	67%
Blogs - reading only	20%	57%
Blogs - posting	14%	20%
Blogs - moderating	5%	6%
Forums	23%	29%
Research	78%	70%
News	73%	46%
Distance Education	32%	32%
Meetings	23%	23%
Consultations		30%
Advertising		17%

Table 7.5 - Other Uses of the Internet by Respondents

In 2009, 41% of the astrologers used blogs. While not all the respondents who used blogs stated how they used them, 14% stated that they posted, 5% moderated, and 20% just read posts. In 2012 this figure had significantly increased, with 67% using blogs. Of these 67%, 57% read posts, 20% posted, and 6% moderated. Using the US as an example, these figures can be compared with those of the general population. In 2012 in the US it was estimated that there were thirty-one million bloggers, meaning people who regularly post on blogs.⁸⁴⁹ As the population of the US in 2012 was 314 million, this means that 10% of the population posted on blogs.⁸⁵⁰ 170 of the questionnaire respondents were from the US and forty-one of them or 23.5% posted regularly on blogs. This means that the percentage of US astrologers who post on blogs is more than twice that of the general population in the US.

There was little change in the number of people using astrological forums. In 2009 23% used forums; in 2012 it had increased to 29%. However, as some respondents

⁸⁴⁹ blogging.org, "Blogging Stats 2012," <http://blogging.org/blog/blogging-stats-2012-infographic/>. [Accessed 15/03/2015]

⁸⁵⁰ United States Census Bureau, "Us and World Population Clock," <http://www.census.gov/popclock/>. [Accessed 15/03/2015]

mentioned Facebook groups as the forum they used, this results in the increase being even smaller than 6%.

In 2009, 78% used the Internet for research, 73% used it for news, 32% used it for distance education, and 23% used it for meetings. Of the people using the Internet for distance education some were teachers and some were students. Some of the respondents who use the Internet for news qualified this statement with comments like 'Keeping in touch with events'. Other comments indicated that 'news' included reading online newsletters such as 'Around the World with NCGR', from the National Council for Geocosmic Research Inc. Some of the respondents who use the Internet for meetings specified certain applications, such as Skype or GoToMeeting. Some also specified the purpose of the meetings such as 'ISAR board meetings'. (ISAR is the organisation who ran the 2009 conference where the first of the questionnaires was issued.) As with certain other astrological organisations, such as the AA, board meetings sometimes take place over the Internet due to board members living in different parts of the country or in different countries. In 2012 the number of people using the Internet for research had decreased slightly and the number of people using it for news had decreased significantly from 73% to 46%. The figures for distance education and meetings were unchanged.

In 2012, 30% of the respondents claimed to use the Internet for consultations and 17% used it for advertising. Skype was frequently mentioned as an online venue for astrological consultations and advertising; advertising, where specified, tended to mean self-promotional posts on Facebook, concerning books, articles, lectures, or a discussion of current planetary positions. Almost 60% of the respondents who stated they were full-time astrologers, used the Internet for consultations and 31% of the full-time astrologers used the Internet for advertising. The use of the Internet for online consultations represents a significant change in how astrology is being practised. Gunzburg, Radermacher, and Hyde all wrote about the space created in an astrological consultation, which both Radermacher and the astrologers

interviewed by Gunzburg likened to the creation of the space for a religious experience.⁸⁵¹ This was an area that merited further research in the interviews.

Identity

	2009	2012
Always use own identity	54%	54%
Usually use own identity	21%	22%
Sometimes use own identity	12%	8%
Usually do not use own identity	8%	3%
Never use own identity	2%	3%

Table 7.6 - Use of own identity

The results of this question in 2012 were very similar to those of 2009, with the majority of astrologers, 75% in 2009 and 76% in 2012, usually or always using their own identities on the Internet. The main reason given for using a false identity was to avoid being identified as an astrologer. On questionnaires where this statement was made, the majority of respondents gave no explanation for it. It is likely that they believed I, as an astrologer, would already know the reason. In the world of astrology, it is common for astrologers with careers in the non-astrological world to hide their astrological activities from their non-astrological contacts. This is done from a fear of discrimination in the workplace or sometimes, in the case of people living in a small community, from a fear of being alienated for their beliefs. A statement to that effect was made by one respondent who stated that she lived in a small, right-wing Christian town in the US and she would not wish her connection with astrology to become known to the people in her local community. Thirty-six percent of the astrologers in 2012 use a false identity, at least some of the time, and the main reason given for this is to avoid being identified as an astrologer.

These findings suggest that astrologers feel a certain amount of unease with the exposure of the Internet, and there is evidence that this fear is justified. A study of

⁸⁵¹ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 176; Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, pp. 182-83, 98; Maggie Hyde, 'Pigs and Fishes', p. 2.

technopagans found that many of them had experience of intimidation and abuse for their beliefs.⁸⁵² Campion gives an account of how astrologers had been targeted for their beliefs, to the extent of receiving death threats.⁸⁵³ As reported by Turkle, Wilbur, and Stone, using a false identity or several false identities was a common practice in the 1990s.⁸⁵⁴ However, this is not the case for users of SNSs. More recent studies have shown that users of SNSs tend to use their offline identities while online.⁸⁵⁵ However, despite the high level of use of SNSs by astrologers, there still appears to be a higher level of anonymity among astrologers than among the general public.

The next section analyses the results of the cyberspace questions.

Section B

Cyberspace and Dualism

Chapter Two contains a discussion of both anthropological and cosmological dualism, and Chapter Three examines the claims by cyberspace theorists that cyberspace reflects one or more of these forms. In Gibson's novels cyberspace was a place that was entered physically and could be experienced by all of the senses, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s it was believed by the early theorists, for example Benedikt and Stenger, that the Internet was in the process of becoming a Gibsonian three-dimensional, virtual reality.⁸⁵⁶ An example of this is Benedikt's vision of a three-dimensional online world as 'a technology very nearly achieved', which he prophesied would be a 'full-blown, public, consensual virtual reality that will indeed be cyberspace'.⁸⁵⁷ Although it did not develop in this way, the early

⁸⁵² David Thompson, "The Craft and the Web: Internet Services and the Pagan Community, <http://www.thewellhead.org.uk/Elders/survey.htm>. [Accessed 30/04/2014]

⁸⁵³ Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement*, pp. 106-08.

⁸⁵⁴ Sherry Turkle, 'Identity', p. 643; Shawn P. Wilbur, *Archeology*, p. 48; Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, pp. 82-83.

⁸⁵⁵ S. Gaddis and S. Vazire Sam Gosling, 'Personality Impressions Based on Facebook Profiles', Paper presented at International Conference on Weblogs and Social Media (2007).

⁸⁵⁶ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: First Steps* (Cambridge Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1991), p. 124; Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', p. 52; William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 217.

⁸⁵⁷ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 124.

cyberspace literature often referred to the Internet as a virtual world and discussed the nature of cyberspace, and the human conception of it, based on this vision.⁸⁵⁸ Similarly Heim's description of the cybernaut as disembodied and 'suspended in computer space' describes cyberspace in a way that is both anthropologically dualistic and Gnostic.⁸⁵⁹ Benedikt argues in favour of cyberspace being both anthropologically and cosmologically dualistic. He describes it as a realm that lies between the physical world and the world of the mind, a 'venue for consciousness itself'.⁸⁶⁰ He went on to say 'It is a place and a mode of being'.⁸⁶¹ Other authors, for example Bell and Stone, argue against the idea of cyberspace as dualistic.⁸⁶² Stone claims that no matter what the individual is doing consciousness remains firmly rooted in the physical, and Bell argues that the 'meat' is not that readily discarded.⁸⁶³

In the cyberspace statements that appeared on both questionnaires, question twenty-six in 2009 and question seventeen in 2012, two questions sought the views of the astrologers on the issues of cosmological and anthropological dualism. Statement a, 'When I log on to the Internet, I enter another world' sought to determine if astrologers viewed cyberspace as separate from the physical world, thus creating a cosmological dualism. Statement b, 'When I log on to the Internet, I lose touch with the offline world', is also concerned with dualism but this time it is an anthropological dualism of body and mind or body and soul, as it asks if the astrologer has a sense of losing touch with the physical world which includes their physical body. The results are shown in *Table 7.7*.

⁸⁵⁸ Anon, *From Arpanet to the World Wide Web*.

⁸⁵⁹ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 64.

⁸⁶⁰ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 124.

⁸⁶¹ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 130.

⁸⁶² David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, p. 141; Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, p. 111.

⁸⁶³ Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, p. 111; David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, p. 141.

	Statement a		Statement b	
	When I log on to the Internet, I enter another world		When I log on to the Internet, I lose touch with the offline world	
	2009	2012	2009	2012
Agree/Strongly Agree	19%	37%	7%	12%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	69%	45%	88%	72%

Table 7.7 - Cyberspace and dualism

In 2009 statements a and b were both strongly rejected by the respondents. Fifty-seven percent disagreed with a further 12% strongly disagreeing with statement a. Just under 19% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Statement b was rejected even more emphatically. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Nobody strongly agreed with it and only 7% agreed. By 2012 while statements a and b were still rejected by the respondents the gap between agreement and disagreement was not as wide. 45% disagreed or strongly disagreed with statement a, with 37% agreeing or strongly agreeing. The number of people who stated they did not know remained the same at 10% in both years. Seventy-two percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with statement b, with only 12% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

The results of the questionnaires issued in 2009 and 2012 indicate that astrologers do not support the idea of cyberspace as being either cosmologically or anthropologically dualistic. The cosmological dualism had a lower rejection rate than the anthropological dualism. In 2012, 45% disagreed with the idea of cyberspace as another world compared to 72% who disagreed that they lost touch with the offline world. These figures suggest that most of those respondents who are prepared to see cyberspace as a separate virtual world do not see it as a Gibsonian world where they are out of touch with the physical world.

From the middle of the 2000s some of the literature began to signal the end of the first wave cyberspace theories. Both Graham and Partridge wrote that they

considered cyberspace to be an extension of the mundane world rather than a separate world.⁸⁶⁴ Pang wrote that the growth in use of mobile devices and 'always-on networks' contributed to the end of cyberspace.⁸⁶⁵ The theory of cyberspace as anthropologically dualistic had always had its opponents even in the first wave of cyberspace literature, for example Stone in 1991. But by the second wave, claims of a mind-body split were appearing less and less.⁸⁶⁶ In 2008 Pang wrote of the sensual experience of holding cyberspace in the hand via a smartphone.⁸⁶⁷ In 2010 Boler dismissed a split from the body, arguing that the body is 'the final arbiter of what is "true"'.⁸⁶⁸ Pang's theory of the end of cyberspace and statements such as Boler's suggest a move away from both cosmological and anthropological dualism.⁸⁶⁹ Yet the questionnaire results, despite an overall rejection for both cosmological and anthropological dualism, indicate a reverse trend for astrologers. The issue of dualism merits further investigation in the interviews.

Barlovian Cyberspace

While statements a and b, discussed above, approached the issue of dualism directly, some of the other statements took an indirect approach, by asking the respondents if they considered cyberspace to be qualitatively different from offline space, such as statement m, 'In cyberspace I can do anything I want'. Healy describes how the early cyberspace literature portrays cyberspace as a place where the rules of the physical world do not apply.⁸⁷⁰ This notion is put into words in Barlow's 'Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace', where he asserts that cyberspace is, 'naturally independent of the tyrannies you (Governments of the industrial world) seek to impose on us'.⁸⁷¹ In 2007, Cohen reported that the belief

⁸⁶⁴ Stephen Graham, *End of Geography*, p. 96; Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 146.

⁸⁶⁵ Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *End of Cyberspace*, p. 57.

⁸⁶⁶ Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, p. 111.

⁸⁶⁷ Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *End of Cyberspace*, p. 58.

⁸⁶⁸ Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, pp. 185-86.

⁸⁶⁹ Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *End of Cyberspace*, p. 57; Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, pp. 185-86.

⁸⁷⁰ Dave Healy, *Cyberspace and Place*, p. 55.

⁸⁷¹ John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," <http://homes.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>.(accessed 21/6/2010)

that the laws of the physical world are not relevant in cyberspace still existed even in some legal circles.⁸⁷² Statement m, 'In cyberspace I can do anything I want', tested if the respondents had this view of cyberspace.

	Statement m	
	In cyberspace I can do anything I want	
	2009	2012
Agree/Strongly Agree	4%	7%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	81%	68%

Table 7.8 - Cyberspace as Lawless

The level of disagreement fell between 2009 and 2012. In 2009, 48% disagreed and 33% strongly disagreed. In 2012 these figures had fallen to 37% who disagreed with 31% strongly disagreeing. In 2009 nobody strongly agreed, and 4% agreed, compared to 2012 where 1% strongly agreed and 6% agreed. The percentage of people who ticked the 'Don't know' box rose from 9% in 2009 to 14% in 2012. Therefore it appears that astrologers in 2012 were a little less opposed to the idea that cyberspace is a place where the rules of the physical world do not apply. However, overall there is a strong rejection of the concept of Barlovian cyberspace.

Cyberspace as a Sacred Space

Cyberspace had from the beginning been viewed as sacred and somehow different from the mundane, physical world. Despite changes in the perception of cyberspace, as late as 2005, Cowan noted a tendency in the literature for cyberspace to still be seen as 'qualitatively different', as divine or somehow superior to the material world.⁸⁷³ Also in 2005, Partridge wrote of cyberspace as providing a doorway to digitised sacred space 'from a materialism that many people find increasingly unsatisfying'.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷² Julie E. Cohen, 'Cyberspace as/and Space', p. 210.

⁸⁷³ Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 258.

⁸⁷⁴ Christopher Hugh Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West* (London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2002),p. 154.

The concept of sacred space as a home for the divine can be found in the writings of Plato, the Gnostics, and in Christianity.⁸⁷⁵ Cyberspace is seen as containing a deity in the literature. Ulansey wrote that in the modern world 'the question of where the gods are will be answered by cyberspace'.⁸⁷⁶ Wertheim and Stenger both call cyberspace a version of the Christian heaven and Benedikt likens it the Heavenly City from the *Book of Revelation*.⁸⁷⁷

In the questionnaires, statements c and d of the cyberspace statements sought the views of astrologers on whether or not they believed cyberspace could be a sacred space. Statement c stated, 'Cyberspace can be a sacred space', and statement d stated, 'There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace'. This is a somewhat weaker version of the theory that cyberspace is a sacred space than that found in the literature. While the literature describes cyberspace as fundamentally sacred, the cyberspace questions merely ask if it could be.

	Statement c		Statement d	
	Cyberspace can be a sacred space		There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace	
	2009	2012	2009	2012
Agree/Strongly Agree	21.5%	20.5%	16%	14%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	44%	43%	57%	50%
Don't Know	30%	27%	27%	26%

Table 7.9 - Cyberspace as Sacred Space

The responses to these statements did not change much from 2009 to 2012. In 2009, 18% of the respondents agreed with statement c and a further 3.5% strongly agreed. In 2012 17% agreed and 3.5% strongly agreed. In 2009 30% disagreed and a further 14% strongly disagreed. In 2012, 28% disagreed and a further 15% strongly

⁸⁷⁵ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-c; *The Exegesis on the Soul*. [Accessed 27/08/2015]; *Gospel of John*, 3.11-15.

⁸⁷⁶ David Ulansey, 'Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace', <<http://www.mysterium.com/cultural.html>>.

⁸⁷⁷ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21; Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', p. 52; Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 38.

disagreed. In both years statement c had the highest number of respondents choosing 'Don't know', than any other statement. In 2009 the number who did not know was 30% and in 2012 it was 27%.

There was slightly more of a variance for statement d in terms of strong disagreement. In 2009, 30% of the respondents strongly disagreed with statement d compared with 24% in 2012. However the number who simply disagreed did not change as much, with 27% disagreeing in 2009 and 26% in 2012. In 2009, 12% agreed and a further 4% strongly agreed, while in 2012, 10% agreed and a further 4% strongly agreed. Again a large percentage of people ticked the 'Don't know' box. Twenty-seven percent answered that they did not know in 2009, putting this statement in joint second place that year, in terms of people who did not know. In 2012, 26% answered that they did not know, the second highest of the year. Although respondents were not asked to comment on any of the cyberspace statements, several did in both years. Some comments expressed the view that anywhere could be a sacred space. From the small number of respondents who did believe that there was a god or gods in cyberspace, a most frequent comment was 'God is everywhere'. The question actually asked if there is a 'god (or gods)' in cyberspace - god with a small 'g'. In the responses, however, the g was capitalised and singular, suggesting that the god to which they referred was the Christian God. This suggests that only a small number of the respondents believed that the Christian God exists in cyberspace.

Partridge discusses Samuel Smith's claim that religious institutions are notably absent from cyberpunk novels, 'and Christianity in particular'.⁸⁷⁸ According to Smith, 'Even when these authors are not depicting any religion at all, we have a de facto sense that what isn't being shown is Christianity'.⁸⁷⁹ Partridge disagrees with

⁸⁷⁸ Samuel R. Smith, "'When It All Changed": Cyberpunk and the Baby Boom's Rejection of Religious Institution', in *Youth Culture: Identity in a Postmodern World*, ed. by Jonathan Epstein (Oxford: Wiley, 1998), pp. 232-62, pp. 232-33. Cited in Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, Vol 2, p. 139

⁸⁷⁹ Samuel R. Smith, *When It All Changed*, p. 244. Cited in Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, Vol 2, p. 139

this somewhat, claiming that the absence of Christianity is not absolute, but when it does appear it is portrayed as 'a villainous and repressive hierarchical organization'.⁸⁸⁰ He states that this is not surprising as most cyberpunk authors were born in the 1940s and 1950s; this was the generation that made their disillusionment with institutions and religion explicit and rebelled.⁸⁸¹ The average age of my respondents in both 2009 and 2012 was over fifty-five years, meaning that they too were of the generation to which Partridge refers. Partridge argues that while organised religion, particularly Christianity, was abandoned by this generation, spirituality - inner experience, the personal quest, achieving the potential of the self - was not. He points out that *Neuromancer* is full of references to alternative spirituality.⁸⁸² Campion's survey of astrologers in the US and the UK indicated the most common religious affiliation for astrologers was 'spiritual but non aligned', meaning they did not see themselves as connected to any institutional religion.⁸⁸³ Campion also noted what he termed a 'dramatic collapse of Christian affiliation', meaning an abandonment of the Christian religion in which they had been raised as children. At a UK astrological conference, 74% were affiliated to Christianity as children but only 26% still considered themselves so affiliated as adults. At the US conference the drop was from 81% to 12%.⁸⁸⁴ The figures from my research indicate that only a small percentage of the astrologers believe that the Christian god exists in cyberspace, which reflects Smith's statement about a lack of Christianity in cyberspace. Partridge's observation, along with Campion's findings, suggests that they may not believe a Christian god exists outside of cyberspace either.

Smith was writing in 1998, but the figures from my research do not support the views of some of the other cyberspace theorists of the 1990s, such as Stenger who wrote that 'cyberspace will feel like paradise', or Wertheim who believed that cyberspace was a re-packaging of the Christian Heaven in a secular and

⁸⁸⁰ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 139.

⁸⁸¹ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 139.

⁸⁸² Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, pp. 139-40.

⁸⁸³ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', pp. 240-41.

⁸⁸⁴ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 240.

technologically sanctioned format.⁸⁸⁵ Neither have the astrologers supported Cowan's statement that cyberspace is seen as 'somehow qualitatively different from the more mundane places from which we access the online world'.⁸⁸⁶ Although some uncertainty around the issue was expressed in the high percentage of respondents who chose 'don't know', from these results it can be concluded that the majority of astrologers do not believe that cyberspace can be a sacred space or that there is a god or gods in cyberspace, or as stated in the last paragraph, that the Christian God is in cyberspace. Furthermore, the responses to questions eleven, thirteen, and sixteen from 2009, and questions six and seven in 2012, indicate that astrologers do not necessarily see cyberspace as qualitatively different from the offline world. All of those questions asked astrologers to compare online and offline activity and each question had the possible answer, 'Too different to compare'. This option never got more than 25% in either year and was in one case as low as 4%. In addition to indicating a rejection of the concept of cyberspace as sacred, this also opposes the view that cyberspace is cosmologically dualistic as it suggests that astrologers do not see cyberspace as different from offline space.

The issue of cyberspace as divine or a place that can contain a divine component overlaps with the findings of Radermacher and Gunzburg, discussed above. It is also an issue that has relevance for online consultations and will be investigated further in the interviews.

Cyberspace as an American Concept

As stated in Chapter Three, Karaflogka claims that cyberspace is an American invention and the idea of cyberspace as a place is an American concept.⁸⁸⁷ Support for this idea is repeatedly found in the early cyberspace literature of the 1990s. In 1893, as the frontier line in the American West ceased to exist, Frederick Jackson Turner predicted that the expansive character of American life would not cease and

⁸⁸⁵ Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', p. 52; Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21.

⁸⁸⁶ Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 258.

⁸⁸⁷ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 19.

'the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise'.⁸⁸⁸ One hundred years later, in 1997, Healy claimed that, as predicted by Turner, the search for new wilderness continued to the 'final frontier' of space and on to the new frontier of cyberspace 'where some of the same tensions that characterized American settlement continue to be played out'.⁸⁸⁹ Cyberspace, he argues, is new land to conquer.⁸⁹⁰ Like Healy, Barlow, Leary, and Stockton have all made reference to the myth of the American Wild West and the concept of the frontier, in their studies of cyberspace.⁸⁹¹

In 2009, 86% of the respondents used the Internet at least once a day. However if the responses from American astrologers are examined in isolation, this figure drops to 78%. The average amount of astrological time spent on online was 26.5%. The figure for American astrologers, only, was 22%. While there is not a significant difference between the two sets of figures, in terms of the level of Internet use, the concept of Americans being more attracted to the Internet does not appear to hold. In fact the reverse is suggested. This question was not asked in 2012 as, due to global increases in Internet access and frequency of access, it was viewed as unnecessary.

In 2012, the astrologers were asked how they would personally compare their online astrological social activity to their offline social activity. Overall 38% said online and offline activities were equally important to them and 11% said that online was more important. When examining the figures for American astrologers only, 43% said online and offline activities were equally important to them and 14% said online activities were more important. Also in 2012, the astrologers were asked how they would personally compare their online astrological work. Overall 39% said online and offline astrological work were equally important and 10% said online

⁸⁸⁸ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/TURNER/> [Accessed 19/09/2015]

⁸⁸⁹ Dave Healy, *Cyberspace and Place*, p. 57.

⁸⁹⁰ Dave Healy, *Cyberspace and Place*, p. 55.

⁸⁹¹ Timothy Leary, *Cyberpunk*, p. 245; Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 588; John Perry Barlow, "Electronic Frontier Foundation, <http://homes.eff.org/~barlow>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

astrological work was more important. Once more there is a slight difference when looking at the figures for American astrologers only. Forty-seven percent said online and offline astrological work were equally important and 12% said online was more important.

From these figures it would appear that American astrologers access the Internet slightly less often than non-American astrologers but value their online activity more. However the differences between the American and non-American figures are not great enough to support a claim that American astrologers are more attracted to the Internet than non-American astrologers.

Omnipotence and Omniscience

Alongside the concept that cyberspace contains a god, some authors consider the ideas that cyberspace endows the user with god-like qualities such as omnipotence and omniscience, or that cyberspace itself is god. Believing that cyberspace is or could become a god, Cox and Paul wrote that cyberspace could eventually, 'Transcend the timid concepts of deity and divinity, held by today's theologians', while Ward called it the "The ultimate secularisation of the divine".⁸⁹² That cyberspace allows the user to emulate God is claimed by Heim, who wrote that the ability to enter this heavenly world while still alive and return to Earth at will gave the human being, 'a god-like instant access' to heaven.⁸⁹³

	Statement e		Statement i		Statement l	
	Cyberspace is God		I feel powerful when I am in cyberspace		In cyberspace I can know everything	
	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012
Agree/Strongly Agree	4.5%	4%	8%	9%	10%	11.5%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	80%	71%	61%	56%	76%	64%

Table 7.10 - Omniscience and Omnipotence in cyberspace

⁸⁹² Earl Cox and Gregory S. Paul, *Beyond Humanity: Cyberevolution and Future Mind*, pp. 1-7; Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God*, p. xvi.

⁸⁹³ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 69.

Cyberspace statement e, 'Cyberspace is God' was firmly rejected by the respondents in 2009 and 2012. In 2009, 80% disagreed or strongly disagreed and less than 4.5% agreed or strongly agreed. In 2012, 71% disagreed or strongly disagreed and less than 4% agreed or strongly agreed. Cyberspace statement i was 'I feel powerful when I'm in cyberspace'. In 2009, 61% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement and less than 8% agreed or strongly agreed. In 2012, 56% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 9% agreed or strongly agreed. Cyberspace statement l was 'In cyberspace I can know everything'. In 2009, 76% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, with only 10% agreeing. Nobody strongly agreed. In 2012, 64% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 11.5% agreed or strongly agreed.

Once more, the responses of the astrologers differ to the views of the cyberspace theorists, who wrote that cyberspace gave human beings a sense of having god-like powers of omniscience and omnipotence. The astrologers did not support the picture of cyberspace painted by Heim as a virtual Heaven that people could visit while still alive and return at will.⁸⁹⁴ Neither did they support Ward's vision of cyberspace as a secularisation of the divine.⁸⁹⁵

Benedikt's ten definitions of cyberspace include the following:

- Cyberspace: A common mental geography, built, in turn, by consensus and revolution...a territory swarming with data and lies, with mind stuff and memories of nature
- Cyberspace: Its corridors form wherever electricity runs with intelligence. Its chambers bloom wherever data gathers and is stored
- Cyberspace: The realm of pure information⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁹⁴ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 69.

⁸⁹⁵ Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God*, p. xvi.

⁸⁹⁶ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, pp. 1-3.

With these definitions Benedikt is associating cyberspace with a mental realm, a world full of data and information. Like Descartes who considered God to be pure mind and Plato who associated the reasoning part of the soul with the divine, Ward writes of cyberspace, Benedikt's mental realm, as a god who sees and knows all things.⁸⁹⁷ However the association between cyberspace and the availability of 'everything' in terms of what can be known was rejected by the respondents.

Cox and Paul wrote of the possibility of human brains being uploaded to a computer where they could be stored as software and live forever. He believed that the uploaded brains could collectively become more powerful than 'the timid concepts of deity and divinity, held by today's theologians'.⁸⁹⁸ However, this idea was emphatically rejected by the respondents in 2009 and in 2012.

Immortality

There are claims in the literature that cyberspace is perceived by people as a means of living forever. The heavens of the Gnostics and of Christianity represented salvation, a place where people could live forever.⁸⁹⁹ Cyberspace is likened to the Christian Heaven by Wertheim and to paradise by Stenger, 'for all eternity'.⁹⁰⁰ Lupton and Heim both portray cyberspace as a place offering Salvation. Heim writes that cyberspace offers an escape from a toxic earth to what Lupton calls the 'inner [space]' of the computer.⁹⁰¹ The Transhumanist movement believes that this can literally happen, that humans can evolve beyond the mortal body and that cyberspace offers an alternative mode of existence.⁹⁰² Similarly, Moravec describes how an individual can live forever in cyberspace.⁹⁰³

⁸⁹⁷ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, pp. 1-3.

⁸⁹⁸ Earl Cox and Gregory S. Paul, *Beyond Humanity: Cyberevolution and Future Mind*, pp. 1-7.

⁸⁹⁹ *The Exegesis on the Soul; Gospel of John*, 3.16-17.

⁹⁰⁰ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21; Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', p. 52.

⁹⁰¹ Deborah Lupton, *Embodied Computer*, p. 479; Michael Heim, *Realism*, pp. 149-55.

⁹⁰² Anon, "Transhumanist Values: What Is Transhumanism?,"

<http://humanityplus.org/learn/philosophy/transhumanist-values> [Accessed 01/07/2010]

⁹⁰³ Hans Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*, pp. 121-24.

Cyberspace statement k states, 'In cyberspace I feel immortal'. The statement does not ask people if they actually believe they can live forever in cyberspace. Rather it enquires whether or not cyberspace evokes feelings of immortality.

	Statement k	
	In cyberspace I feel immortal	
	2009	2012
Agree/Strongly Agree	1%	2.5%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	87%	71%

Table 7.11 - Immortality in cyberspace

While this statement was rejected both years, the percentage of people rejecting it fell slightly in 2012 from that of 2009. In 2009, 47% disagreed and a further 40% strongly disagreed, compared with 2012 when 39% disagreed and 32% strongly disagreed. In 2009, not one person strongly agreed and less than 1% agreed. In 2012, just under 2% agreed and less than 1% strongly agreed. In 2009, 7% ticked 'Don't know' and this figure had risen to 16% in 2012.

The total number of people who disagreed with the statement fell from 87% in 2009 to 71% in 2012. The percentage of people who agreed rose from just under 1% in 2009 to 2.5% in 2012. These figures along with the increase in the percentage of people who were undecided, suggest that people are somewhat less opposed to the idea that cyberspace promotes a feeling of immortality. However, overall the claims of Heim and Lupton and the Transhumanists have been rejected in both 2009 and 2012. Again these results provide further answers to Dawson and Cowan's second question of how people experience the Internet when carrying out astrological activity.

Cyberspace as a Community

McMillan and Chavis proposed four criteria for a definition of community. They concluded that a sense of community required firstly, a sense of membership;

secondly, influence or a sense of mattering to the group; thirdly, integration with the group and fulfilment of needs; lastly, a shared emotional connection.⁹⁰⁴ The literature in the area of cyberspace and Internet studies contains debates about whether or not virtual and online communities can meet these criteria. A more detailed discussion about online astrological communities and whether or not, in the views of the astrologers, they meet the criteria for community, will appear in Chapter Eight - Analysis of the Interviews. This section will focus on the responses of the questionnaire respondents.

In the questionnaires the respondents were given questions that asked if they believed that they were members of an online community, how important they believed their participation was to the community and how much it mattered to them, both socially and in terms of their astrological work. In addition, four of the cyberspace questions were designed to discover if the astrologers felt that the online communities fulfilled their needs in the area of community and if they had a sense of a shared emotional connection.

The astrologers were asked about the relationship between their online and offline astrology and contacts. Some authors, for example Baym, conclude that online communities are often an extension of offline communities, with users befriending, online, people with whom they already have offline ties and the online communities' styles, structures, contexts, and group purposes shaped by their offline counterparts.⁹⁰⁵ The advent of social network sites has brought about a body of literature that re-examines the concept of community and online community in connection with these sites; some authors found that, just as with the earlier virtual communities, SNS communities are often an online representation of an existing offline community. Studies by Lampe et al., Ellison et al., and boyd and Ellison

⁹⁰⁴ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 4.

⁹⁰⁵ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 38.

suggest that online connections frequently originate as connections in the offline world.⁹⁰⁶

Part of an Online Astrological Community

Yes	39%
No	35%
Did not answer	26%

Table 7.12 - Part of online astrological community (2009)

Importance of Participation in an Online Astrological Community

Online more important than offline	9%
Offline more important than online	36%
Both equally important	32%
Too different to compare	22%

Table 7.13 - Importance of participation in online astrological communities (2009)

The 2009 questionnaires asked astrologers, in question ten, if they considered themselves part of an online astrological community, and in question eleven, how they rated participation in the online community compared to participation in an offline astrological community. Twenty-six percent did not state whether or not they considered themselves part of an online astrological community. Thirty-nine percent considered themselves part of an online community and 35% did not. Thirty-two percent considered online and offline participation of equal importance, 36% considered offline more important, 9% considered online more important, and 22% believed online and offline were too different to compare.

⁹⁰⁶ Nicole Ellison, Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe, 'The Benefits of Facebook 'Friends'', p. 1164; danah m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, 'Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship'; Nicole B. Ellison, Cliff Lampe, Charles Steinfield, and Jessica Vitak, *With a Little Help from My Friends: How Social Network Sites Affect Social Capital Processes*, p. 133.

Importance of Online Astrological Contacts and Friendships

Online more important than offline	8.5%
Offline more important than online	50%
Both equally important	33%

Table 7.14 - Importance of online astrological contact and friendships (2009)

Online and Offline Friendships with the Same People

Online and offline friendships are with the same people	11%
Online and offline friendships are not with the same people	23.5%
Some online and offline friendships are with the same people	43.5%

Table 7.15 - Online and offline friendships with the same people (2009)

In question fourteen, the respondents were asked to compare their online astrological contacts and friendships with offline contacts and friendships in terms of which is most important to them. Thirty-three percent considered online and offline friendships equally important, 50% felt their offline friendships were more important and 8.5% answered that their online friendships were more important. People who preferred offline contacts and commented on their answer tended to express a preference for face-to-face interaction with people, whereas those who rated online friendships higher stated that they tended to have no offline astrological contacts. People who rated them as equally important tended to comment that they valued all friendships whether online or offline. When asked, in question fifteen, if their online and offline friendships were with the same people, 23.5% stated that their online and offline friendships were not with the same people, while 11% said they were with the same people. Forty-three and one half percent answered that some of their online and offline friendships were with the same people.

In 2012 respondents were asked, in question nine, to compare their online social activity with their offline social activity. Thirty-eight percent said that online and

offline activities were equally important to them. A further 11% said that online was more important while 32% considered offline more important. Fifteen percent felt they were too different to compare. On a scale of zero to ten with zero being 'of no importance' and ten being 'very important', astrologers in general gave online social astrological activity a rating of 4.08. Full-time astrologers gave it a rating of 5.48.

Online and Offline Astrological Social Activity

Online and offline social activity equally important	38%
Online social activity more important than offline	11%
Offline social activity more important than online	32%
Too different to compare	15%

Table 7.16 - Online and offline astrological social activity (2012)

Also in 2012, in question ten, 49% of the respondents answered that their online astrological work was as important or more important than their offline astrological work. This figure rose to 64% percent for full time astrologers. On a scale of zero to ten with zero being 'of no importance', and ten being 'very important', astrologers gave online astrological work a rating of 3.66. Full time astrologers gave a rating of 5.14.

Some of the cyberspace statements, f, g, h, and j were intended to discover if being online evoked a sense of community in the astrologers. Statement f, 'I feel safe in cyberspace' aimed to discover if astrologers felt safer online where they were less likely to be attacked for their beliefs. Statement g, ' I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace', and statement h, ' I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace' investigated the sense of security and familiarity, the astrologers felt while online. Statement j, 'In cyberspace I never feel lonely' sought to discover if astrologers felt less lonely online than offline.

	Statement f		Statement g		Statement I		Statement j	
	I feel safe in cyberspace		I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace		I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace		In cyberspace I never feel lonely	
	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012	2009	2012
Agree/Strongly Agree	31%	26%	7%	9%	15%	12%	18%	13%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	45%	43%	75%	63%	54%	53%	55%	57%

Table 7.17 - Cyberspace and community

Statement f was 'I feel safe in cyberspace'. In 2009 45% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 31% agreed or strongly agreed. Nineteen percent did not know. In 2012, 43% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 26% agreed or strongly agreed. Twenty-one percent did not know. This shows a slight increase in overall agreement with the statement. Statement g was 'I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace'. In 2009 75% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. Nobody strongly agreed and 7% agreed. In 2012, 63% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 9% agreed or strongly agreed. This shows a slight increase in overall agreement with the statement. Statement h was 'I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace'. In 2009 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 15% agreed or strongly agreed. In 2012 53% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 12% agreed or strongly agreed. There was almost no change between 2009 and 2012. Statement j was 'In cyberspace I never feel lonely'. In 2009, 55% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and 18% agreed or strongly agreed. In 2012, 57% disagreed or strongly-disagreed and 13% agreed or strongly agreed. There was a slight increase in overall disagreement with the statement.

In 2009, 39% considered themselves part of an online community. Yet a higher number, 41%, considered participation in the online community to be as important or more important than participation in offline communities and an almost identical number, 41.5%, believed that online friendships were as important or more important than offline friendships. This number rose to 49% in 2012. Almost 55% of

the respondents said that all or some of their online and offline friendships were with the same people. However 23.5% said they did not have offline friendships with their online friends. If this figure is taken along with the 43.5% who said some of their online and offline friendships were with the same people, then a total of 67% of the respondents have online friends who they do not know in the offline world. This does not support the findings of the studies by Lampe et al.⁹⁰⁷

The results of the cyberspace statements show slight increases from 2009 to 2012 in the feelings of safety and familiarity while in cyberspace, although the statements were still rejected by the majority of the respondents. More people disagreed with the idea that they are never lonely in cyberspace in 2012 than did in 2009 and the statement was rejected both years. Feelings of strength in cyberspace did not change between 2009 and 2012 and the statement was rejected both years.

The above results suggest that, although by 2012 more than three-quarters of the astrologers use social media for astrology and 67% have friendships with people they do not know in the offline world, the majority do not believe they are part of an online astrological community. Online astrological work and online social activity is more important to full-time astrologers than to part-time or amateur astrologers. From these figures it can be concluded that astrologers do not share the utopian views of virtual communities that Rheingold identified in the 1990s.⁹⁰⁸ However they do support the findings of Campbell that people are more and more using the Internet to form relationships with people with whom they share a common interest.⁹⁰⁹ In opposition to this are the studies by Lampe et al. who found that online connections and communities reflect their offline counterparts.⁹¹⁰ This does not appear to be the case for astrologers.

⁹⁰⁷ Nicole B. Ellison, Cliff Lampe, Charles Steinfield, and Jessica Vitak, *With a Little Help from My Friends: How Social Network Sites Affect Social Capital Processes*, p. 133.

⁹⁰⁸ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 376.

⁹⁰⁹ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 41.

⁹¹⁰ Nicole B. Ellison, Cliff Lampe, Charles Steinfield, and Jessica Vitak, *With a Little Help from My Friends: How Social Network Sites Affect Social Capital Processes*, p. 133.

The rejection of statements f, g, h, and j in both 2009 and 2012, suggests that for the astrologers online or virtual communities do not provide the shared emotional connection and fulfilment of needs listed by McMillan and Chavis as criteria for community, or the web of personal relationships described by Rheingold. However, despite the lack of emotional connection the figures show that more and more astrologers are becoming part of astrological groups on Facebook. For this reason, and the growing body of literature on the issue of community and social networks, I decided to explore this issue further in the interviews.

Dawson and Cowan

Dawson and Cowan identified six areas of research for the study of online religion.⁹¹¹ The responses to the questionnaires can give some information to the questions posed by research areas one, two, and three, when applied to astrology.

Research area one concerns who is using the Internet, and how this use is changing over time.

The average age of the respondents in both years was fifty-five years and over. In 2012, 71% were female and 24% male. In both years, the majority of the respondents were from either the US or the UK. Approximately three-quarters of the respondents were professional astrologers, either full-time or part-time.

All of the respondents to the questionnaires were delegates at offline conferences. Therefore they were not purely online astrologers or solitary astrologers. Eighty-five percent of those surveyed in 2009 used the Internet at least once a day, with a further 11% using it more than once a week. This is a significantly higher percentage than the population at large. Also, unlike the general population, Internet use among astrologers does not decline with age. Approximately 75% of the astrologers always use their own identity. These figures lead to the conclusion that astrologers are regular users of the Internet. They use it to read astrological material, conduct research, news, distance education, meetings, and consultations.

⁹¹¹ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 10-11.

Two important changes happened between 2009 and 2012. The first was in the use of social networks for astrology. In 2009, 51% of my respondents stated that they used a social network; in 2012 this figure had risen to 76%, with Facebook being the most popular site. This figure is greater than that of the general population, and the increase in use of Facebook during the period 2009-2012 is greater than the increase for the general population. The second significant change was the growth in the use of the Internet for consultations. Online consultations were not mentioned in 2009 but in 2012 30% of the astrologers stated that they use the Internet for consultations, with most of them specifying Skype. This figure rises to 60% for full-time, professional astrologers. This represents a significant change in how astrology is being practiced.

Other than email, research was the most popular of the uses of the Internet for astrology, with over 75% of the respondents stating this. Twenty percent of the respondents in 2009 and 25% in 2012 stated they used chart calculation software, which, as stated in Chapter One, is not necessarily an Internet application. However the respondents believed that the impact of chart calculation on astrology was sufficiently important for them to raise it.

Research area two concerns the nature of people's experience of online astrological activity.

Dawson and Cowan ask in question two, about the nature of people's experiences online. At least some of the time, 36% of the astrologers use a false identity. The main reason given for this is to avoid being identified as an astrologer, suggesting a certain amount of unease with the exposure of the Internet. From the responses to the questionnaires it appears that astrologers are more and more using the Internet to form relationships with people in order to engage in online astrological activity, rather than those with whom they share existing offline connections. However, their responses also suggested that for them, their experience of online communities is that they do not provide the shared emotional connection and fulfilment of needs listed by McMillan and Chavis as criteria for community. The

results of the questionnaires indicate that the astrologers do not experience the Internet/cyberspace as dualistic or as a sacred space. Neither do they believe it contains a god, or endows them with god-like qualities.

Research area three concerns the relationship between people's online and offline astrological activities.

Dawson and Cowan's third question, when applied to astrology, looks at the relationship between people's online and offline experiences. In terms of the astrology they practice, the views of the astrologers appear mixed in this area, with an equal number believing that their online and offline astrology were too different to compare and that they are generally the same. The same mixed view applies to their relationship between online and offline reading of astrological material. While most of them read the material online, they prefer it offline.

Chapter Conclusions

Campion examined the extent and nature of belief in astrology and gathered quantitative and qualitative data.⁹¹² My research has followed the same approach in relation to the beliefs of the astrologers concerning the Internet.

Partridge and Jonveaux both propose the theory that the Internet holds a certain attraction for people who are spiritually or religiously inclined, a group that, as Campion's findings show, includes astrologers.⁹¹³ Together, Partridge's and Jonveaux's statements and Campion's conclusions suggest that astrologers are more attracted to the Internet than the general public. This conclusion is supported by the questionnaire results. My findings suggest that use of the Internet by astrologers is indeed greater than that of the general public, as measured by Pew

⁹¹² Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 6.

⁹¹³ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 135; Isabelle Jonveaux and Gabrielle Varro, 'Virtuality as a Religious Category?', p. 39; Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', p. 284.

Internet in the US and the Office for National Statistics in the UK.⁹¹⁴ Unlike the general public Internet use by astrologers does not decrease with age. Use of social media by astrologers is also greater than that of the general public.

My most important conclusions concern attitudes to cyberspace. My questionnaire respondents in both 2009 and 2012 did not have a Platonic or a Cartesian view of cyberspace. To recap, Plato believed in a perfect and unchanging world of Being which was inhabited by a creator God, and a separate and imperfect world of Becoming that contained the visible universe, including the Earth.⁹¹⁵ Cobb wrote that cyberspace is an expression of Plato's desire to leave behind the imperfect world of the body for the perfect world of Being.⁹¹⁶ However my questionnaire respondents did not believe that cyberspace was a separate world. Nor did they support the idea that it brings about a Cartesian separation of the mind from the body, as is claimed by Stockton, or that it is a place of the mind as claimed by Benedikt.⁹¹⁷ From this it can be concluded that the questionnaire respondents do not perceive cyberspace as anthropologically or cosmologically dualistic.

Further, Cowan described online space as 'qualitatively different' to offline space.⁹¹⁸ Wertheim considered it space for the soul, a technological version of the Christian Heaven.⁹¹⁹ According to Ulansey the gods of today are in cyberspace.⁹²⁰ Taking the association between gods and cyberspace a step further, Ward called cyberspace a secularisation of the divine.⁹²¹ However my questionnaire respondents did not support any of these ideas. Nor did they support the idea that cyberspace gave

⁹¹⁴ Pew Internet, "Internet Use over Time, <http://www.pewinternet.org/Static-Pages/Trend-Data/Online-Activites-Total.aspx>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]; Anon. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

⁹¹⁵ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-c.

⁹¹⁶ Jennifer Cobb, 'A Spiritual Experience of Cyberspace', p. 399; Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-28c.

⁹¹⁷ Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 609; Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 3.

⁹¹⁸ Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 257.

⁹¹⁹ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21.

⁹²⁰ David Ulansey, 'Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace', <<http://www.mysterium.com/cultural.html>>.

⁹²¹ Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God*, p. xvi.

human beings a sense of having god-like powers of omniscience and omnipotence, as claimed by Heim.⁹²²

The results of the questionnaires have given a negative response to the questions concerning dualism. That is, the extensive claims in the literature on cyberspace that cyberspace is dualistic are not supported by my data.

However, as Creswell and Plano Clark point out, there are limits to what questionnaire data can reveal.⁹²³ Quantitative data, they state, is obtained from examining a large number of people's responses to a few variables, and may not tell the complete story. The understanding of the data and the individual's position is diminished.⁹²⁴ In order that a more complete story be told, my research also consisted of qualitative research in the form of interviews, which will be analysed in Chapters Eight.

⁹²² Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 69.

⁹²³ John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* 2nd ed. edn (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2011), p. 8.

⁹²⁴ John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, p. 8.

Chapter Eight - Analysis of the Interviews

Introduction

I conducted sixty-five interviews between 2012 and 2015. All the interviewees were professional astrologers, many of them full-time astrologers and many of them leaders in the field. Examples of astrologers I consider 'leaders in the field' are astrologers who have written astrological texts that are recommended to students by the established schools, astrologers who are repeatedly asked to speak at national and international conferences following positive feedback from delegates, or high-profile astrologers whose names were frequently mentioned in a positive light in comments on the returned questionnaires. Thirty of the interviewees were women and thirty-five were men. In the interests of ethical research, I have assigned each interviewee a unique identification number (ID) which will be used to identify the individual astrologer in the text. They will be referred to as Astrologer 1, Astrologer 2, and so on. The numbers were assigned randomly and do not reflect the alphabetical order of the astrologers' names or the order in which the interviews took place.

Fifty-five of the sixty-five astrologers were interviewed at astrology conferences or approached at the conferences and interviewed later. They are referred to in Chapter Eight as 'interviewees' and in some cases as 'conference astrologers', for the sake of clarity. Ten of the sixty-five interviewees were admins of Facebook astrology groups. These are referred to in the text as 'admins'. Chapter Eight contains an analysis of the views of the interviewees and a separate analysis of the views of the admins. The experiences of the admins on Facebook groups will be discussed at the end of this chapter in the section before the chapter conclusions. Due to the high profile of Facebook in astrology, discussion of Facebook took place in almost every interview with the fifty-five interviewees, and is intermingled with their views on the Internet in general. These views are included in the main body of this chapter. Some questions, such as whether they experienced a sense of online community, or whether cyberspace could be a sacred space, were put to all interviewees. The other questions differed according to the individual area or areas

of specialisation of each interviewee. For example, an interviewee whose work was mostly based around YouTube and Facebook was asked mainly about these areas. Similarly, an astrologer who, in addition to seeing clients and writing articles for astrological journals, wrote a newspaper Sun sign column, was asked about the effects of the Internet on Sun sign astrology in comparison to the effects on real astrology. A set of questions covering the main topics of the research was prepared prior to the interview, but leeway was given to allow the interviewees to introduce topics, within the area of research, that they considered important. One example is the issue of self-promotion. Their views on self-promotion are discussed below.

Unlike the questionnaires, many of the questions posed to the interviewees did not receive a clear 'Yes' or 'No' answer. Most of the answers fell somewhere between the two, with interviewees sometimes answering 'Yes and no'. Often the answer did not directly answer the question but approached it from a different angle. As stated by Bryman and cited in Chapter Six, qualitative research, such as open-ended interviews, emphasises words rather than quantification and embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals' creation.⁹²⁵ For these reasons, it is not possible to state precisely the numbers or percentages of interviewees who agree or disagree with each concept. Instead Chapter Eight attempts to portray the different views of the interviewees on the topics discussed in the literature review and other topics raised by the interviewees, while highlighting the most popular of these views. As expected and discussed in Chapter Six, the interviews yielded very different results from the questionnaires.

Dualism

Chapter Two contained Ladd's definitions of cosmological dualism and anthropological dualism. He defined cosmological dualism as a contrast between two levels of existence, the earthly and the heavenly, and anthropological dualism as a contrast between two parts of the individual, the body and soul.⁹²⁶ He claimed

⁹²⁵ Alan Bryman, *Methods*, pp. 19-20.

⁹²⁶ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

that they usually appeared side by side, with the body belonging to the earthly level and the soul belonging to the heavenly or spiritual level.⁹²⁷ The view of cyberspace as a form of both cosmological and anthropological dualism is discussed in Chapter Three. A cosmologically dualistic portrayal of the Internet can be found in the literature from the very beginning when Gibson's cyberspace was seen by Benedikt as 'a technology very nearly achieved'.⁹²⁸ Other authors, such as Cobb and Stockton, depicted a form of anthropological dualism arguing that cyberspace was a venue for the mind, and that it separates mind from body.⁹²⁹ While, as discussed in Chapter Three, this perception of cyberspace became increasingly challenged in the second wave of Internet research, the idea could still be found in some authors' work, such as Cowan, who asked in 2005, 'Where do we go when we are online? Where is the "place" in cyberspace?'⁹³⁰

In the questionnaires from both 2009 and 2012, the views of the respondents were sought on the issues of cosmological and anthropological dualism. In 2009 the astrologers firmly rejected the idea of cyberspace as a form of cosmological dualism and even more firmly rejected the idea of an anthropological dualism in connection with their use of the Internet. In 2012 they once more disagreed with the idea of cyberspace as either cosmologically or anthropologically dualistic, but less emphatically than in 2009. In 2012, 44% of the respondents rejected the concept of cyberspace as a separate world, while 72% rejected the idea that they lost touch with the physical world and their physical body when logged onto the Internet, supporting Bell's statement that the meat is not that readily discarded, and Jurgenson's that the digital and physical are increasingly meshed.⁹³¹

⁹²⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

⁹²⁸ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 131.

⁹²⁹ Jennifer Cobb, 'A Spiritual Experience of Cyberspace', p. 399; Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 609.

⁹³⁰ Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 257.

⁹³¹ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, p. 141; Nathan Jurgenson, "Cyborgology," <http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/02/24/digital-dualism-versus-augmented-reality/#more-1347>. [Accessed 11/08/2015]

The results from the interviews told a different story. During the interviews the interviewees were asked if they believed that a separate world was being created online and if they believed that they entered that world when logged onto the Internet. As stated above, the answers from the interviewees were rarely a simple 'Yes' or 'No'. A small number of people did reply 'No', but most gave a more detailed answer. The quotes in the paragraphs below reflect the range of replies.

Ladd's statement that cosmological and anthropological dualism are closely connected is upheld by the frequency with which authors like Benedikt and Heim move seamlessly between the two types of dualism in their writing.⁹³² For example, comparing cyberspace to Plato's world of ideas, Heim in 1991 called it 'Platonized formalized knowledge', and wrote, 'Cyberspace is Platonism as a working product'.⁹³³ In the next sentence he states that the cybernaut 'leaves the prison of the body' and is 'lost to this world', statements that are both Gnostic in their perception of the soul or mind being trapped in the physical body, and Cartesian in their view that, like Descartes, the cybernaut can detach from his physical body and the physical world.⁹³⁴ This tendency to blend cosmological and anthropological dualism was evident in some of the replies of the interviewees. More than half of the interviewees to whom the question was put, said that they believed that a separate world - the word 'territory' came up frequently - had been created online. When asked to describe this online world, the most common response was to relate the world to the mind or soul, such as a 'world of the mind' or 'world of ideas', or 'mental arena'.

For example, Astrologer 8 agrees that cyberspace is a separate world, directly comparing it to Plato's world of Ideas and indirectly referencing Descartes in his identification of the person with their thoughts and his perception of the physical as irrelevant. He said,

⁹³² George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

⁹³³ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 64.

⁹³⁴ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 64; *On the Origin of the World*; Rene Descartes, *Philosophical Works*, Vol 1, p. 171.

We live here in this Platonic space. It's Platonic because it's not physical; it is literally a world of Ideas. I think the whole Internet is made up of ideas. I suppose there is a physical presence in that there are servers with bits of magnetic material oriented one way or the other that represent the data. But the whole fact that you can represent everything – your thoughts, your ideas, your location – everything can be represented as a series of zeros and ones in any format you like. So yes: it might be on a server today but it might be on a different media tomorrow and you wouldn't know. If your Internet service provider suddenly started storing your emails on laser discs rather than some other sort of storage, you wouldn't know. You wouldn't know that they changed; there would be absolutely no difference. So the physical layer has become irrelevant; the Internet is this intellectual, digital layer of zeroes and ones that doesn't really reside in any one place. And you don't know where they are.

Astrologer 8's comment that 'you can represent everything – your thoughts, your ideas, your location – everything can be represented as a series of zeros and ones in any format you like' suggests that he, like boyd, believes that it is possible to write 'one's offline self into being in a digital environment'.⁹³⁵ His view that if the digital version of the person was changed online 'you wouldn't know' but that the person's thoughts and ideas would still exist, strongly echoes Descartes's statement: 'and even if body were not, the soul would not cease to be what it is'.⁹³⁶ His words, 'I suppose there is a physical presence', indicates an identification with the mind.

Some interviewees made reference to an astrological online world that has been created by astrologers. According to Astrologer 48, 'We (astrologers) are already in there in a very large way'. While the comment from Astrologer 48, that astrologers are physically inhabiting cyberspace, suggests he has a Gibsonian view of cyberspace, Astrologer 48 is also an active offline astrologer who was present at an offline conference. Given that almost 100% of the conference astrologers are online and offline astrologers, their astrological world might be considered an astrological

⁹³⁵ danah boyd, *Networked Publics*, p. 43.

⁹³⁶ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 101.

version of Lefebvre's social space and Soja's thirdspace in that it contains both the mental and physical worlds.⁹³⁷ However, unlike the questionnaire respondents who did not perceive the online and offline world as qualitatively different, it appears that the interviewees perceive them differently and to them the two worlds are separate. Astrologer 4 perceives the online astrological world as being separate from the offline astrological world, and claims it has become bigger than the offline astrological world. She said, 'So there is a separate world there and..I think it might be worthwhile doing a headcount'. Astrologer 36 states that the online world is not physical, but mental,

It (the online world) will operate quite differently because it's not 'hands on'. It's 'mental on'; it's 'head on' instead of 'hands on'. It's not a physical thing.

While Astrologer 4's views could be considered Platonic in her depiction of two separate worlds, Astrologer 36, in her use of the word 'instead', appears to view the Internet as almost hyper-Cartesian, in that she sees mental and physical as a dichotomy. Her views meet the criteria used by O'Connell for a genuine dualism in that she portrays the mental and physical as opposed to each other.⁹³⁸

This was a scenario about which some interviewees had misgivings. Astrologer 1, when asked if people are creating a separate world online, said,

Yes, I think we probably are and I think it's really frightening that we're creating a separate online world. Everything is totally dependent on it..... it's actually impossible not to be connected to it, now.

Astrologer 1 is echoing the views of Slouka, who wrote that he was concerned that humanity in the future would end up living in virtual worlds. He stated that his quarrel was with those who believe that the future of humankind is not in RL (real

⁹³⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 2-3; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11.

⁹³⁸ Robert J. O'Connell, *Plato on the Human Paradox*, p. 114.

life) but in some form of VR.⁹³⁹ Slouka's fears also appeared to be shared by Astrologer 60, who said, 'I'm afraid we are creating virtual worlds on the Internet. And that may just be our future.'

Other interviewees expressed a less extreme form of apprehension about the online world. Rather than viewing a totally online life as a frightening inevitability, some described a slight uneasiness when online. For example Astrologer 7 said,

If I go 'there' (cyberspace), who can see me and what can I not see, not knowing the territory. So whereas physical long-distance travel is very exciting – actually travelling into the Internet makes me nervous because I don't understand the territory. So it feels like very alien territory that I don't understand the rules or how it works, so therefore I don't know if I'm putting myself at risk somehow because I don't know the territory.

Benedikt, in 1991, described cyberspace as a realm that lies between the physical world and the world of the mind, just as Corbin called his imaginal space an 'intermediary between the sensible world and the intelligible world'.⁹⁴⁰ The term 'imaginal space' was used by Astrologer 6, whose comment also bears resemblance to Plato's world of Ideas and Teilhard de Chardin's noosphere,⁹⁴¹

I think it's a virtual territory...It facilitates, it allows, it connects, and it does all of the things that human beings might do: exchange information, find out, learn...It doesn't have space or dimensions; time is not an issue. It reflects something of the collective mind, a virtual world, like a second life – something like that...It's almost an imaginal space, a space within the imagination and therefore it represents something of the group mind, perhaps, the collective mind.

⁹³⁹ Mark Slouka, *War of the Worlds: Cyberspace and the High-Tech Assault on Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), p. 10.

⁹⁴⁰ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 124; Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, pp. 6, 11.

⁹⁴¹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28d; Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 256.

Corbin's tri-part view of space consists of the physical world connected to the body, the world of the intellect connected to the mind, and the world of the imagination - imaginal space - connected to the soul.⁹⁴² He considered imaginal space as real as the worlds of the physical and mental. Echoing Plato's world of Being that consisted of forms, the blueprints for their Earthly equivalents, the figures in Corbin's imaginal space had 'equivalents for everything existing in the sensible world without being perceptible by the senses'.⁹⁴³ He saw it as an 'intermediary between the sensible world and the intelligible world'.⁹⁴⁴ Echoes of Corbin and Plato can be heard in Astrologer 6's comment 'It does all of the things that human beings might do'.

Astrologer 43's vision of the Internet is, like that of Karaflogka's, one of physical wiring supporting a noosphere or, as he termed it, 'a world of thought'. Like Benedikt's 'common mental geography', it is a vision that is both Platonic and Cartesian, echoing Plato's world of ideas, which he associated with the divine, and Descartes's separation of the mental world from the physical body that supports it.⁹⁴⁵

You know I think that there are other dimensions we don't really know where thought exists; we don't know where it comes from. And in cyberspace you do have a lot of thoughts being brought together that are bringing people together and I think it does build larger, you might say, thoughtfulness. Because I kind of assume that the internet, the wiring has created the connection of thought like if that, suppose you send me an email and I don't get it. Then I don't think it is going to build anything because I didn't receive it. It is the humans that build the thought world and the Internet is a bunch of electrons that brings it to me, it is not till I get it and receive it but I think the thought world is created between us.

⁹⁴² Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 5.

⁹⁴³ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-28c; Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 5.

⁹⁴⁴ Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, pp. 6,11.

⁹⁴⁵ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 2; Plato, *Timeaus*, 28d; Rene Descartes, *Philosophical Works*, Vol 1, p. 102.

Robinson wrote that in the second wave of cyberculture, cyberspace is viewed as an extension of offline lives. Rejecting the anthropological and cosmological dualism of the first wave, she wrote that 'our cyberselves have been materialised'.⁹⁴⁶ The interviewees who did not view the Internet as a separate online world tended to describe it, like Robinson, as a part of the physical world or an extension of it. For example, Astrologer 15 believed it was totally part of the physical world, 'possibly because I don't play these kind of games of being another person on the Internet'.

Of the interviewees who replied that they did not see cyberspace as a separate world, many of them went on to describe it as anthropologically dualistic. One of these was Astrologer 14. When asked if it was a separate world he said, 'I've never felt that - I might be missing out', and laughed. However he then described the Internet as detached and 'a purely mental experience', suggesting that even if he did not view it as cosmologically dualistic, he felt there was a certain amount of Cartesian dualism in it. Astrologer 17 gave a similar reply. When asked if she considered people were creating an online world, she disagreed, and said she viewed the Internet as an extension of the physical world, as 'a disembodied reflection of it', again suggesting a certain amount of anthropological dualism.

Astrologer 19 seemed somewhat ambivalent. He said,

And I think sometimes I am – I was going to say guilty of – seeing it as something totally separate and I'm not sure that it should be anymore. I think it's more an extension of our world, now, but I think there are a lot of people who do see it as a separate thing.

Astrologer 19's use of the word 'guilt' seems to reflect a negative view of dualism found in the literature, from Lefebvre's and Soja's desire to find a non-dualistic view of space, to Massey's description of a dualistic view of space and place as part of

⁹⁴⁶ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 56-57.

the 'radical polarization into two genders which is typically hegemonic in western societies today'.⁹⁴⁷ Astrologer 19, like Astrologer 8, expressed a view of the Internet as changing in his statement, 'I think it's more an extension of our world, *now*'. Astrologer 8 called cyberspace 'a Platonic space', when asked if he believed people were creating a separate world in cyberspace, replied, 'I think, in a way, we are. I think it was actually much more noticeable in the early days of the Internet; I think it's just that we take it for granted now'. The second wave literature of Jurgenson, Robinson, Pang, and Graham claims that our view of the Internet as a separate world has faded due to changes in technology and how the Internet is being used.⁹⁴⁸ While Astrologer 19 appears to support this view, Astrologer 8 is suggesting the view has not changed but that familiarity with the online world has caused people to be less consciously aware of it.

Astrologer 8 also referred to the issue of the permanency of information published on the Internet, in that it is stored on a server long after the user has logged out. This point is also made by Astrologer 16 who believes this permanent storage of peoples' posts leaves a trace of the person in cyberspace. Astrologer 16 in one sense could be considered Cartesian as he associates the divine with 'higher levels of understanding'. He is also one of a minority of interviewees whose views, in part, could be considered Gibsonian. Like Case while in the matrix, Astrologer 16 refers to an online information version of the physical person and this information is what constitutes the separate online world of cyberspace.⁹⁴⁹ Astrologer 16 said,

When you connect to other people on the Internet, when you write down something, you leave a trace there, information. This information might affect other people later without your knowledge. So, in this sense it is something; it's another dimension, really. It's not something

⁹⁴⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 2-3; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11; Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, p. 6.

⁹⁴⁸ Nathan Jurgenson, "Cyborgology," <http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/02/24/digital-dualism-versus-augmented-reality/#more-1347>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]; Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 56-57; Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *End of Cyberspace*, p. 55; Mark Graham, Matthew Zook, and Andrew Boulton, 'Augmented Reality', p. 96.

⁹⁴⁹ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 67.

solid but it is knowledge and it is there; when they access it they can find you there. So it might be, yeah; it seems like a kind of reality, not based on here and now, or solid information or solid things, but a mental sphere, mental environment.

'A mental sphere' was close to the way Astrologer 16 had described his personal version of heaven. He used the term, 'higher levels of understanding'. When I pointed out to him the similarity between this and his view of cyberspace, he replied, 'In a way this is the same. Again, the mental...yeah.'

Comparisons between cyberspace and Heaven were common in the 1990s and the early 2000s. Stenger called it 'Paradise', Benedikt likened it to the Heavenly City from the *Book of Revelation*, and Wertheim called it a re-packaging of the Christian Heaven in a secular and technologically sanctioned format'.⁹⁵⁰ Unlike the traditional version of the Christian Heaven, a person did not have to die to enter cyberspace. Heim in 1993 wrote that because of cyberspace's dualistic nature, for the first time it was possible for people to enter the heavenly world while still alive and return at will.⁹⁵¹ This sentiment is echoed by one of the interviewees, Astrologer 22 who said,

I think that the fact that you can have a disembodied existence on the Internet, say, through Second Life or something like that, is very scarily like what it might be like to be dead. I think there is a big thing there...I think it's fascinating - the possibilities as to what might happen.

Like Heim, who claimed that cyberspace allowed living people to enter an ethereal other-world and return, Astrologer 17 believes that it has given us the ability to access something not previously accessible. She said,

Yeah, I'm beginning to think it is another reality. I'm beginning to think something happens there, but I cannot articulate what. There is something but I have no idea how it fits into pre-Internet reality, or if it's plugging into

⁹⁵⁰ Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', p. 52; Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 38; Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21.

⁹⁵¹ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 69.

something that's pre-existing but we now – people en masse now have sort of a technological way to access it. I really don't know, but I do have a sense that something's going on.

Wertheim wrote that the Greek bipolar view of the cosmos, as described by Plato, became integrated with Judaic thinking and gave rise to the complex notion of the Christian soul, which is characterised by a tension between body and mind.⁹⁵² She argued that this tension has been played out in what is perceived as a space in which human bodies are embedded and a space in which human souls and psyches are embedded. She believes that cyberspace is the latest space onto which these notions have been projected. Astrologer 25 also views the online world as a projection of an internal world, with network connections representing a desire to personally connect with others. In his words,

But I also like the idea that the Internet is really an external model for what we can be creating internally: an inner-net. Basically it's teaching us how to connect collectively while retaining our individuality.

While supporting the idea of the existence of a world online, most of the interviewees expressed a preference for the offline world. For example, Astrologer 3 said, 'I have to say, though, the online experience is not the same as being in the geographical location; you can't smell it and you can't feel it.' Similarly Astrologer 7 said,

It (cyberspace) feels like techno world which is a different order of reality. It's techno world, where I have an ambivalent and unhappy relationship with techno world. So for me there's some kind of privileging of real world over techno world, so therefore I have a different relationship to it.

Astrologer 7 uses the term 'real world' to refer to the physical world. van Dijk claimed that using the word 'real' to apply to the offline world was a bias in favour

⁹⁵² Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 28.

of the offline world. He termed this bias a 'reality bias'.⁹⁵³ Astrologer 21 uses the word 'reality' to refer to the offline world, despite claiming not to see cyberspace as a separate world, and differentiates between people he knows on Facebook and people he 'actually knows'. Seeing the offline and online world as qualitatively different he, like Astrologer 7 who, 'privileges the real world', displayed van Dijk's 'reality bias':

I think, rather than thinking of it as a separate world, I think our world now includes this virtual aspect...So to me it doesn't feel quite like a virtual reality. It feels like it has become a subset of our reality. For example: now, So-and-so's a 'friend' of mine; are they a Facebook Friend or a friend-friend? We now have to qualify the word 'friend' because there's this broader category of someone who I may not know but we have some connection on the Internet vs. someone I actually know and have a connection with.

Astrologer 7 stated that she privileged the 'real world over techno world'. This was the view of most of the interviewees. Whether speaking about online reading, online teaching or online consultations, with very few exceptions they all expressed a strong preference for the offline world. Several said they preferred the 'embodied' experience of offline, suggesting that they viewed cyberspace as a disembodied experience. A greater trust of the embodied experience was what Boler termed 'New Digital Cartesianism'.⁹⁵⁴ Boler also uses the word 'real' to refer to the offline world.⁹⁵⁵ Astrologer 21 differentiates between 'a Facebook Friend or a friend-friend' suggesting that a Facebook friend is somehow not a real friend.

From these quotes it can be concluded that, despite the rejection in 2009 and 2012 of the questionnaire statements that portrayed cyberspace as cosmologically and anthropologically dualistic, the majority of respondents perceive cyberspace as having some dualistic characteristics. While some see cyberspace as an extension of the physical world, many view it as separate or different in some way, often

⁹⁵³ Jan A.G.M. van Dijk, 'Reality', pp. 44-45.

⁹⁵⁴ Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, pp. 185-86.

⁹⁵⁵ Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, p. 196.

describing it in the same manner as did the early cyberspace theorists. Anthropological dualism could also be heard in many of the quotes, with cyberspace being described as a mental arena, or an opportunity to leave the body behind, in a way that could be termed Platonic or Cartesian. Wertheim called cyberspace 'a re-packaging of the Christian Heaven in a secular and technologically sanctioned format', and considered it space for the soul.⁹⁵⁶ While Astrologer 22's comparison of the Internet with 'what's it's like to be dead', this view tended to be the exception. In the views of the interviewees the other world of cyberspace was not a representation of the Christian Heaven. Neither could the comments of the interviewees be considered Gnostic. In Gnosticism, the physical world is a place where humans are trapped in mortal bodies.⁹⁵⁷ The demonic Archons seek to prevent them travelling upwards to unite with the deity.⁹⁵⁸ Gibson's cyberspace where Case is trapped in 'the prison of his own flesh', for which he has a 'relaxed contempt', has strong Gnostic leanings.⁹⁵⁹ Case's preference is made clear with Gibson describing him as living 'for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace'.⁹⁶⁰ The expressed preferences of the interviewees were the reverse of the Gnostics and of Gibson's hero. With the exception of a tiny minority, the interviewees could not be considered either Gnostic or Gibsonian in their relationship with the Internet and cyberspace.

Cyberspace as Sacred Space

Dualistic views of space, discussed in Chapter Two, have existed since the time of Plato, with one half of a dualistic cosmos being seen as superior to the other half, or in many cases, sacred and associated with the divine, as with Plato's world of Being, the Gnostic divine realm beyond the sphere of the fixed stars, or the Christian Heaven.⁹⁶¹ As stated above, cyberspace has been compared to paradise by Stenger

⁹⁵⁶ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21.

⁹⁵⁷ *On the Origin of the World*. [Accessed 31/05/2015]

⁹⁵⁸ *Apocryphon of John*. [Accessed 31/05/2015]

⁹⁵⁹ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 12.

⁹⁶⁰ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 12.

⁹⁶¹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-c; *The Teachings of Silvanus*. [Accessed 31/05/2015]; St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*.XI.I

and to Christian sacred worlds by Benedikt and Wertheim.⁹⁶² According to Wertheim cyberspace, like heaven, has no terrestrial coordinates.⁹⁶³ Stenger, Benedikt and Wertheim were part of the first wave of cyberspace literature, but the concept of cyberspace as a sacred world could still be found in second wave literature. In 2005, Cowan wrote that cyberspace is viewed as divine or somehow superior to the material world and, a year later in 2006, Partridge wrote that cyberspace had a transcendent quality.⁹⁶⁴

In the questionnaires, respondents were asked their views on the statement, 'Cyberspace can be a sacred space'. In both years this statement had a high number of respondents choosing 'Don't know', with 30% choosing this option in 2009, and 27% in 2012. Only 22% agreed with the statement in 2009, and the same percentage agreed in 2012. Some questionnaire respondents commented on this question, with the most frequent comment being that anywhere could be a sacred space. These results indicate that the majority of astrologers surveyed did not believe that cyberspace can be a sacred space, and many of those who did believe it did not see it as inherently sacred.

The space in which an astrological consultation takes place is described by Radermacher as sacred, with a strong correlation to Eliade's hierophany, or irruption of the sacred.⁹⁶⁵ Radermacher claims that in any astrological consultation, in the space between astrologer and client a dialogue occurs that is 'centred on a living symbolic presence that is the birthchart itself'.⁹⁶⁶ She concludes that in an astrological consultation there is a dialogue between astrologer and client and the cosmos that can be termed, 'a meeting with the divine'.⁹⁶⁷ Gunzburg carried out research on the consultation process with professional astrologers and found that,

⁹⁶² Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', p. 52; Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 38; Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21.

⁹⁶³ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, pp. 38-39.

⁹⁶⁴ Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 258; Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 154.

⁹⁶⁵ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 176; Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 21.

⁹⁶⁶ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. vii.

⁹⁶⁷ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 175.

in the astrologers' views, a space is created that is 'mysterious or divine'.⁹⁶⁸ This space was also identified by Hyde, who termed it 'Divinatory Space'.⁹⁶⁹ By 2012, 60% of full-time astrologers stated that they used the Internet for consultations with their clients. If the majority of astrologers agree with Radermacher's view of what takes place in a consultation, then the question arises: can cyberspace be an appropriate place for this meeting with the divine to take place?

Fifty-five interviewees were asked their views on cyberspace as a sacred space or venue. There were two parts to the question and they were put separately. They were asked if they believed that cyberspace is fundamentally a sacred space, as described by Wertheim and Benedikt and, secondly, if they believed that the astrological consultation contained a sacred element, as is suggested by Radermacher's conclusions; if so, did they believe that this 'meeting with the divine' could occur online.⁹⁷⁰

Only a small number of interviewees said they believed cyberspace to be a fundamentally sacred space. One who did was Astrologer 1 who, supporting Benedikt and Wertheim, views cyberspace as an already sacred venue to which she brings clients. In her words, 'I do think it is a sacred space and I do create a space; I want a special space which is very private, which is a consulting space...It's like I bring them (her clients) into that sacred space via Skype'. The majority of astrologers, however, believed that the Internet was not of itself a sacred place. A comment by Astrologer 22 best represents the views expressed by the astrologers:

I think a sacred space can be created anywhere. But the whole Internet isn't going to be a sacred space because it's accessible by everyone and, human nature being what it is, there's lots of horrible things on the Internet as well – which I wouldn't associate with sacred space. I think you could make a particular website or a particular group have what I

⁹⁶⁸ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, p. 198.

⁹⁶⁹ Maggie Hyde, 'Pigs and Fishes', p. 2.

⁹⁷⁰ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21; Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 15; Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 175.

would consider to be a sort of sacred consciousness around it. It depends on the people using it.

With only one exception, every interviewee who was asked the question said they believed that the astrological consultation contains a sacred element and the space in which it takes place is a sacred space. O'Leary argued that the validity of a sacred ritual is not necessarily linked to physical presence.⁹⁷¹ To determine if the astrologers shared this view, the interviewees were asked, 'Can cyberspace be the venue for this sacred dialogue?'. There was a wide range of answers. On one end of the spectrum were the interviewees who did not think Radermacher's 'meeting with the divine' could happen online, to those who, like Astrologer 1 above, felt that the Internet was the preferred venue for this meeting. The majority however, fell somewhere in between the two ends. The quotes in the next few paragraphs represent the different views expressed.

Very few totally disagreed with the idea that a sacred connection between astrologer and client can occur online. Two who did were Astrologer 29 and Astrologer 15, who both compared it unfavourably to offline space and a face-to-face consultation. Astrologer 15 said, 'Not in the same way, I think. I mean, it's not so intimate, possibly, because there's a distance', and Astrologer 29 said

It's never as good. Never as good; nothing like that is ever as good as a one-to-one in a contained space. But, sometimes, that's all there is, you know? It's the only option people have got, so you've got to go with it, make the best of it.

Astrologer 29 is taking the same position as Campbell did in relation to online communities. Campbell, although supporting the concept that virtual communities merited the name 'community', also stated that participation in online religious communities does not fully meet religious members' desire for face-to-face interaction and a shared, embodied worship experience, so they represent one part

⁹⁷¹ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, pp. 47-48.

of an individual's overall religious involvement.⁹⁷² This is a view shared by Radde-Antweiler, who claims that there have been questions about whether social actions within digital realms have the same quality as face-to-face interactions.⁹⁷³ She claims that in research of religion and the Internet, performance of rituals online are often doubted as being a mere simulation or a reproduction of something 'real', rather than being authentic.⁹⁷⁴ This is an extreme example of van Dijk's 'reality bias'.⁹⁷⁵ However the views reported by Campbell and Radde-Antweiler in the study of online religion were only expressed by a small minority of interviewees in connection with the online practice of astrology.

Astrologer 36 expressed a view that the occurrence of the sacred in the online consultation took some effort:

Perhaps it takes a little bit longer to warm up for the client. Maybe that's the only difference; there's not that first intimate shaking a hand, something like that. So that perhaps takes a bit longer but then, yeah...

Astrologer 36's comment that it 'takes a bit longer to warm up' supports the findings of King-O'Riain who researched communication between people on Skype.⁹⁷⁶ She found that that it took longer for the people to feel connected over Skype and that the sense of connection was weaker. Her conclusion was somewhat similar to the statement above by Astrologer 29, albeit slightly more amenable to Skype: 'While Skype is not a first choice, but it is a good second choice – the next best thing to being together in person'.⁹⁷⁷ Astrologer 36 refers to the lack on Skype of a physical hand shake, suggesting that she believes that lack of physicality plays a part in the delay.

⁹⁷² Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 191.

⁹⁷³ Kerstin Radde-Antweiler, *Authenticity*, p. 88.

⁹⁷⁴ Kerstin Radde-Antweiler, *Authenticity*, p. 88.

⁹⁷⁵ Jan A.G.M. van Dijk, 'Reality', pp. 44-45.

⁹⁷⁶ Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain, 'Transconnective Space, Emotions, and Skype: The Transnational Emotional Practices of Mixed International Couples in the Republic of Ireland', in *Internet and Emotions*, ed. by Tova Benski and Eran Fisher (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 131-43.

⁹⁷⁷ Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain, *Skype*, p. 141.

Some interviewees agreed that a sacred space can be created or can occur online, but with some reservations or ambivalence. Astrologer 2 expressed some reservation: 'I would say I do. And I would say it *can* but it's probably less likely to. I would say those consultations tend to have a duller, drier quality.' Astrologer 7 was the astrologer quoted above who referred to cyberspace as 'alien territory that I don't understand the rules', which she said made her nervous. She believed strongly in Radermacher's 'meeting with the divine', but was somewhat ambivalent about this meeting taking place in the territory she considered alien, yet did not reject the idea. She said,

I'm not saying 'no', because I'm sure it could...I think it might be possible...I mean, having said that I have had some really valuable Skype conversations, very valuable Skype sessions.

O'Leary argues that there are parallels to suggest that the validity of a ritual may not necessarily be linked to physical presence or the mode of mediation. He gives the example of Pope John Paul II celebrating mass on television and announcing a plenary indulgence to observers from around the world.⁹⁷⁸ Another example comes from Helland, who writes about the Western Wall in Jerusalem which he describes as 'wired', allowing for people to virtually visit the sacred site any time they wish.⁹⁷⁹ When applied to astrology, the view that the ritual or sacred activity transcends the medium, is shared by the majority of the interviewees. As Astrologer 5 put it, 'It's only a cellular telephone consultation, it's just got the pictures added. Or even post your communication which is two days doing it in the post in between. It's just the same.' Similarly Astrologer 17 said, 'Oh, yes, just as much. It's a rapport. I mean, I can do it with telephone conversations where there's no visuals. It's a rapport'.

A frequently expressed view was that it is the consultation itself, the dialogue between the two people, or the actual act of interpreting the chart, that makes the environment sacred, regardless of the medium. O'Leary had concluded that it was the words and actions of the individuals involved in an online ritual that turned the

⁹⁷⁸ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, p. 48.

⁹⁷⁹ Christopher Helland, *Ritual*, p. 33.

space of cyberspace into a sacred space.⁹⁸⁰ With this he is echoing Eliade, who termed the act of manifestation of the sacred 'a hierophany', and described it as the manifestation of a reality that does not belong in the physical world.⁹⁸¹ He described the space in which the sacred manifests as becoming qualitatively different from the surrounding milieu.⁹⁸² Echoing Eliade, O'Leary stated, 'It is the declarative act of setting the space apart that sacralizes the acts within that space, which turns further uses of ordinary language into performative speech acts - for those who take the ritual seriously'.⁹⁸³ The same point is made about Wiccan use of the Internet for religious activity by both Arthur and Cowan. According to Arthur, 'the parts of cyberspace that Wiccans utilise are being appropriated by them and taken out of the ambiguous virtual realm into a created pseudo-simulation of real space'.⁹⁸⁴ This same point is made by Cowan who described how the space in which the online ritual occurs, a chat room, can be sacralised and thus made separate from the larger enclosing space.⁹⁸⁵

The words of Eliade, O'Leary, Arthur, and Cowan were frequently echoed in the responses of the interviewees, for whom the intention of the astrologer is key to creating the sacred space. For example, Astrologer 28 said, 'I don't think that it's the Internet that's holding the sacred space, I think it's the people who are holding the sacred space'. Astrologer 20 said,

It's the idea of one person, as a practitioner, showing up for the other person...the sacredness is in the interpersonal interaction. And that interaction happens whether we meet together in person or whether we connect...over Skype video. The sacredness is still present, I would say.

⁹⁸⁰ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, p. 52.

⁹⁸¹ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 11.

⁹⁸² Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 26.

⁹⁸³ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 12; Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, p. 52.

⁹⁸⁴ Shawn Arthur, 'Technophilia and Nature Religion', p. 307.

⁹⁸⁵ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 138.

O'Leary's 'setting the space apart that sacralizes the acts within that space' is echoed by Astrologer 6 in this quote:

I think it's about the intention to create that space, and so you have to, as it were, make a mental magical circle which encompasses you and then the client. So it's a kind of mental thing; you make that mental link with somebody else. So it does create, on a kind of intangible level, a connection that is a sacred space, if you like. It's harder to do it because you have to do it mentally rather than being able to do it physically by delineating your space, as in having a particular room set aside for the work or a particular area of a room. But I'd say it's possible to do it.

Astrologer 6 is describing a conscious decision to make the space happen. This was also suggested by Astrologer 50 who, when asked if a sacred space could open up for him in an online astrological consultation said, 'I've found a way to do that'. In an interview with Davis, Pesce discusses the conscious use of the will to create a magical space online. He argued that cyberspace and magical spaces were both entirely constructed by a person's thoughts and beliefs.⁹⁸⁶ Arthur and Brasher argued for the suitability of cyberspace for a ritual, due to the fact that both cyberspace and rituals are concerned with being outside of space and time.⁹⁸⁷ These views could be heard in the words of Astrologer 19, who, referring to online consultations and the space created in them, said,

I agree that there is a sacred space created, but I think you create that anywhere. You just have to be flexible in how you view that space. I've always been interested in magic and that type of thing, and a lot of that is about creating a certain space.

Astrologer 6 spoke of performing a task of mentally delineating the space before the consultation. Eliade wrote that the passing between the worlds of the sacred

⁹⁸⁶ Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 229. Interview with Pesce

⁹⁸⁷ Shawn Arthur, 'Technophilia and Nature Religion', p. 305; Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*, pp. 47-56.

and the profane were accompanied by 'Numerous rites'.⁹⁸⁸ This point was also mentioned by Astrologer 3, who compared cyberspace to an online mosque in that both are created by people for the purpose of enacting something sacred. Astrologer 3 referred to cyberspace as 'that sacred space' and, like Eliade, considered the issue of a ritual accompanying the accessing of the sacred space to be important. She said,

And the question is, would there be some sort of ritual accompanying the entry to the sacred space?...You enter the virtual environment randomly whereas, really, for a sacred space I feel there should be some type of ritual within that space, not even just for entering the space: within the space.

The comments of Astrologer 6 and Astrologer 3 suggest that accessing cyberspace, if only when being used for astrological consultations, should have a ritual accompanying the entry to it. Several interviewees mentioned certain tasks they always perform before a consultation. The view that tended to be expressed was that the astrologers felt it just as necessary to carry out these tasks, or rituals, before an online consultation as they would before an offline consultation.

From these comments it can be concluded that while the Internet is not, of itself, sacred, a sacred space - Hyde's Divinatory Space - can be created there and a sacred activity can take place in the space created. The actions and intentions of the astrologer and the activity that takes place in the space are what makes it sacred.

⁹⁸⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 25.

The Gods of Cyberspace

Just as the heavenly worlds of Plato, the Gnostics and Christianity contain a god, so too, it has been written by Heim, Gibson and Ulansey, does cyberspace.⁹⁸⁹

According to Heim, the gods of cyberspace, like the gods of Gnosticism and Christianity, offer salvation and it is salvation, he claims, that is being sought in cyberspace which, he points out, was created at a time when there are holes in the ozone layer, toxic waste in the water and we are running out of fossil fuels.⁹⁹⁰

In the questionnaires, respondents were asked their views on the statement, 'There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace'. Like the previous question concerning cyberspace as a sacred space, this question also had a high number of 'Don't know' responses, with 27% choosing this option in 2009, and 26% in 2012. Only 16% agreed with the statement in 2009, and only 14% in 2012. Some questionnaire respondents commented on the question, the most frequent being comment being, 'God is everywhere'. These results indicate that the majority of astrologers surveyed did not believe that there is a divine presence in cyberspace.

In the interviews the response of the interviewees to the previous question, about whether they believed cyberspace could be a sacred space, determined whether or not the question of there being a divine presence in cyberspace was put to them. A small minority answered that they did not believe that cyberspace could be sacred, so the question of whether or not it had a divine presence was not put to them.

Of those who had said they believed cyberspace was or could be a sacred space, when asked if they believed the Internet had a divine presence, some did not believe it, like Astrologer 23 who said,

Personally, I think 'No' (the Internet does not have a divine presence). But again, I would say that's coming from me as somebody who is very Taurean, and I like stuff that I can

⁹⁸⁹ Michael Heim, *Realism*, pp. 149-55; William Gibson, *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, p. 138; David Ulansey, 'Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace', <<http://www.mysterium.com/cultural.html>>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

⁹⁹⁰ Michael Heim, *Realism*, pp. 149-55.

touch and feel or a sense of atmosphere, body language, that sort of thing.

Stone, in 1991, wrote that she found it hard to believe that any artefact could be devoid of agency.⁹⁹¹ She gives her computer a name, 'Saint-John Perse', and argues that for people who work with computers, the machines are not just 'passage points' for communication.⁹⁹² For them 'the unhumans can be lively too'.⁹⁹³ Several of the interviewees, while not seeing the Internet as having a divine presence, believed either it had a presence of some type of energy or elemental, or that it had an agency of its own. The following are some examples.

Astrologer 1 did not believe the Internet had a divine presence but she did associate it with a supernatural presence. She said,

One thing I think is quite fascinating is how there seems to be a growth in people receiving all sorts of strange messages...that they think are some kind of supernatural communications...I think there is something very liminal about technology that is on a kind of border between two worlds. If one takes it seriously – and there's no reason not to when you look at all the evidence – that there's some kind of ability, that it does provide some kind of interface for other dimensions to communicate with us...I think what communicates with us are very quite low, intermediate-level spiritual reality; I think it's presences or intelligences that just sort of hover around on the other side and are able to find ways to communicate through.

Astrologer 58 has experienced what he called 'amazing synchronicities' with the Internet. He is using this term in the way defined by Carl Jung, as 'meaningful coincidences'.⁹⁹⁴ Astrologer 58 said, 'I mean, it's like information I get from the

⁹⁹¹ Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, p. 81.

⁹⁹² Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, p. 81.

⁹⁹³ Allucquere Rosanne Stone, *Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?*, p. 82.

⁹⁹⁴ C.G. Jung, *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013),p. 18.

Internet will often then be necessary right away'. He added that this happened much more often with the Internet than it did offline. He added,

But I know very well now what synchronicity means or much better, and it's all a way of making contact with the universe... yes: more synchronistic things are happening; the pace is being picked.

However, the most common answer, from people who believe in a divine presence was that a divine presence is everywhere. As Astrologer 31 put it, 'The Internet is an extension of human beings, so if there's a divine presence in people, there's a divine presence in the Internet'. Astrologer 6, who earlier stated that she believed the astrologer created the sacred space in the consultation, also spoke about a divine presence on the Internet created by the act of chart interpretation:

I do believe in divine presence...and I do believe it can manifest in a conversation online. For me the astrological symbols cross all of those borders – spatial and temporal – and therefore the divinity that is being signified by the symbols also does the same thing.

The overall response to this question, perhaps unsurprisingly, reflects the overall response to the question of cyberspace as a sacred space, in that the answer to both could be summed up as 'it can be'. In the case of the Internet containing a god, although a small number of interviewees have experienced the Internet as hosting a presence of some type, not necessarily divine, the majority expressed the belief that while, unlike Gibson's matrix, the Internet does not automatically contain a divine presence, the divine can manifest there.

The Secular Divine

Two versions of an association between cyberspace and God can be found in the literature. In the first of these, cyberspace has become God and in the second, it enables human beings to collectively become God. In 1997 Zaleski asked, 'Will the

WWW evolve into God?'⁹⁹⁵ That same year Ward called the Internet 'The ultimate secularisation of the divine', and 'a God who sees and knows all things, existing in pure activity and realized presence, in perpetuity'.⁹⁹⁶ In 2013 Deitweiler stated that faith in technology was widespread, passionate, boundless and complete.⁹⁹⁷

Heim wrote in 1993 that the ability to create a world gave humanity a god-like power over which they had 'god-like instant access'.⁹⁹⁸ Cyberspace appeared to promise immortality. In 2005, Partridge wrote, 'The twenty-first century spiritual seeker can experience the eternal now - virtually'.⁹⁹⁹ The possibility of living forever in cyberspace was believed to be a possibility by Cox and Paul, who described how humans could upload their minds to cyberspace where they could live forever, and collectively become more powerful than current concepts of the divine.¹⁰⁰⁰

In the questionnaires respondents were asked their views on statements that associated the use of cyberspace with a sense of having god-like powers, and on a statement that cyberspace was god. The following statements were concerned with an association between the Internet and feelings of omniscience and omnipotence:

- i. I feel powerful when I'm in cyberspace
- k. In cyberspace I feel immortal
- l. In cyberspace I can know everything

All three statements associated with feelings of omniscience and omnipotence were strongly rejected in both 2009 and 2012. The highest rate of acceptance was for statement i in 2009 at 16%, which dropped to 9% in 2012. The highest rejection was for statement k, with which 87% disagreed in 2009. Apart from statement i, the percentage of people agreeing with the statements rose slightly in 2012, but never

⁹⁹⁵ Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives* p. 20.

⁹⁹⁶ Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God*, p. xvi.

⁹⁹⁷ Craig Detweiler, *Igods*. Loc 123

⁹⁹⁸ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 69.

⁹⁹⁹ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Earl Cox and Gregory S. Paul, *Beyond Humanity: Cyberevolution and Future Mind*, pp. 1-7.

reached higher than 11.5%, which was for statement I. From this it can be concluded that the questionnaire respondents do not feel that cyberspace endows them with godlike feelings of omniscience and omnipotence. Statement e was 'Cyberspace is god'; in 2009 less than 5% agreed and 80% disagreed. In 2012, less than 4% agreed and 71% disagreed. While the extent of their rejection was less in 2012, overall it can be concluded that the respondents were firmly opposed to the idea that cyberspace is god.

In connection with god-like powers, none of the interviewees expressed a belief that use of the Internet made them, individually, omniscient or omnipotent. However there was a tendency to see the Internet as containing all the information they would ever need, and several referred to 'the great god Google'. For example, Astrologer 44 had experienced difficulties in the past accessing the information she required from libraries and shops. She said,

It was hugely frustrating and the more frustrating it was the more I wanted them. But now it seems like nearly everything I need I can get via the Internet... It's like the treasure box has been opened and the Internet has done that.

The idea of the Internet as a representation of the collective mind was frequently expressed and this was seen as powerful, often compared to a divine mind. Cox and Paul writing about uploading human brains to cyberspace where they could live forever, wrote that the uploaded minds will collectively become more powerful than current concepts of the divine. In their words, 'Such a combined system of minds, representing the ultimate triumph of science and technology, will transcend the timid concepts of deity and divinity, held by today's theologians'.¹⁰⁰¹ Versions of both the idea that the person's mind can live in cyberspace and that the collective human minds in cyberspace can become a powerful deity, were expressed in the interviews. Astrologer 57 saw the Internet as 'the brain of God':

¹⁰⁰¹ Earl Cox and Gregory S. Paul, *Beyond Humanity: Cyberevolution and Future Mind*, pp. 1-7.

Humanity on the planet, because of the Internet has become in mass a human brain. Any cell in the brain can, through synapses connect to another cell and that's what the Internet kind of out pictures and the power of that for good or ill... So we are the brain of God, you know the brain of the planet through the Internet in that way.

Astrologer 57 sees the Internet as having unified humanity into 'the brain of the planet'. The idea of the Internet as a global brain has been mentioned by O'Reilly and Pesce.¹⁰⁰² O'Reilly wrote that Web 3.0 is turning the Internet into a 'kind of global brain'.¹⁰⁰³ The idea of a global brain or a converged global consciousness can be found in the work of Teilhard de Chardin, who wrote of the noosphere.¹⁰⁰⁴ The noosphere has been likened to cyberspace by Bauwens, Pesce, Cobb, and Campbell.¹⁰⁰⁵ Pesce believes that cyberspace is a manifestation of the noosphere and that cyberspace is 'part of our evolution'.¹⁰⁰⁶ In addition to Astrologer 57, several other astrologers made reference to the Internet as 'a global brain', or 'collective consciousness'. Astrologer 6 and Astrologer 43, discussed earlier in the chapter, made the same comparison. Astrologer 49, like Pesce, make a direct comparison with Teilhard de Chardin:

The internet also is in a sense reflective of the larger whole, because it's a unifying, connecting phenomenon that constitutes an almost global brain, what Teilhard de Chardin called the noosphere, the emerging brain and nervous system of the planetary, collective, new conscious human identity.

¹⁰⁰² Tim O'Reilly, *What Is Web 2.0?*, p. 41; Mark Pesce, "Proximal and Distal Unity, <http://hyperreal.org/~mpesce/>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

¹⁰⁰³ Tim O'Reilly, *What Is Web 2.0?*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 256.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Michel Bauwens, 'Spirituality and Technology: Exploring the Relationship', <<http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/496/417>>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]; Mark Pesce, "Proximal and Distal Unity, <http://hyperreal.org/~mpesce/>. [Accessed 25/08/2015]; Jennifer J. Cobb, *Cybergrace: The Search for God in the Digital World*, p. 98; Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 58.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Mark Pesce, "Proximal and Distal Unity, <http://hyperreal.org/~mpesce/>. [Accessed 25/08/2015]

While the interviewees had no sense of personal deification, there was some support for it as a fount of all knowledge, and a sense that somehow the knowledge on the Internet had merged to become a global and somewhat mystical entity.

Online Astrological Community

Frequent arguments in the online community literature centre around the issue of whether or not online communities, with members in different geographic locations, merit the term community. Baym, for example, found a lack of commitment in online communities. She argues that unlike the real world, it is very easy for virtual community members to walk away with the click of a mouse, rather than deal with any issues or diversity that arise online.¹⁰⁰⁷ Foster argues that virtual communities are based on communication, but communication alone does not have the necessary sense of collective identity that he believes is a criterion for community.¹⁰⁰⁸ Campbell, however, puts more emphasis on the importance of communication, stating that the ability to 'contact and interact with other members, either through posting messages to the entire group or through personal interaction with other subscribers' is what makes a group a community.¹⁰⁰⁹ Agre also emphasises the importance of communication as a criterion for community.¹⁰¹⁰ Some authors, such as Van Dijk, argue against what they see as a belief that virtual communities are a substitute for offline communities.¹⁰¹¹ Rheingold and Wilbur both write about virtual communities appearing at a time when traditional communities are under attack.¹⁰¹² Campbell rejects the idea that new technologies brought about a rejection of the traditional, location-based sense of community, claiming that this idea assumes that life was better in the past than it is now.¹⁰¹³

¹⁰⁰⁷ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Derek Foster, *Community and Identity in the Electronic Village*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 42.

¹⁰¹⁰ Philip E. Agre, *Designing Genres for New Media: Social, Economic, and Political Contexts*, p. 72.

¹⁰¹¹ Jan A.G.M. van Dijk, 'Reality', pp. 44-45.

¹⁰¹² Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 62; Shawn P. Wilbur, *Archeology*, p. 5.

¹⁰¹³ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 29.

Just as Robinson and the second wave of Internet research claimed that cyberspace was now an extension of the physical world, some authors writing about online communities, such as Baym, conclude that online communities are often an extension of offline communities.¹⁰¹⁴ Baym found that users befriend, online, people with whom they already have offline ties and, she argues, the online communities' styles are being shaped by a range of preexisting structures, including external contexts, temporal structure, system infrastructure, group purposes, and participant characteristics.¹⁰¹⁵ Parks also believes that offline communities are frequently the foundation for 'virtual' online communities.¹⁰¹⁶

In Chapter Seven, McMillan and Chavis's criteria were applied to the questionnaire results to try to determine if astrological online communities could be considered communities. In this section of Chapter Eight, the views expressed by the interviewees will be measured against McMillan and Chavis's criteria for community, and against the arguments in the literature concerning the validity of online communities.

McMillan and Chavis's four criteria for a definition of community were,

- A sense of membership
- Influence or a sense of mattering to the group
- Integration with the group
- A shared emotional connection.¹⁰¹⁷

These criteria, they claim, can be used for communities based on relationships between people without reference to physical location, a description which applies

¹⁰¹⁴ Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 55-56; Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 38.

¹⁰¹⁵ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 38.

¹⁰¹⁶ Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 120.

¹⁰¹⁷ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 4.

to virtual communities as well as those based on territorial and geographic locations, and that these two uses are not mutually exclusive.¹⁰¹⁸

The questionnaire results show that social media is the most widely used of the applications that facilitate participation in group activities and discussion. Social networks are used for astrology by 76% of the respondents in 2012, compared to 29% who use forums and 20% take an active part in blogs. However, while more than three-quarters of the questionnaire respondents use social media for astrology, the majority do not believe they are part of an online astrological community. Neither did they appear to feel a sense of membership or emotional connection with an online community. The average rating in 2012 for the importance of online astrological work was 4.08, rising to 5.48 for full-time astrologers. The average rating for online astrological social activity was 3.66 rising to 5.14 for full-time astrologers.

Once again the interviews told a different story. The interviewees were asked if they experienced a sense of community with their online astrological contacts and, with only two exceptions, they stated that they did. For example Astrologer 11 said, 'Well I think it's definitely enhancing community dynamics: connecting people, exchanging ideas. And I think, because of that, there's more creativity in the field of astrology'. Similarly Astrologer 28 said, 'I love the Internet and I love what the Internet has done for astrology, in that we didn't really have a place to meet as a global community before'. Although a small number of interviewees referred to pre-social media technologies, such as email lists, chat groups, blogs and forums, the vast majority immediately spoke about Facebook when asked about community. For example Astrologer 52 considers Facebook the ideal technology for the creation of online astrological communities:

I think Facebook already does that (fosters online community). I think it would be easier to create your groups on Facebook than it would be to have an isolated one, just

¹⁰¹⁸ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 3.

because of economy of scale and I don't see any point in having one that's not Facebook at this point.

McMillan and Chavis define membership of a group as a sense of belonging to and identifying with the group. They state there are boundaries between the people who belong and the people who do not belong to the group; these boundaries provide the members with the emotional safety necessary for intimacy to develop.¹⁰¹⁹ The sense of belonging they explain as 'The feeling, belief, and expectation that one fits in the group and has a place there'.¹⁰²⁰ One example of this from the interviews was Astrologer 6, a UK-based astrologer who spoke of how the Internet enables her to feel part of a global community. She said,

Because you're aware of what everybody else is doing. You can learn about what people are doing in the USA or Europe and you can feel, somehow, closer to the rest of the astrological community. Because, even if you don't decide to actually go, physically, to a conference in the States you can see what's going on, you can see who's involved, you can see what they've organised. And there are, of course, all sorts of things you can join in, like online conferences and so on. So I think it does foster a sense of community.

The clearest examples of an awareness of the boundaries between group members and non-members, as outlined by McMillan and Chavis, came from two interviewees who described feelings of identification with other group members that they felt were lacking with non-astrologers. Astrologer 46 said,

I've had some interesting discussions through Twitter and Facebook with people I would never have come into contact with before...we're on the same wavelength. I would never have found him and he sent me a book. So those sorts of connections I think are quite important because it's a lonely kind of pursuit, especially in some of the stuff I'm doing. Not many people know what I'm interested in, not many people are doing it. So yeah, that's good, it makes you feel like you're not quite so weird.

¹⁰¹⁹ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 9.

¹⁰²⁰ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 11.

Similarly, Astrologer 57 said,

Maybe the connectives that the Internet affords has developed my attitude about it, and my hopefulness about not being such a strange person in this world, because there's so much to be connected to and you know that somebody else is out there doing it. It gives a sense of community.

The second of McMillan and Chavis's criteria for community is a feeling of influence and mattering to the group.¹⁰²¹ While no interviewee actually said they felt influential and that they were important to the group, neither did any interviewee express a feeling that they had no influence or that they did not matter to the group. However, there were several comments suggesting that people wished to feel they were important to the group. One example was Astrologer 28 who believes that the Internet and online astrology gives astrologers the feeling they are part of a large group. She said, 'They (astrologers) can participate in it (the online astrology group) and they are vital to its functioning. Even if they're doing it badly, they're participating in their community and they are a vital part of it.'

McMillan and Chavis's third criterion for community is integration with the group and the fulfillment of needs. They state that for any group to maintain a positive sense of togetherness, the individual-group association must be rewarding for its members.¹⁰²² They claim that people join groups that seem to offer rewards such as status of membership and competence of other members and a feeling of shared values with other group members.¹⁰²³

An example of participation in a group where the other members are seen as skilled and competent in their area was that given by Astrologer 8. He talked about his membership in online groups with other astrologers whose skills and knowledge he

¹⁰²¹ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 4.

¹⁰²² David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 12.

¹⁰²³ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 13.

valued. He believed he was very much part of several online groups where he had access to conversations he might not have been able to have offline,

Some of my Facebook friends are academic, medieval astrologers who study my particular field really seriously... Most of the people that I'm friends with, who are astrologers, have been taking astrology quite seriously. So it's not just the very simplistic 'Oh, I'm a Pisces, so therefore I must be X' sort of thing, because they are astrologers.

McMillan and Chavis list status of membership as a potential reward of group membership. Several high-profile, successful astrologers, for example Astrologer 18 and Astrologer 52, told how they had been added to Facebook groups without their permission. They both believed this was done to increase the prestige of the group in the astrological online world. Both of them had their names removed. Other high-profile astrologers, for example Astrologer 12, talked of how they were usually inundated with invitations to join groups and to become Facebook friends with other astrologers, many of whom they did not know.

A shared emotional connection is the fourth of McMillan and Chavis's criteria for community. They write that it involves a shared history that the group members do not have to have experienced, but must identify with.¹⁰²⁴ A shared connection to astrology was the most commonly expressed reason for the feeling of community reported by the interviewees. Almost every interviewee mentioned this in some way. The following are typical examples of what they said.

Astrologer 26 said,

The way I feel about it is that I feel that there *is* a global community, because we are all of one mind, and therefore we do have a link around the world with people who are interested. So I think the Internet facilitates that feeling of being connected to people that maybe you haven't even

¹⁰²⁴ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 13.

met yet, that you might just through a Facebook page or a blog or some kind of Internet-based connection.

The strongest evidence of a shared emotional connection between astrologers on Facebook came from Astrologer 52, who spoke about how moved she had been by the amount of support, given via Facebook, to the family of an astrologer who died in January 2015. She said,

I thought it was brilliant. I thought it was a way of not feeling isolated, of going through grief with a whole community, of being able to offer some support to the family as well, going through it. I thought we all went through it together; it was extremely powerful. And I didn't know (Astrologer X) as well as some people, but it was so moving to read about the history people had...And, to just be able to offer those kind of condolences across the miles and across time. It felt like we all went through it as a community. Even people who had never met (Astrologer X) got to 'meet' him, even after he passed and even while he was passing. So it was actually quite an incredible experience; I don't think I've ever gone through anything like that. Pretty amazing, actually...

Astrologer 52 states that she and other Facebook astrologers, did not know the deceased astrologer very well, yet she speaks of a connection with the group and a general sense of belonging and support that would appear to meet all four of McMillan and Chavis's criteria for community.

Baym observed what she interpreted as a lack of commitment in some online groups stating that it is very easy for people to leave groups.¹⁰²⁵ This point was also made by Astrologer 28 although she did not see this as totally negative. Comparing online groups to participation in offline conferences she said,

Whereas just being online it's quite easy to just disengage, or just to ignore the noise or just to actually not sign up for the notifications. So you feel like you're just in the

¹⁰²⁵ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 36.

background and you can dip in and dip out but I don't feel like it's as strong as some of the actual, physical groups. I feel that it does lack something. But then, on the other hand, it's nice to be able to be that – I want to say 'shallow' but it's not – I don't know...maybe not so present. Because you can come and go without making others feel like that you've abandoned or left them if you just turn away for a minute. Because it's so impersonal it actually sometimes suits my personality.

Astrologer 38's view was more in line with the findings of Baym. In his words,

Your social network's only as good as the people that are in it, and if you find people starting to leave Facebook that you were following and talking to, then that starts to break down.

According to Foster virtual communities are based on communication, which he believes is insufficient grounds to consider them a community.¹⁰²⁶ Both Campbell and Agre, however, argue that communication is what makes a group a community.¹⁰²⁷ This opinion is shared by the majority of the interviewees. Almost all of the interviewees spoke about sharing and dissemination of information, discussion and exchange of views, and general social chit-chat as fundamental to online astrology groups. Most spoke of this communication as the purpose of the group. Astrologer 3, for example, believes that the way Facebook creates a sense of community is through the sharing of information. Astrologer 38 believes the Internet, even before the advent of social media, facilitated a growth in the amount of communication among astrologers which allowed groups to form. But he added that the growth had accelerated since the beginning of what he called 'The Facebook years'. He said,

I think there's a lot more communication between astrologers; that's the big thing...And on Facebook there's lots of informal contact because a lot of my friends happen to be astrologers... I find that I'm talking to a lot of

¹⁰²⁶ Derek Foster, *Community and Identity in the Electronic Village*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰²⁷ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 42; Philip E. Agre, *Designing Genres for New Media: Social, Economic, and Political Contexts*, p. 72.

astrologers, day by day, just because they're my friends on Facebook. From all over the world.

Rheingold and Wilbur both write of the demise of community in the offline world as part of the reason for a growth in online communities.¹⁰²⁸ Some of the literature portrays this as a lack of something or a painful gap in peoples' lives that needs to be filled, with online communities not really doing the job properly. For example, Baym identifies a concern in the literature, that online groups are a poor substitute for a lack of offline community.¹⁰²⁹ This view appears to be shared by Astrologer 28 who believes that, for some astrologers, the Internet is a substitute for a lack of something meaningful in their offline life. She said, 'for some people I know, an online life is – how can I say? – not better than, but it substitutes a lot for a "lack of" in their real life'. However this was the only negative view expressed on this topic. Online communities substituting in a positive way for a lack of offline community was a very frequent comment in the interviews, due to the fact that many astrologers live in areas where there are simply no offline astrological communities. All of the interviewees except Astrologer 28 spoke of the substitution as being highly positive and, in many cases, the biggest gift the Internet has given to astrology and astrologers. They claimed that it enabled community and communication where there were none before and most described it as ending a sense of alienation or isolation for themselves or other people concerned. It came up in almost every interview. For example, Astrologer 4 personally experienced social media as a substitute for the lack of an astrological community in his offline life. He was one of several interviewees whose experiences support the findings of Backstrom et al. that the degrees of separation between people the world over are shrinking. He said,

I think, social media has, in a way, become partly a substitute for not being in an offline community for me. I live in a fairly remote (place), I'm not in a city. I would like live people to chat to but I don't seem to really have them around me. I get a chance through social media – you know,

¹⁰²⁸ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 62; Shawn P. Wilbur, *Archeology*, p. 45.

¹⁰²⁹ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 36.

chatting sometimes...I know people from every continent now and they know people I know. We have 'mutual friends'.

Astrologer 45 also lives in an isolated area:

Well it's very much a sense of community on the Internet. My online astrological community is a lot richer and fuller and more immediate because I live in a rural area... My online astrological community is very rich and full and active.

Another interviewee, Astrologer 36 said,

I think it's actually fabulous because we're quite a specialist community; we're a small community, when it comes down to it. And for people who live in an isolated area or don't have an astrological group close by, connection via the Internet is the only way that they can connect with the community.

Rather than substitution for the real world, Graham believes that cyberspace is an extension of and part of the material world.¹⁰³⁰ Baym also believes this and claims that online groups frequently end up mirroring the offline groups that acted as a foundation for them.¹⁰³¹ While some interviewees saw their online astrological community as an extension or continuation of their offline community, most of the interviewees who were members of both offline and online communities, in possibly another expression of cosmological dualism, saw their online and offline communities as different. As was the case with Astrologer 48 above, who saw the offline and online worlds as non-overlapping, the perception of the majority of the interviewees of the online and offline astrological worlds appears more like a version of Plato's separate worlds than the merged spaces of Lefebvre and Soja.¹⁰³²

¹⁰³⁰ Stephen Graham, *End of Geography*, p. 96.

¹⁰³¹ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 38.

¹⁰³² Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-28c; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 3; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11.

Parks sees offline communities as frequently the foundation for online communities.¹⁰³³ Baym also holds this view and adds that people often befriend online people with whom they are already friends in the offline world.¹⁰³⁴ The interviewees were asked if their online astrological friends were also their friends in the offline world. In the 2009 questionnaire, almost 55% of the respondents said that some or all of their online friends were people with whom they had offline friendships. The responses to this question from the interviewees were varied. Approximately half the astrologers knew at least some of their Facebook friends in the offline world. Yet they still appeared to differentiate between online and offline friends. For example, Astrologer 22 said,

I've got loads of friends on Facebook who I don't know who they are. But I know that they are connected to astrology because when it comes up – when I see someone asking me to be my friend – it comes up that we have fifty friends in common and I know it's an astrologer because that's the only way it can be possible. Because I know that I think 'okay, I will be friends with them' because I know they're, sort of, part of our community.

Astrologer 30's experience is in line with Rheingold's early idea that the friendships would initially be formed online and then would move to the outside world.¹⁰³⁵ He said,

But it's often sort of accidental, like, for example, meeting somebody at a conference that I was previously only connected to online. And then thereafter, perhaps becoming friends or part of a tighter personal network... In that way they sometimes overlap, but very often, initially at least, they tend to be separate.

From the above comments from the interviewees it can be concluded that for astrologers, online communities meet the criteria for community laid down by

¹⁰³³ Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 120.

¹⁰³⁴ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 38.

¹⁰³⁵ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. xvi.

McMillan and Chavis. In 2006, Partridge wrote, 'Increasingly, the trend is moving towards Rheingold's utopian understanding...'.¹⁰³⁶ The interviewees' statements support this statement by Partridge, and the earlier views of Rheingold. Social media, and Facebook in particular, has enabled them to form communities based on shared interests rather than, as stated in the later literature, based on communities already existing in the offline world.

A Challenge to Authority

Rosen wrote that the Internet has brought about a shift in power from the broadcaster of information to those he calls 'The people formerly known as the audience', arguing that the flow of information is no longer vertical with the people at the bottom at the receiving end of whatever information those at the top choose to disseminate.¹⁰³⁷ He concluded that the people had taken control of what information they received and were not willing to relinquish this control. With this change, traditional hierarchies are undermined and former authorities are challenged.

The challenge to traditional religious authorities and beliefs, from the power shift brought about by information on the Internet as described by Rosen, has been discussed by Dawson and Cowan, Berger and Ezzy, Helland and Brasher.¹⁰³⁸ Dawson and Cowan, who believe that the Internet is changing the face of religion worldwide, argue that religious information can be published on the Internet by anyone, without first being approved by the religious hierarchies: this information can appear authoritative to the general public, resulting in what they call 'instant experts'.¹⁰³⁹ They believe this has the effect of making people doubt the absolute claims to sacredness and permanence of real-world religious sites.¹⁰⁴⁰ Berger and

¹⁰³⁶ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 145.

¹⁰³⁷ Jay Rosen, *Audience*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰³⁸ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 3; Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy, *Teen Witches*, pp. 176-77; Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*, p. vii; Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰³⁹ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 3.

Ezzy claim the Internet increases individual autonomy which decreases the importance of the traditional hierarchies.¹⁰⁴¹ Brasher also believes that traditional authorities and hierarchies are threatened by the Internet because it creates a space where new, alternative religions compete for respectability with traditional religions.¹⁰⁴² Helland argues that established beliefs are threatened by the Internet because there is, 'no central authority online to limit the discussion, censor contributors, or set boundaries on the religious participation that was taking place'.¹⁰⁴³ On the other hand, Cheong points out that the Internet is also used effectively by traditional hierarchical religions, such as the Roman Catholic Church, to spread their message.¹⁰⁴⁴ Thus the teachings of established religions potentially reach substantially more people than they would have done in the pre-Internet era.

Astrology does not contain official authority figures that can be compared to the leaders of the established religions. However it does contain umbrella organisations such as The AA or The Association for Astrological Networking in the US, and established schools such as the FAS. The astrology taught differs somewhat from school to school and according to different ideologies, but there are what could be considered set rules and astrological principles, as well as codes of conduct for astrologers, that are taught at the schools such as the FAS.¹⁰⁴⁵ The astrology on the Internet, however, is not subject to peer-review or any code of conduct concerning how a person's chart is interpreted.

To compare the effects of the Internet on astrology to the effects of the Internet on religion, the interviews were designed to find out, firstly, if astrologers believed that the established organisations and schools were challenged by the astrology available on the Internet as Dawson and Cowan and Berger and Ezzy claim is the case with religion and, secondly, if they consider the principles of astrology itself to

¹⁰⁴¹ Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy, *Teen Witches*, pp. 176-77.

¹⁰⁴² Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*, p. vii.

¹⁰⁴³ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Pauline Hope Cheong, *Authority*, p. 79.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Anon, "Examinations," Faculty of Astrological Studies, <http://www.astrology.org.uk/study-with-us/examinations/>. [Accessed 22/07/2015]

be threatened by the astrological material available online, as Helland claims is the case with religion.¹⁰⁴⁶ These questions, being highly qualitative in nature, were not included on either questionnaire. The interviewees were asked if they believed that the availability of vast quantities of free astrological information and teaching material posed a challenge to the established organisations and schools. They were also asked if they believed that the established principles of astrology, or what a lot of astrologers refer to as 'good astrology', or 'real astrology', could be threatened by the wide dissemination of unregulated astrological material on the Internet.

On the question of a challenge to astrological institutions, the interviewees tended to differentiate between the astrological schools and the umbrella organisations such as the AA. Many interviewees, but not all, believed that the organisations were challenged by the wide availability of astrological material and astrology groups online. The reasons given tended to be connected to the availability of both astrological material and social interaction on the Internet, which appeared to meet the needs for astrological news and material such as astrological articles, and astrological group membership. Several astrologers connected with organisations on both sides of the Atlantic referred to a perceived drop in membership figures for organisations, yet some referred to the potential the Internet afforded to reach more people, as Cheong states is the case with religious organisations.¹⁰⁴⁷ One example of an interviewee whose opinion mirrored that of Cheong's is Astrologer 11, an American based astrologer who is involved in the running of an astrological organisation. He talked about the expanding membership:

I can see now, especially being on the board of (the organization), how easy it is to interact with people from faraway places. You know, you have this huge Turkish community and this huge Norwegian community; the Internet helps with making the world smaller in the astrology world as well.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 3; Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy, *Teen Witches*, pp. 176-77; Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25; Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Pauline Hope Cheong, *Authority*, p. 79.

However, many other interviewees, in relation to astrological organisations, expressed views that echoed those of Dawson and Cowan, Berger and Ezzy, Helland and Brasher.¹⁰⁴⁸ For example, Astrologer 27, a UK-based astrologer, expressed the following view:

People don't need to be members of organisations like the (an umbrella organisation) anymore. When I was a member, I paid my fees and I only ever saw people once a year at the conference. Now I talk to people on Facebook every day - I'm in about twenty groups. I've heard the number of (the organisation's) members is now a quarter of what it was when I was a member... perhaps that's the reason.

A similar view was expressed by Astrologer 21, an American astrologer, who viewed the availability of online astrological material to pose the biggest threat:

I think the egalitarian nature of the Internet and the wide variety of free information, it makes, like, well...why? What would I get from joining this organisation that I'm not already getting out of the Internet? I think that's why the numbers of these organisations aren't growing, they're dwindling.

Astrologer 10, also American, believes that the structure of astrological organisations is no longer suited to the contemporary world, as they were designed for the pre-Internet world, where organisations disseminated the astrological information. However, as Rosen argued, 'While once the people were on the receiving end of a media system running one way, now information and data flows horizontally from citizen to citizen, and the people have taken control and will not give it back'.¹⁰⁴⁹ In the experience of Astrologer 10, who is involved in one of the major US astrological organisations, the Internet is a threat to the organisations.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 3; Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy, *Teen Witches*, pp. 176-77; Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25; Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*, p. vii.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Jay Rosen, *Audience*, pp. 13-14.

Echoing Rosen, she believes the old vertical model of information being handed down to the masses, no longer works:

The other major function that they had was the annual conference. And then they printed a newsletter because there was no other way to correspond with people: it was just 'the newsletter'. And that's how the information spread. And so, as the organizations grew, most of the models are still built around that idea that you need a conference and you need a newsletter, because those are the only ways people can connect with each other...We don't think of things now in terms of an external editor choosing what I get to read and then sending it back out. The model doesn't work anymore...

Astrologer 10's words, 'an external editor choosing what I get to read', indicate that astrology, like religion no longer has, to quote Helland, a 'central authority to limit the discussion, censor contributors'.¹⁰⁵⁰ Helland believes that in religion this has resulted in a threat to established beliefs.¹⁰⁵¹ While Astrologer 10 believes the ease with which anyone can publish material threatens established organisations, it raises the question of whether it threatens established beliefs in astrology.

The views of the interviewees concerning a threat by the Internet to the established principles of astrology tended to go hand in hand with their views of the impact of the Internet on the established schools where the principles are taught. As with the astrological organisations there were a range of different views. However the majority of interviewees believed, as argued by Cheong in connection with religion, that the schools now had a wider reach.¹⁰⁵² For example, talking about an astrological school, Astrologer 7 said, 'We reach more people because of it (the Internet)', and Astrologer 15 said, 'It (the Internet) helps them find us'. A common view was that people who are serious in their attempts to learn astrology will, sooner or later, find the best school. For example, Astrologer 6, who is heavily involved with an established school of astrology said,

¹⁰⁵⁰ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁵¹ Christopher Helland, 'Methodological Issues', p. 3.

¹⁰⁵² Pauline Hope Cheong, *Authority*, p. 79.

I've never actually worried about that (challenge to the school from the Internet), because I firmly believe that if people want to find their way into a serious course, they'll come to see us. I haven't noticed a drop in numbers as the availability of material or services on the Internet has gone up...in fact, I'd say we have more students now than we had a few years ago. So I don't think it's about the availability of material online undercutting or undermining what (the school) does. In fact, I'd say that perhaps those things whet people's appetites and then they can come through. If they're serious they'll find a place like (the school) to teach them, because if you're really serious about learning something you'll find the place for you. So I don't worry about it.

This view was shared by Astrologer 16:

Because of the Internet, Facebook or other web-based platforms, now astrological knowledge goes everywhere but it is uncontrolled and there is lots of pollution, too... People who doesn't have any prior information about astrology or astrological practice – they may not distinguish whether this is a good school, whether it is a good astrologer. And maybe, at first sight, this might be threatening, harmful thing for major schools. But I believe, in the end, people who are looking seriously at the subject, can finally find you; they can find you after some search and trial and error.

Anderson argues that the Internet has brought in a new economic model; people expect an endless choice of goods which can be easily located and also expect to get a lot of stuff free.¹⁰⁵³ One of the astrologers who believed the free material on the Internet could reduce the number of students at astrological schools was Astrologer 22, who said,

I think because there's so many free things out there and free websites that make their money through advertising or other things, they appear to give a lot of information. I think

¹⁰⁵³ Chris Anderson, 'The Long Tail', in *The Social Media Reader*, ed. by Michael Mandiberg (New York; London: New York University Press, 2012), pp. 137-54.

a lot of people – especially now, with the economic crisis – people are used to getting things for free from the Internet and I think there might be people who would have chosen (an astrological school) before, to study because they couldn't really find the information themselves or the books they could find would have been, maybe, too much effort.

The majority of the interviewees, however, did not mention cost or comment on the fact that the information on the Internet is free. Those who mentioned cost tended to believe that the free material is not as likely to be of the same quality as that taught at the schools. Only three astrologers considered the cost of formal training at the established schools to be a factor. While most interviewees did not believe the astrological schools were challenged by the Internet, those who did saw the challenge as coming, again, from the availability of and ease of access to online astrological material.

Astrologers 6's and 16's comments that people who are serious about their studies will, sooner or later, find a reputable school was a commonly expressed view. Some other interviewees also made the statement that, once people realised the difference between the astrology taught at the schools and Internet astrology, they would choose the schools whose astrology, for the majority of interviewees, was seen as the vastly superior of the two. Anderson, discussing free material on the Internet in general, believes that much of it is of dubious quality. As he puts it, 'Oh, sure, there's a lot of crap'.¹⁰⁵⁴ This was very much the view of the vast majority of the astrologers concerning free online astrological material. It was repeatedly stated that a lot of the material available online is of an inferior standard. As stated above, Helland believes that the ease with which anyone can publish religious material on the Internet has resulted in a threat to established beliefs.¹⁰⁵⁵ The interviewees were asked if they believed this was also the case with astrology. While the vast majority of the interviewees expressed concern, there were some other views expressed. For example, Astrologer 15 was of the view that people can

¹⁰⁵⁴ Chris Anderson, *The Long Tail*.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Christopher Helland, 'Methodological Issues', p. 3.

learn to distinguish between 'bad astrology' on the Internet and 'real astrology' and 'good astrology' on the Internet:

If someone can read what is on the Internet and then can go to someone, for instance, like you or like me or cyber-tutors or people who are doing real astrology and then compare one thing to the other, this reinforces the quality of what is real astrology and good astrology.

Astrologer 14 did not perceive Internet astrological material as a challenge either, but his reasons were very different from those of Astrologer 15 who believes there is 'good astrology' and 'bad astrology'. His view, like of Teusner in connection with online religion, was that the unregulated astrology on the Internet, did not challenge, but potentially gave all astrologers an equal opportunity to be heard.¹⁰⁵⁶

Well, I think astrology's so diverse, first of all, that anybody setting up something in direct opposition to what you might be saying, it's just (in my opinion) somebody else's view.

However the vast majority of views expressed were less relaxed than those of Astrologers 15 and 14. Helland believes that the greater threat to established religions comes from inside those religions, where members of individual religions can publish their own information that might be seriously at odds with official doctrine and teachings. To an outsider this information bears the stamp of the organisation and may be assumed to be authoritative.¹⁰⁵⁷ This was also the view of many interviewees concerning what they consider astrological misinformation on the Internet. A great concern was that an outsider would assume a person calling him or herself an astrologer was, in fact, a qualified or experienced astrologer. Astrologer 48 raised this issue and echoed Dawson and Cowan's statement about instant experts:¹⁰⁵⁸

¹⁰⁵⁶ Paul Emerson Teusner, *Formation of a Religious Technorati*, p. 182.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 2-3.

The downside issue is there's no peer review and there's no accreditation. So if you do a course at the Faculty, for example, you know that those teachers have been through various courses, that they've been accredited, that they're going to be good astrologers...Whereas, anybody could say, 'Oh! I read this book on astrology and I'm really into it and I'm really enthusiastic...And people think 'oh! this person's a great astrologer'! Whereas they might only have the basics or they might have got the wrong end of the stick. And there's no way that you, as a student, would know that if you're a beginner in astrology as well...You know, people setting themselves up as teachers without any qualifications.

Dawson and Cowan's 'instant experts', referred to by Astrologer 48 as 'people setting themselves up as teachers without any qualifications', were seen as highly problematic by many interviewees. While, as stated above, many astrologers believed that beginners would learn to discern between 'good' and 'bad' astrology, some expressed concern that they would not. Many of them stated that a person who was new to astrology and eager to learn would not be able to differentiate between quality astrology and echoing Anderson's 'crap', 'garbage'.¹⁰⁵⁹ However the greatest danger, it was believed, was to the potential clients of the instant experts. The interviewees were asked if they believed that poor quality, online, astrological material could impact astrology itself. Most of their replies tended to focus on examples of bad practice they had experienced or of which they had heard. This question aroused some of the most strongly worded replies from all of the interviews. The words 'fear' and 'dangerous' came up frequently in relation to the damage the interviewees believed could be done to clients and, in some cases, students, by inexperienced astrologers who had not been properly taught by a school with a code of ethics. Almost all of them had examples from their dealings with clients and students, of astrologically inaccurate and usually highly negative interpretations of birth charts that had left a client or student highly distressed and frightened. Invariably, they reported, the interpretation had been something the client or student had read on the Internet or had been told by someone who had

¹⁰⁵⁹ Chris Anderson, *The Long Tail*.

been self-taught via the Internet. There were fears that 'good astrology' would somehow 'get lost'. The following are some examples.

Astrologer 15, a qualified consultant astrologer and teacher, is of the view that astrology can be damaged, 'to a very dangerous extent'. In this quote she gives some examples,

Yes, absolutely (astrology can be negatively affected). Sometimes to a very dangerous extent. Today I was teaching here at summer school to a group and I read them three emails I received from three people of different countries asking for consultations... But the level of anxiety of these emails – and these are just three among the emails I receive (I chose three) – was terrible. There was a high level of anxiety, saying things like, 'I read on the Internet that if you have that kind of square in a mutable cross (or whatever), that I will forever have problems with "this and that"'. Or another who was asking for the chart of her son, who was one year old, and she read that if the Sun and the Moon in the chart of the children are not in a harmonious aspect the parents will divorce, and things like that. And she worried... And all these people, invariably, they mention they've read this and that on the Internet. So yes, I think so. It challenges, strongly, the real astrology.

Astrologer 12 saw 'bad astrology' as a real danger,

The main challenge that I see is there's a lot of bad astrology on the Internet and it doesn't get corrected because it's just being *said* off the cuff in various ways, in various threads and conversations. I think that creates a lot of misinformation for people that's not being corrected. I don't think it *can* be corrected – not easily.

Astrologer 14's reply contained both Dawson and Cowan's argument concerning instant experts, and Helland's argument that the threat from within was the greatest threat:¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁶⁰ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 3; Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25.

So I think it impacts on a very basic level. Again, everyone's an expert, quickly, and that worries me. Everyone's an authority and there's an equal playing field where you don't know one authority from the other, or one authority from a charlatan. You don't know the quality of what you're reading and I think that can do damage, particularly in the early years of learning it.

A comparison between online and offline information was made by Astrologer 29, a qualified consultant astrologer and teacher who has over forty years experience in the field. Weizenbaum and Detweiler both wrote about the blind faith people place in information technology, a faith Detweiler claims is passionate, boundless and complete.¹⁰⁶¹ Weizenbaum claimed that people have handed their capacity to think over to computers and no longer trust their own judgment.¹⁰⁶² This tendency was something experienced by Astrologer 29, who said,

That is the terrifying thing of the Internet, really, is that you can put anything out there; there's nothing you can do about it. I've been to local groups in the past where somebody's said 'oh, I read on the Internet that so-and-so...' some piece that I think is bloody rubbish...and that is often something quite negative or something so fatalistic. And again, you challenge that and say 'well, actually, no: that is definitely not true of this, there's hundreds, thousands of examples to prove that is not true'. You can get the 'oh well, it's on the Internet!' Now, there is a mindset, among some people, that if somebody's published.... on the Internet, it somehow gains validity by being there...So when an actual, physical astrologer says something they think, 'oh well, that's not on the Internet so they're probably wrong'.

Astrologer 16, who is also quoted above in connection with challenges to organisations, used language that was less strong but also found instant experts problematic and said that he felt that astrology was becoming trivialised. Echoing

¹⁰⁶¹ Joseph Weizenbaum, *Computer Power*, pp. 9-10; Craig Detweiler, *Igods*.loc 123

¹⁰⁶² Joseph Weizenbaum, *Computer Power*, pp. 9-10.

Helland's statement, 'no central authority online to limit the discussion', he spoke of the dangers of astrology that is 'polluted in a way and not filtered out or not monitored by some authorities in a way'.¹⁰⁶³

Anderson argues that the problem of poor quality material has always existed even before the advent of the Internet.¹⁰⁶⁴ Some interviewees made the same comment - that this was simply an expansion of an already existing situation. However, many felt that even though the problem existed before the Internet, the Internet had greatly magnified the problem. This view was expressed by Astrologer 21,

Now, the quality, unfortunately, that's always been an issue; so you have to rely on someone, at some point, figuring how to sift between what makes and what doesn't. Now that has always been true. Some books were better than others when I was growing up; some teachers or colleges are better than others, so there's always been what's meaningful to me, or what makes sense to my astrology, what's logical. The Internet just allows everyone to have a soap box more easily, and if they know how to build a website, they also know they can direct traffic there.

However, when the vast amount of information on the Internet about astrology is 'good astrology', or comes from what astrologers consider reliable sources, then the Internet's potential for the dissemination of information was seen as very positive, even by the astrologers above, who were highly critical of the poor quality of some Internet astrology and spoke of its dangers. Almost every astrologer interviewed spoke of dissemination of information as one of the main impacts that the Internet had on the world of astrology, and most qualified this statement. For example, a frequent comment was that there were 'pluses and minuses' about this issue. Astrologer 1's view was highly representative of the views of most of the interviewees:

So I think there's a two-pronged thing. On the one hand, serious astrology can really raise its profile via the Internet

¹⁰⁶³ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Chris Anderson, *The Long Tail*.

but, on the other hand, not-so-serious astrology gets itself a widespread profile and then just give astrology a very bad name. So I think it's a double-edged sword, there. It could be very, very good for some reasons but not for others. There's the possibility of people alighting on serious, interesting, informative information that changes their views completely, of astrology. But there's also the rubbish stuff and the sensational stuff which would just confirm their beliefs that it's all rubbish.

One of ways in which the dissemination of good quality astrological information was seen as positive was that it spread real astrology to the non-astrological public. Dawson and Hennebry challenged the idea of the Internet as a recruitment tool for unofficial religions or NRMs.¹⁰⁶⁵ One of their arguments was that web pages, at the time of writing in 2004, differed little in content or function from more traditional forms of religious publication and broadcasting. The views of the interviewees suggest that the advent of social networks has changed that. A frequently expressed view was that social networks contribute to the spread of astrology among the general public and more people were becoming attracted to astrology. It had been noted by several interviewees that non-astrologers now tended to be more knowledgeable about astrology than previously. This was the view of Astrologer 39 who said,

I think there's probably more widespread acceptance of astrology through things like social media because it seems to me that a lot of people I just generally meet...they all say things to me like 'oh, I've seen this interpretation of Mars square Uranus in the heavens' or something 'and we're having a bad week' or something like that.

Astrologer 12 was of the same opinion, but with some reservations. She said,

There are certain phrases that are now really part of the vernacular – Mercury retrograde, eclipses, full moons, new

¹⁰⁶⁵ Lorne L. Dawson and Jenna Hennebry, *Recruiting*, p. 153.

moons – these things are becoming more and more part of the general vernacular. Again, along with that comes misinformation, like being afraid of Mercury retrograde times, things like that. It's just kind of inevitable.

On the topic of attracting more people to astrology, Astrologer 7 said,

I think it's a doorway into something deeper. Facebook - I think it's a doorway; I think you get all this superficial stuff presented on it to get people's attention and from then that they find their way into something of value.

This was also the view of Astrologer 20 who said,

It's like there's been an explosion of astrology on Facebook...I think that has the potential to be very positive: that we can get astrology into the hands of people who are willing and interested very easily. So in some ways, I guess, Facebook has become like a distribution channel with the qualifier that there's no quality control, but it is there and it's accessible.

From these comments by the interviewees it can be concluded that, in the views of the astrologers, astrological organisations who rely on membership may be threatened by the easy availability of astrological material and social activity on the Internet, despite the Internet's potential for them to reach more people in different parts of the world. However they do not think the astrological schools are challenged as they believe that people serious about their astrological studies will, sooner or later, find a reputable school, and the schools themselves can use the Internet to reach a wider student base. However, like Helland found with religion, the biggest challenge comes from the inside. For astrology, this translates to the challenge to the principles of astrology, coming from people who consider themselves astrologers.¹⁰⁶⁶ Poor quality astrological material and astrological interpretations were viewed as dangerous, with many interviewees having seen

¹⁰⁶⁶ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 24-25.

examples of the danger it can do, first-hand. They believe that the problem of unqualified and untrained people acting as astrologers is greatly exacerbated by the Internet, where anyone can pose as a competent astrologer, and there is no peer-review or regulation. However there was also a plus side to the wide availability of astrological information on the Internet, which can spread 'good astrology' and quality information when it comes from a reputable source.

Dawson and Cowan believe that the Internet is changing the face of religion worldwide, and argue that one reason for this is that information not approved by the religious hierarchies can be published on the Internet by anyone and may appear authoritative.¹⁰⁶⁷ The interviewees were asked if they believed astrology had been or could be fundamentally changed because of the Internet. The majority of astrologers echoed the views of Dawson and Cowan, in connection with astrology. The biggest and most frequently mentioned impact was, as discussed above, the availability of vast quantities of information and the fact that anyone can publish their views and appear authoritative. While a small number believed this could have positive effects, the majority saw it as negative. Discussing online Wiccan practices, Dawson and Cowan argue that cybercovens can be created by anyone regardless of experience and differ in fundamental ways from the traditional offline covens. This leads them to ask if the meaning of the concept of a coven has been irretrievably compromised.¹⁰⁶⁸ The majority of the interviewees made the point that anyone can create an astrological website or post astrological material on a Facebook page that is not in keeping with established good practice in astrology. This poses the question of whether astrology has been irretrievably compromised. The views of the interviewees suggest that, for them, this is a real danger.

Zaleski and Helland both concluded that the structure and ethos of the Internet facilitates the growth of alternative or unofficial religions. The Internet has no

¹⁰⁶⁷ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 2.

central authority and no chain of command, and Zaleski believes that it favours religions that tend towards anarchy and that lack a complex hierarchy.¹⁰⁶⁹ Helland argues that individuals using the Internet for popular or unofficial religion have embraced this medium as a new environment where freedom of religious expression rules supreme.¹⁰⁷⁰

As discussed above, freedom of expression in astrology, in the views of the interviewees, equated with poor quality astrological material. However there are several, currently less practiced, types of real astrology that could be compared to Zaleski's alternative religions. The interviewees were asked if they believed the Internet favoured any particular branch of astrology over others. About half believed it did not; for example Astrologer 6 said, 'In my experience I'd say that with astrology, the different branches of astrology are represented just as evenly on the Internet as they are in real life'. Of those who believed the Internet could favour certain types of astrology, the view that most closely echoed that of Zaleski about alternative religions was Astrologer 21. He said,

If anything, it allows some of the oddball astrology schools to have a potentially larger voice than they would normally have in an environment like this. Because if I'm into Babylonian observational astrology and I'm trying to link that to modern living, I can create a really cool website, have all the keywords there, draw people to it and yet never get an opportunity to speak at a place like this (a conference). So in a sense, I think the Internet allows a more variety of voices to have a place, and a niche.

The potential for the Internet to favour more specialised and less popular types of astrology was mentioned by several astrologers, for different reasons. Astrologer 48 believed that certain types of astrology would not be possible without the Internet:

¹⁰⁶⁹ Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives* pp. 111-12.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, p. 23.

Say, if someone wanted to run a Hellenistic astrology class or school, and we didn't have the Internet, it would be extremely difficult, because you've only got one or two people in each state and in each country that might be interested in it. Well, they can all come together and do things online; whereas, beforehand, you probably couldn't find a dozen Hellenistic astrologers in the UK to make a class viable.

This was also the view of Astrologer 41, who is a full time astrologer who specialises in traditional astrology which, like Hellenistic astrology is not as widely practiced as for example, psychological astrology. He said,

I think it allows you to be, if I had to do it locally I don't think there would be as much interest in my own personal type of astrology, which tends to be more focused on traditional or ancient astrology. And because that is such a small sub-set of the astrological community who are interested in traditional astrology, holistic astrology, unless you have access to a much broader group of the community then you are not going to have as many people know about it or be interested in your work. So it is greater exposure I suppose.

Horary astrology, one of the four types of astrology defined in Chapter Three, is a form of astrology whereby a chart is cast for the moment someone asks a specific question. The interpretation of the chart is believed to reveal the answer to the question.¹⁰⁷¹ Several astrologers considered this type of astrology was suited to the Internet because it could be done without a face-to-face consultation and does not usually involve counselling of any type. The astrologers believed its nature was suited to the Internet. Astrologer 5 said,

It's in the nature of the Internet to provide instant answers; therefore where you can get something that's pretty prompt at the click of a mouse people will like it...And I think something like horary which, again, is quite mechanistic in the way that it – well sometimes – can be mechanistic in the way that it's interpreted, could also be done online and

¹⁰⁷¹ Derek Appleby, *Horary Astrology*, p. 9.

possibly profitably...The more contemplative forms of astrology won't work with the Internet because they require you to sit and think and the Internet isn't that kind of medium.

The most frequent answer was that the Internet would favour a more superficial type of astrology. The short concentration span of Internet users was frequently mentioned and the need for astrology to be offered in what one astrologer called 'small bites'. Astrologer 24 stated that on the Internet, he found it necessary to deliberately phrase his astrology so that it would be understandable to a non-astrologer. Talking about the type of astrology that is more suited to the Internet, Astrologer 1 said, 'I can see that it (the Internet) probably favours a sort of quick kind of media type of...it probably favours a kind of astrology that isn't particularly serious.'

Astrologer 12 said,

You know, Facebook, in particular, is fast. So people want fast 'sound bites'; people don't write long, long messages, usually. So in that sense, maybe general Sun sign astrology, general astrology, is favoured because of that. Because it's really not a forum for scholarly learning. It's not for that.

Astrologer 18 said,

It is probably easier to construct simplistic, sound-bite, sensationalist-magazine astrology online than it is to construct serious, thorough state-of-the-art astrology online. So it could certainly contribute to the rise of the 'Madam Wanda' sorts of astrology.

The Internet was seen as supportive, in a practical way, for branches of astrology that are quite specialised and perhaps not widely practiced. The Internet allowed the astrologers in these areas of astrology to access material they might otherwise have difficulty accessing, and to connect with other astrologers interested in the

same area that they might not otherwise have been able to contact. However, the most frequently expressed opinion was that the Internet, because of its nature, favoured a superficial astrology with little depth. This view is possibly not too different from the view in the previous section, where Internet astrology was seen as being of poor quality.

Self-Promotion

The issue of using social networks for self-promotion by astrologers was frequently introduced by the interviewees as a response to a question about the quality of online astrological material. Most of them commented that much use of Facebook by individual astrologers was for self-promotion, and discussion of astrological topics tended to happen only in the Facebook groups. Self-promotion was seen as negative by a lot of astrologers, but as positive by astrologers who use Facebook in this way. The astrologers who viewed it negatively were, once more, concerned with the quality of the information.

Astrologer 18 said,

The difficulty I think a lot of people have is separating wheat from chaff, again. And it comes down to that...Obviously, some astrologers are doing it, putting out interesting information about things they're researching or things they're looking into, and I think that can be great. But there's probably just an awful lot of background noise as well.

Astrologer 33 uses social media for self-promotion. He explains,

I became aware of the suddenly developing, large, potential audience there was there and the impact that would have on my ability to make money...And the reason for saying this is on the grounds that, in order for me to continue to present a cutting-edge, contemporary face of modern astrology to the world I have to stay fairly close to the edge of what is going on.

Astrologer 58 also discovered the marketing potential of social media:

So I went on Facebook and then one at a time I started taking more Friends and people friended me and I started ferreting out other astrologers. And then after awhile I thought it would be good to have my own astrology Facebook site, because it's a way for me to market, it's another way for me to show people. For instance, I'm promoting my book...And so I market it and I talk about it.

The interviewees tended to make the same points about social networks as they did about the Internet in general. They believed social networks contribute to the spread of astrological knowledge among the general public and may attract more people to astrology due their being more frequently exposed to it. Some saw social networks as a form of communication and a way or forging connections with astrologers in different parts of the world, to an extent not possible before the advent of the Internet, and not experienced even on the Internet, in the days before the arrival of social networks. In connection with the astrological information posted on social networks, once again, there were a lot of mixed opinions and the term 'pluses and minuses' cropped up again. The reasons were once more, the poor quality of the astrological information and the creation of instant experts. A use of social networks that was not mentioned in connection with the Internet in general was that of self-promotion by astrologers, with the interviewees differing on this issue.

While the opinions of the astrologers concerning social media use in astrology were similar to their views on the use of the Internet in general for astrology, the biggest differences in their views involved the prevalence of social networks and the sheer number of people using Facebook, which meant that more people were posting astrological material to a larger audience, who were accessing it more frequently. This, they believed, was bringing astrology more and more into the public eye and, just as the Internet had brought about increased dissemination of information, further increases had been affected by social media, making the effects of this dissemination more widespread.

Admin Interviews

I conducted ten interviews with admins of Facebook astrology groups. For ethical reasons the admins will be referred to as SN1 to SN10. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions with opportunities for the admins to raise topics they considered significant in the area of social media use for astrology. The open-ended questions were concerning the following:

- Dualism
- Community
- Challenges to Astrology
- Solitary astrologers

The admins were also allowed to raise topics they considered of importance. Two topics that were raised by several of the admins were firstly, the need to bring young people into astrology and secondly, the benefits they perceived to astrology coming from Facebook groups.

Dualism

Astrologer 8 stated above that an online world had been created but that it was taken for granted and people no longer notice it. That appeared to be the view of some of the admins. For example, Astrologer SN10 perceived the Internet as different from the physical world. Like Plato's world of Being, he viewed it as a separate and non-physical world.¹⁰⁷²

I don't think about so much now, but I was more cognisant of it in the past. It's an environment I know and operate in, but it's not physical - I can't touch the objects I use there.

¹⁰⁷² Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-c.

Some admins were more sure than others about their views on this topic. Astrologer SN3, like Slouka who feared that humanity would move entirely to an online world, a fear shared by some of the conference astrologers, referred to the Internet as 'the metaphysical world' and distinguished it from 'the physical world'.¹⁰⁷³ When asked if he considered the Internet a separate world, he replied, 'Oh yes; I think we're living in it right now... I find that disturbing.' This was also the view of Astrologer SN5 who, when asked if a world was being created online, replied, 'Yes, definitely'.

Like the conference astrologers, some of the admins appeared ambivalent. Astrologer SN6 seemed unsure of her views. Although first answering 'Yes', and describing the online world as 'real', she later appeared to retract the statement,

Yes, I think we are (creating an online world). I think that we are realising, through being online, that we're all in the same boat...I don't know if it's a 'world'. I don't know what it is but it's very real, I know that much...Is it a separate 'world'? I don't know if it's a separate world.

The admins showed more support for a cosmological dualism than an anthropological dualism, in that they seemed to agree with the idea of a separate world, but made no mention of disembodiment. Their online world was a Platonic world of ideas and information. One of Benedikt's ten definitions of cyberspace was 'The realm of pure information'.¹⁰⁷⁴ This view was particularly emphasised by the admins. The online world, to them, was primarily one of information and this could be accessed equally, as Benedikt said, from all over the world. An example was Astrologer SN2, who said, 'There's more astrology available to the world now because of the social media than there's ever been in recorded history. It's everywhere... The genie's out of the bottle.'

¹⁰⁷³ Mark Slouka, *War of the Worlds: Cyberspace and the High-Tech Assault on Reality*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 3.

Astrologer SN4 believed, like some of the conference astrologers, that this dissemination was increasingly reaching the non-astrological public, who he refers to as 'laypeople',

I'm starting to see people – laypeople – who are expressing interest in what astrology's really about. So I think it kind of, in the beginning, kind of worked to its disadvantage but I think, in the long run, will work to its advantage.

One of the astrologers who believed there were some differences between astrology on the Internet and astrology on social media was Astrologer SN1 who believed that one way in which social networks differed from the pre-social network Internet is in the direct involvement of experienced and respected astrologers commenting on posts in groups, or creating posts:

I think it facilitates networking on the one hand and, I think, a very valuable sharing of ideas; through the discussions that occur there I think we all learn. So I think it does ultimately improve the quality of the knowledge that astrologers have even through something as simple as astrologers commenting on some other thread – you invariably get some astrologers with a lot of experience and knowledge who share their knowledge in there and it definitely enriches the whole community.

Several of the conference astrologers above spoke about how they believed the Internet had facilitated some niche types of astrology, such as Babylonian astrology or Hellenistic astrology. This was also the view of several of the admins, such as Astrologer SN3, who referred to it as 'astrological diversity':

Wider forms of astrology have become more opened... I liked the diversity that the technology was opening up...so that people who are practicing astrology now, in the early 21st century, are becoming (I believe) more educated especially in judicial astrology, mundane astrology, even astro-meteorology. And they're beginning to see how applied astrology works in the real world as opposed to the

world of strictly natal astrology which has a tendency to be very myopic.

Only ten admins were interviewed compared to fifty-five conference astrologers, making it difficult to generalise with any certainty. However a larger percentage of them tended towards dualism, generally Platonic in its perception of cyberspace as a separate world.

Community

Given the findings of boyd and Ellison on the potential of SNS to foster a sense of community, and the importance placed on community by the conference astrologers, the admins were asked if they believed there was a sense of online community in their Facebook astrology groups.¹⁰⁷⁵ All of the admins interviewed, while only able to speak from their own perspectives, said they experienced a strong sense of community in their groups.

Agre and Campbell cite communication as one of the fundamental criteria for community.¹⁰⁷⁶ Facebook groups were portrayed by the admins as places where people with shared interests connect and communicate, in a way that they could not have done in the pre-social media age. A typical comment was this one from Astrologer SN1:

I think it's (Facebook) been very good for promoting community, inasmuch as it's linked people that would never be linked. So I think it's really helped networking a great deal and it's actually brought a very large community into much tighter relationship, I think, than would otherwise have been possible. I think that has also helped the sharing of ideas and that's been good for the astrology, too.

¹⁰⁷⁵ danah m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, 'Social Network Sites: Definition, History and Scholarship'. [Accessed 30/08/2015]

¹⁰⁷⁶ Heidi Campbell, Exploring Religious Community Online, p. 42; Philip E. Agre, Designing Genres for New Media: Social, Economic, and Political Contexts, p. 72.

McMillan and Chavis's criteria for community included a sense of membership and of integration with the group, of mattering to the group and a shared emotional connection.¹⁰⁷⁷ These factors could be heard in the words of the admins when they spoke about their groups, but not all of them were necessarily found in the same group. For example, Astrologer SN5 described a group with a lot of communication among the active members, suggesting a sense of membership among members, with a lot of different people with different levels of experience contributing and enjoying the feedback they received. He said,

There are people connecting, having the same feelings, writing things like 'Omigosh, you've just written about exactly what's going on for me'. Getting that kind of feedback from people is quite rewarding, that as astrologers and as we're speaking about the daily or weekly transits, people are very much connecting to what's happening with their own lives.

Astrologer SN7 experienced her group as including a high level of cooperation between peers:

And that's the other thing: it provides very good supervision. Because there are certain colleagues that I know online who I would go and consult with if I was stuck with something. And they'd come to me as well. And like that, that's very easy; it means you don't have to go all the way to ring somebody or whatever. And I can do that with a colleague across the world, anywhere. It doesn't matter.

Fulfilment of needs and a shared emotional connection was the factor most commonly spoken about by the admins, and was considered one of the most enjoyable aspects of Facebook astrology groups by Astrologer SN6:

I think it absolutely creates a sense of community and I think it creates a very human sense of community – that people get to know each other beyond just being astrologers. I

¹⁰⁷⁷ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 4.

wouldn't have known about deaths in people's families, or illnesses or whatever, with astrologers halfway across the world, some of whom I've never met but which I have now formed a bond with because I know of those situations in their lives. And so I think they're very real communities, actually, incredibly real communities.

Astrologer SN6's experience of community is the same as that experienced by Rheingold in the book that he and others, such as Wellman, later described as utopian.¹⁰⁷⁸ Rheingold, whose definition of online communities was, 'social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace', similarly described supporting fellow community members and being supported by them through personal crises, illnesses and death.¹⁰⁷⁹ In 2006, Partridge had noted a trend moving increasingly 'towards Rheingold's utopian understanding...'.¹⁰⁸⁰ The views of both the interviewees in Chapters Eight and Nine, and the admins of the Facebook groups, would appear to back up this observation.

A frequently stated view in the literature, for example by Wilbur or Campbell, as discussed in Chapter Three, is that the formation of communities is no longer dependent on geographic location and physical proximity.¹⁰⁸¹ Examples of this can be found in the Facebook astrology groups, where several admins stated that they set up the groups because of a strong interest in a particular area of astrology and a desire for a place where they could communicate with others who shared this interest. Astrologer SN1, talking about his group said, 'Because it's something I'm particularly interested in, that particular branch of astrology'. Similarly Astrologer SN8 felt that the existing astrology groups in his field of traditional astrology did not meet his needs, so he set up his own, 'Because the kind of group that I was looking for did not exist'. This was also the case with Astrologer SN3:

¹⁰⁷⁸ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 376; Barry Wellman, 'Utopia', pp. 445-46.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁸¹ Shawn P. Wilbur, *Archeology*, p. 45; Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 38.

Facebook is a social media site. I see it more as a communications site, a technology, where people were able to share knowledge and information and also to use as a medium for education, for teaching. I set up my own Facebook groups because I found some of the other groups to be badly administered or badly moderated, and people were complaining to me, constantly, about some of the rudeness, some of the little immature games that some people would play. I kept getting requests from some people to start my own groups.

Challenges to Astrology

The earlier interviews with the conference astrologers had highlighted the importance astrologers placed on the issue of quality in online astrology, so the admins were asked their views on the quality of the astrology in their groups. As discussed above, many of the astrologers interviewed seemed to think that beginners were at risk from poor quality material in social networks, but that for experienced astrologers it was beneficial, as it allowed them to access any information they required and exposed them to new ideas and new ways of thinking. This was also the view expressed by the majority of the admins, such as Astrologer SN7 who, talking about people who learned astrology purely from social networks, said,

They don't know what they don't know. So they often may know a lot about 'Okay, I know about signs and the Sun' and they learn a little bit about aspects. But in terms of some other aspects of astrology, whether it's harmonics or midpoints or more the refined aspects of things that people talk about at conferences, they won't know.

Another example was Astrologer SN1, who said,

I'm very glad a lot of my sort of formative stage of learning and practice occurred offline because I think it...things were more personal. The process of finding information and

studying, also, perhaps didn't enable access to quite the array of information you can get now, but I think that it also made it more focused. I find that many modern astrology students who are getting most of their information through Facebook, I think sometimes get their minds full of lots of unusual information – which is good information, perhaps – but they often then are weak on the basics...I think now though, I've been exposed to ideas and I've gained knowledge that way that I wouldn't have otherwise. So I think it's improved my astrology by enriching my paradigm via contact with astrologers and their ideas that I otherwise wouldn't have had.

Yet again, the dissemination of vast amounts of astrological information on social media was seen as good and bad because of the varying quality of the material. Astrologer SN2, like some of the conference astrologers in Chapter Eight, believed that materials at all points on the quality spectrum had always existed, but with social media, there was much more of it:

I think there's a huge mixture. I think you have to be selective... It's a bit like picking up a newspaper. You know, which newspaper do you read? So, which sites do you go to in terms of social media, who do you read? And there will be certain people that I would read their comments and other people I wouldn't.

Dawson and Cowan, in a study of online Wicca, observe that cybercovens can be created by anyone regardless of experience, which leads them to ask if the meaning of the concept of a coven has been irretrievably compromised.¹⁰⁸² Based on the quotes of the conference astrologers above, I posed the same question about astrology. The same point was made by some of the admins. Representative of their views is this quote by Astrologer SN8 who believes that astrology itself has been compromised,

I think the best example of trivialization in astrology is the unrestrained use of asteroids. There is no procedure,

¹⁰⁸² Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 2.

everyone just picks and chooses what works for them, there is no technique, no standard practice, nothing. Meanings are made up practically on the spot. That isn't astrology, it's tossing darts and making up your own score.

Beginners were believed to be at risk. Astrologer SN8 continued,

Too much information goes hand in hand with trivialization and is a problem for less experienced astrologers, especially if they are self taught and neglect the basics of reading the chart, for more exotic pursuits (such as asteroids). It's like exercising one part of your body for example, instead of the entire system being used, only one is and the rest go to flab or atrophy.

Once again the views of the admins reflected the views of the conference astrologers.

Solitary Astrologers

Because of Cowan's work on solitary witches, the admins were asked about solitary astrologers in their groups. Cowan defines solitary witches as 'those modern Pagans who, for a variety of reasons, choose to work either primarily or exclusively alone'.¹⁰⁸³ He describes one of those reasons, 'A number of solitaires online report that this choice is motivated at least in part by the dominance of conservative Christianity in the areas where they live'.¹⁰⁸⁴ He found that many solitary witches had suffered social marginalisation because of their beliefs, and for that reason chose to work alone. For witches unable to practice their beliefs publicly offline, online covens offered an opportunity to connect with others in a safe environment.¹⁰⁸⁵

¹⁰⁸³ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 109.

A search of Facebook in December 2014 revealed a list of Facebook groups for solitary witches, such as 'Solitary Witches Alone Together' with 345 members, or 'The Solitary Witches' Coven' with 1928 members in July 2015.¹⁰⁸⁶ A similar search for solitary astrologers yielded no results. Most of the admins reported that some members of their groups were solely online astrologers, but the majority of members were both online and offline astrologers. While, as discussed in Chapter Seven, some astrologers lived in communities where they believed it unwise to let their position as an astrologer be known, this was not the reason that the admins gave for people choosing solitary status. For some it was due to a lack of astrologers in their locality; for others it was a personal choice not to become involved with offline groups and attend offline conferences. Astrologer SN1, who himself had been a solitary astrologer because of there being 'so few astrologers in my community', challenged the term 'solitary astrologer', arguing that if an astrologer was part of a Facebook astrology group, where they interacted and discussed astrology with other astrologers, then they were not solitary, but purely online astrologers as distinct from offline astrologers or astrologers who practiced both online and offline. In his words,

In my own experience I've been, you could call it, a solitary astrologer. But I think that the Internet, Facebook and so on has made it almost impossible for that to be the case any longer for anyone – unless you're really determined not to connect.

Astrologer SN1's comments suggest that he views the online world as not only separate from the offline world, but equally 'real'. His view that a group member is automatically no longer 'solitary' also suggests a sense of community in his group.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Anon, "Solitary Witches, Alone Together," Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1514616822088685/>. [Accessed 27/07/2015]; Anon, "The Solitary Witches Coven," Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/704826816261616/?fref=ts>. [Accessed 27/07/2015]

Chapter Conclusions

According to Ladd, cosmological dualism, defined as a contrast between two levels of existence, the earthly and the heavenly, and anthropological dualism, defined as a contrast between two parts of the individual, the body and soul, are closely connected, with the body belonging to the earthly level and the soul belonging to the heavenly or spiritual level.¹⁰⁸⁷ Evidence of Ladd's model occurs in the cyberspace literature, an example being Heim's statement that the 'cybernaut leaves the prison of the body, and emerges in the world of digital sensation'.¹⁰⁸⁸ In my interviews with astrologers, the two forms of dualism, anthropological and cosmological, were frequently blended, with cyberspace frequently being referred to as an 'online world' or a 'territory' and simultaneously 'a world of the mind'. Brady found that 46% of the astrologers involved in her research had a dualistic view of astrology. I found a higher number had a dualistic view of cyberspace. More than half of the interviewees had a cosmologically dualistic view of the Internet and cyberspace, viewing cyberspace as a separate world. Of those who do not believe this, and stated that they considered it as an extension of the physical world, many went on to refer to cyberspace as 'a world of the mind', 'a world of thought' or 'a world of ideas', suggesting an anthropologically dualistic view. Unlike the questionnaire respondents, the tendency for the interviewees was to view online and offline worlds as very different. My interviews therefore, as Creswell and Plano Clark anticipated, gave a different conclusion to my questionnaires.¹⁰⁸⁹ The questionnaires suggested that astrologers reject dualism; my interviews that they support it.

Unlike the questionnaire respondents, the views of the interviewees tended to be both Platonic and Cartesian. To recapitulate, the concept of two separate worlds, with one of those worlds associated with thought and ideas, can be found in the works of Plato who wrote of the world of Being, associated with reason and ideas,

¹⁰⁸⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 64.

¹⁰⁸⁹ John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, p. 8.

and the world of Becoming to which the physical world belonged.¹⁰⁹⁰ The separation of the online and offline worlds, and the view of the two as very different, is an expression of Descartes's separation of the mental and the physical and his claim that the soul 'is entirely distinct from body'.¹⁰⁹¹

In the forms of dualism discussed in Chapters Two and Three, one half is consistently seen as superior to the other and is, invariably, the non-physical world of cosmological dualism and the mind or soul in anthropological dualism. In the dualism of the first wave of cyberspace literature, the non-physical world of cyberspace is seen as qualitatively different from the physical world and superior to it. Boler, in the second wave of cyberspace literature, coined the term 'New Digital Cartesianism', where a greater trust is placed on the offline and the physical, and they are seen as somehow more 'true'.¹⁰⁹² While the views of the interviewees can be considered Cartesian in their separation of and distinction between the mental and the physical, there is a strong streak of New Digital Cartesianism in their views. The vast majority of the astrologers who perceived the online and offline worlds as different expressed a strong preference for the offline world and the embodied experience.

The association between the Internet and the mind was repeatedly emphasised by the interviewees, often using terms like 'global mind' and 'mind of the world'. This is a representation of Teilhard de Chardin's noosphere, a convergence of global consciousness that he associated with the Supreme Being.¹⁰⁹³ Pesce had written of the Internet as the manifestation of the noosphere and this view could be found in the statements of the interviewees and, in the case of one interviewee, was stated directly.¹⁰⁹⁴

¹⁰⁹⁰ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28d.

¹⁰⁹¹ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, p. 101.

¹⁰⁹² Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, pp. 185-86.

¹⁰⁹³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 182-83.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Mark Pesce, *The Playful World: How Technology Is Transforming Our Imagination*.loc. 2105

Corbin's tri-part view of space contained the worlds of the mental and the physical and a world of the imagination or 'imaginal space' that acted as an intermediary between them.¹⁰⁹⁵ Several interviewees described the Internet as a world of the imagination or an imaginary world. As with Teilhard de Chardin's noosphere, one interviewee also directly referred to Corbin's 'imaginal space' as a representation of the Internet. This view cannot be considered dualistic in the same way as a Platonic or Cartesian view. Although Corbin writes of mental and physical space they are not completely separate. His imaginal space links the two.¹⁰⁹⁶ In this, Corbin differs from the thirdspace described by Lefebvre and Soja, which actually contains the other two spaces.¹⁰⁹⁷ However cyberspace, as in Corbin's 'imaginal space', was the closest reference made by the interviewees to any type of thirdspace. The interviewees continually separated the worlds of the mental and the physical when they described them; even those who referred to cyberspace as 'an extension of the physical world', went on to talk of them as two separate worlds, the world of the mind and the offline world.

An important issue that has arisen is that of the creation online of a sacred space, termed 'Divinatory Space', by Hyde.¹⁰⁹⁸ Divinatory Space is the space that opens up between astrologer and client in a consultation. It has been researched by Radermacher and Gunzburg. In Radermacher's view and the views of the astrologers researched by Gunzburg, Divinatory Space is sacred and not of this world.¹⁰⁹⁹ Their descriptions of Divinatory Space bear close resemblance to Eliade's hierophany or irruption of the sacred, where the space created is qualitatively different from the surrounding space.¹¹⁰⁰ When questioned about whether or not Divinatory Space could be created in cyberspace, the majority of the astrologers have stated that it can. This possibility had been discussed by O'Leary in connection with religious rituals; he concluded that validity of a sacred ritual is not necessarily

¹⁰⁹⁵ Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 11; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Maggie Hyde, 'Pigs and Fishes', p. 2.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 176; Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, pp. 183-96.

¹¹⁰⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, pp. 11-12.

linked to physical presence, and that cyber-rituals do have efficacy.¹¹⁰¹ One interviewee, experienced in the creation of magical spaces, likened the creation of Divinatory Space to the creation of space in magical rituals. Magical rituals, it has been argued by Pesce, Arthur, and Brasher are outside of space and time, a description, they argue, that also fits cyberspace, making it a suitable venue for the creation of such spaces.¹¹⁰² Divinatory Space in the astrological consultation has also been described as outside of time, and in the experiences of the interviewees, it can occur online.¹¹⁰³

Finally, we should consider the question of community. The Internet, but most especially Facebook, has resulted in the creation of astrological virtual communities. This development is seen as highly positive by the overwhelming majority of astrologers. The results of the interviews suggest that the criteria for community laid down by McMillan and Chavis have been met.¹¹⁰⁴ The interviewees spoke about feeling part of a global community and the emotional support they received from other astrologers, frequently people they had never met. Campbell and Agre argue that communication is a fundamental criterion for community.¹¹⁰⁵ I found this to be the case with the online astrological communities, with all of the interviewees describing how the Internet allows them to keep in touch with astrologers and astrological events all over the world in a way that would not be possible without the Internet.

The view that online communities have sprung up due to a lack of community in the offline world can be found in the literature, for example in Rheingold and Wilbur.¹¹⁰⁶ Baym claims that online groups are sometimes seen as a poor substitute

¹¹⁰¹ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*, pp. 47-48, 56.

¹¹⁰² Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 229. Interview with Mark Pesce; Shawn Arthur, 'Technophilia and Nature Religion', p. 305; Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*, pp. 47-56.

¹¹⁰³ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, p. 196.

¹¹⁰⁴ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 4.

¹¹⁰⁵ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 42; Philip E. Agre, *Designing Genres for New Media: Social, Economic, and Political Contexts*, p. 72.

¹¹⁰⁶ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. 62; Shawn P. Wilbur, *Archeology*, p. 45.

for a lack of offline community.¹¹⁰⁷ This idea is disputed by Wellman and van Dijk who believe that technologically-enabled communities, where membership is by choice, can provide emotional support.¹¹⁰⁸ Lack of an offline astrological community is a reality for many astrologers, and the benefit they derived from online astrological community was frequently spoken about. While they may have been seen as a substitute for an offline community, they were not portrayed, in the words of Baym, as a 'poor substitute'.¹¹⁰⁹ The communities were frequently described as the greatest benefit the Internet had brought to astrology. It can be concluded that the astrologers views corresponded to those of Rheingold, not just in terms of a lack of offline community but also in terms of the emotional bonds that the astrologers formed online with other astrologers.

According to Baym online groups frequently end up mirroring the offline groups that acted as a foundation for them.¹¹¹⁰ This was not the case with the astrologers. While about half of the interviewees knew some of their online friends, all of them had friends they had never met in person. Parks claims that online communities frequently reflect the geographical proximity of offline communities.¹¹¹¹ Again, this was not the case with the interviewees who had astrological friends from all over the world and had, in the view of many, set up a worldwide network of astrologers. Backstrom's 'Four Degrees of Separation' seems to be very relevant for astrologers.¹¹¹²

There is no censorship or quality control of information published on the Internet. In the literature on the use of the Internet for religious purposes there are claims that this undermines traditional religious hierarchies and facilitates the growth of alternative or unofficial religions, as they can appear as authoritative as the

¹¹⁰⁷ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 36.

¹¹⁰⁸ Barry Wellman, Janet Salaff, Dimitrina Dimitrova, Laura Garton, Milena Gulia, and Caroline Haythornthwaite, 'Computer Networks as Social Networks: Collaborative Work, Telework, and Virtual Community', p. 2013; Jan A.G.M. van Dijk, 'Reality', pp. 40-41.

¹¹⁰⁹ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 36.

¹¹¹⁰ Nancy K. Baym, *The Emergence of on-Line Community*, p. 38.

¹¹¹¹ Malcom R. Parks, *Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities*, p. 120.

¹¹¹² Lars Backstrom, "Anatomy of Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-data-team/anatomy-of-facebook/10150388519243859>. [Accessed 19/09/2015]

established religions.¹¹¹³ Dawson and Cowan believe that the potential for anyone to publish religious information has contributed to the problem of 'instant experts'.¹¹¹⁴ They believe that this has the effect of making people doubt the absolute claims to sacredness of traditional religions.¹¹¹⁵ These claims posed the question of whether unregulated astrological information published on the Internet could similarly challenge the authority of existing offline astrological organisations and established astrological principles. An alternative view is that the Internet can be used by established religions to spread their message and potentially reach substantially more people than they would have in the pre-Internet era.¹¹¹⁶

The views of the interviewees tended to be that, while umbrella organisations could potentially reach more people, their membership numbers might be challenged as the needs of people for astrological activity were being met online, particularly on Facebook. However it was not believed that the astrological schools faced any threats because of the Internet. The view tended to be that the astrology taught in the schools was vastly superior to Internet astrology and sooner or later people would realise this and find their way to the astrological schools. With only a few exceptions the issue of authority did not come up, possibly because astrological organisations are not authorities in the same way that established religions may be seen to be.

The problem of 'instant experts' raised by Dawson and Cowan was seen as a serious problem for astrology.¹¹¹⁷ When the Internet is used by experienced astrologers to share what is considered reliable information the impact is seen as highly positive. But when the information is spread by unqualified and inexperienced astrologers and is seen as unreliable and inaccurate, the impact is seen as extremely negative and potentially dangerous to clients, and could also result in astrology becoming more superficial. Unlike religion, where different messages from different religious

¹¹¹³ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 2-3.

¹¹¹⁴ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 2-3.

¹¹¹⁵ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, p. 3.

¹¹¹⁶ Pauline Hope Cheong, *Authority*, p. 79.

¹¹¹⁷ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 2-3.

groups could be considered equally valid, as they simply represent different beliefs, very few astrologers held this view. With few exceptions, astrological information was considered right or wrong, valid or invalid. The main reason given for the negative view of invalid astrological information is the potential for distress to be caused to a client.

To summarise, then, my findings concerning dualism vary according to my methodology. My questionnaires suggest that astrologers do not consider cyberspace to be dualistic, but my interviews extracted rich qualitative data and point to a different conclusion. Potential reasons for the differences between the quantitative and qualitative results are discussed in Chapter Nine. Chapter Nine will contain the conclusions of the thesis.

Chapter Nine - Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the thesis. It re-visits the initial aims of the research and the findings of the surveys and interviews, and re-examines the topics raised in the literature review in light of these results.

The Aims of the Research

As detailed in Chapter One - Introduction, the initial aims of the project were to discover how astrologers were using the Internet for astrology, to uncover the nature of their relationship to the Internet, and to identify any impact use of the Internet might have on either their practice of astrology or astrology itself. My research involved quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative research was carried out by issuing questionnaires to astrologers at astrology conferences in the US and in the UK, in both 2009 and 2012. The qualitative research involved interviewing sixty-five professional astrologers between 2012 and 2015.

Despite the growing body of academic literature on astrology in culture, at the beginning of this research in 2007 there was virtually no research into the use of the Internet by astrologers for astrology. As there was no previous academic literature in the area on which to build this study, the use of the Internet for religion was used as a framework. A parallel study of online religion was carried out and the results of my research compared to it at different points in the thesis.

Structure of the Thesis

The literature review extends over three chapters: Chapters Three, Four and Five. Chapter Three reviews the literature on the Internet and cyberspace from their inception up to 2015. Three waves of research on the Internet, as identified in the literature, are discussed in Chapter Three. Following Karaflogka, who argued for the importance of integrating web theory and current thinking on cyberspace into her study of online religion, I have examined the literature from the first wave of

cyberspace theorists and the proceedings of the first academic conference on cyberspace, to the third wave of literature on social media.¹¹¹⁸ The key feature of the first wave of research was the issue of whether or not cyberspace is dualistic. Discussions on this topic continued through the second wave. The earliest social media literature of the third wave contained little direct mention of dualism, but the concept has begun to appear again in literature from 2013 onwards. Given the importance of dualism in understanding the human relationship with the Internet and cyberspace through the years, Chapter Two is devoted to the examination of the dualistic models that have been associated with the Internet. Chapter Three also found the issue of online community to be of major importance in the literature. Virtual or online communities have been a topic of scholarly interest since the beginning of the first wave of literature and this has continued through all three waves.

Chapter Four reviewed the literature on the use of the Internet for religion. One of the main areas discussed was the debate about whether or not the Internet posed a challenge to the authority of traditional religions, by facilitating the publication of information appearing equally authoritative, from alternative religions. The arguments concerning the validity of online rituals and online religious communities were reviewed. Chapter Four contains a review of the literature concerning the use of the Internet by Pagan communities. Pagans were early adopters of the Internet, for which it is claimed, by Cowan, they have a particular affinity, and continue to use it in great numbers.¹¹¹⁹

Chapter Five introduces modern Western astrology, and reviews recent scholarly work in the area. As part of her doctoral thesis, Brady investigated the existence of dualism in astrology and concluded that roughly half the astrologers she surveyed had a dualistic view of astrology. The most common dualism she found among the astrologers, was Platonic in nature.¹¹²⁰ Gunzburg and Radermacher both wrote

¹¹¹⁸ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*. Preface

¹¹¹⁹ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 66.

¹¹²⁰ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 256.

about the space created in an astrological consultation, one separate from astrologer and client.¹¹²¹ Radermacher claims that in this space the consultation becomes a 'dialogue with the divine'.¹¹²²

Chapter Six details the research methodology used. I used Creswell's explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, which includes a quantitative research phase and a qualitative research phase.¹¹²³ My position as an emic researcher was discussed based on Pike's emic-etic research model.¹¹²⁴ Adaptations to the research methodology necessitated when researching the Internet were discussed. Due to changes in how the Internet was being used it was necessary to issue two questionnaires. The rationale for the questions was given, along with an explanation of the changes made to the questionnaire before issuing it for the second time.

Chapter Seven analyses the results of the two questionnaires. The two questionnaires yielded different results. Chapter Seven compares the two sets and identifies topics that merit further investigation in the interviews. The interviews are analysed in Chapter Eight. My research found that the use of social network sites, mainly Facebook, is widespread in the astrological community. Because of its importance, Chapter Eight also includes a discussion on ten interviews that took place with admins of Facebook groups, following a period of observing the group activity as recommended by Kozinets.¹¹²⁵

¹¹²¹ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, pp. 182-83; Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 176.

¹¹²² Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 126.

¹¹²³ John W. Creswell, *Research Design*, Vol 4, p. 224.

¹¹²⁴ Kenneth L Pike, Thomas N. Headland, and Marvin Harris, *Emics and Etics*, p. 28.

¹¹²⁵ Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, p. 79.

Methodological Issues

According to Mason, Creswell and Plano Clark, and Sudweeks and Simoff the results from quantitative and qualitative data may be contradictory.¹¹²⁶ This proved to be the case in my research where the questionnaires and the interviews yielded very different and often contradictory responses. Creswell and Plano Clark propose various reasons for this, with two of their reasons potentially applying to my research. One reason is specific to new research where the investigator may not know the questions that need to be asked.¹¹²⁷ Sudweeks and Simoff have found that contradictory results from quantitative and qualitative is more common when researching the Internet.¹¹²⁸ Because quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were designed for an offline environment, they found that they may not be an exact fit when used for Internet research. They recommend using both types of research methods to ensure the researcher ends up with a complete picture of the area being researched.

My research was conducted in a new area with no previous academic work on which to build in two areas: firstly, the study of astrology and the Internet and, secondly, in terms of the testing of the early cyberspace theories in relation to the views of regular Internet users. However, I relied on academic literature in two areas: firstly, research into online religion and, secondly, discussions of the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative research. The literature on the relative merits of quantitative and qualitative research was particularly helpful. For example, Hufford claims that people are cautious when answering questions about their beliefs.¹¹²⁹ Jahoda makes the point that when people are asked to give simple yes or no answers to questions that they have not given thought to they tend to be

¹¹²⁶ Jennifer Mason, 'Linking Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis', in *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, ed. by Robert G. Burgess Alan Bryman (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2002), pp. 89-110, p. 109; John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, p. 8; Fay Sudweeks and Simeon J. Simoff, *Complementary Explorative Data Analysis*, p. 37.

¹¹²⁷ John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, p. 9.

¹¹²⁸ Fay Sudweeks and Simeon J. Simoff, *Complementary Explorative Data Analysis*, p. 37.

¹¹²⁹ David J. Hufford, *The Scholarly Voice*, p. 300.

reluctant to admit to strange beliefs.¹¹³⁰ In my research the greatest contradictions appeared in the results of the cyberspace questions, which were about what the respondents believed.

As stated in Chapter Six, the cyberspace questions in the questionnaires may have appeared strange to respondents encountering these ideas for the first time and they have may taken what they felt was the safest option. Added to this is the fact that many of the questionnaire respondents at the US conferences did not know me. However, the interviews took place in a different environment, a one-to-one situation with someone they knew to be an astrologer. If there was a question they did not fully understand, they could ask for clarification. And during the interviews I gradually introduced the questions, often picking up on a point they made and reflecting it back to them while introducing a related question. It is possible that the environment felt safe enough to talk about their perceptions of the Internet. An example of this is the response of Astrologer 19 (Chapter Eight) who, when asked a question concerning cosmological dualism and the Internet, said 'And I think sometimes I am – I was going to say guilty of – seeing it as something totally separate'. As stated in Chapter Eight, Astrologer 19's use of the word 'guilt' seems to reflect a negative view of dualism found in the literature, from Lefebvre's and Soja's desire to find a non-dualistic view of space to Massey's description of a dualistic view of space and place as part of the 'radical polarization into two genders which is typically hegemonic in western societies today'.¹¹³¹ Accepting the views of Hufford and Jahoda concerning questions about belief, it is possible that the questionnaire respondents were not comfortable with the questions.¹¹³² Supporting this theory is research conducted in the 1980s by Gillian Bennett, into

¹¹³⁰ G. Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition*, pp. 25-26. cited in Nicholas Campion, *Astrology and Popular Religion in the Modern West: Prophecy, Cosmology and the New Age Movement* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limiter, 2012), pp. 133-134

¹¹³¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 2-3; Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 11; Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, p. 6.

¹¹³² David J. Hufford, *The Scholarly Voice*, p. 300; G. Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition*, pp. 25-26.

belief in the supernatural.¹¹³³ She describes her interviews with eighty-seven people, mainly women. Bennett did not directly approach what she considered the most sensitive of her topics, the question of whether the interviewees believed they could communicate with the dead. Instead she began with topics such as omens and premonitions and gently eased them into the areas she believed they may be more reluctant to talk about. With this approach, her findings showed a much higher percentage of people agreeing that it is possible to communicate with the dead than various surveys from the UK and the US had concluded. Bennett concluded that questions about belief, when posed directly or bluntly, will often result in a negative response whereas a more indirect approach can elicit the person's true beliefs.¹¹³⁴ My questionnaires asked direct questions concerning belief but my interviewees were conducted in the same style as Bennett's, and these two different approaches may have contributed to the contradictory responses.

An alternative reason suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark, using the example of an organisation, is that the results a researcher obtains from one level of the organisation may be different from that gathered in another level.¹¹³⁵ If this statement is applied to a profession rather than an organisation, then this was the case with my research. The questionnaires were issued to conference delegates who, in both questionnaires, can be roughly classified as one-third full-time astrologers, one-third part-time astrologers, and one-third amateur or non-professional astrologers. The interviewees were all professional astrologers and most of them were full-time professionals. If the interviewees spent more time on the Internet for astrology and if they used more functionality, such as Skype for online consultations, it is possible that this might have resulted in them having different perceptions of the Internet.

¹¹³³ G. Bennett, *"Alas, Poor Ghost!": Traditions of Belief in Story and Discourse* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1999) pp. 9-13.

¹¹³⁴ G. Bennett, *"Alas, Poor Ghost"*, p. 16.

¹¹³⁵ John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, p. 8.

Dawson and Cowan

As discussed in Chapter Six, Methodology, Dawson and Cowan identified six research areas, in the study of online religion, and I proposed to use them as a guiding framework in the research of astrology and the Internet.¹¹³⁶ Chapter Seven contains an analysis of the questionnaire data in connection with Dawson and Cowan's research areas. Below I set out the results of my interviews in connection with each of Dawson and Cowan's research areas.

Research Area 1

We need more and better studies of who is using the Internet for religious purposes, how they are using it and why. In this regard we need longitudinal studies to detect any changes that are happening with the passage of time and increased experience online.

The results of the questionnaires indicated that 100% of astrologers, of all ages, use the Internet, which is significantly higher than the figures for the general population. Unlike the general population, Internet use among astrologers does not decline with age. In addition to this 85% of the astrologers use it on a daily basis. Astrologers use the Internet to read astrological material, conduct research, news, distance education, meetings and consultations. Over time the most significant change is the increase in the use of social media for astrology, which is in keeping with the figures for Western society in general and specifically for the US and the UK. Other changes included increases in the number of people using astrological blogs and using the Internet for meetings and consultations. The growth in the use of the Internet, mainly Skype, for online meetings and consultations is also in keeping with social trends. At the beginning of 2013 Microsoft announced that, in

¹¹³⁶ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 10-11.

2012, Skype had accounted for one-third of all international calls in the world, up from 12% in 2009.¹¹³⁷

The astrologers surveyed were mainly from the US and the UK, with over 70% being female. In terms of astrological professional status they can roughly be divided into one-third full-time professional astrologers, one-third part-time professional astrologers and one-third amateur astrologers. Their ages ranged from under eighteen to over eighty-five with the fifty-five to sixty-four age group having the highest representation.

Based on the results of the 2009 and 2012 questionnaires, 100% of US and UK astrologers are using the Internet for astrology, with over 85% using the Internet daily. This percentage is greater than that of the society as a whole in the US and the UK, where, in contrast to the astrologers, Internet use declined with age. Between 2009 and 2012 there was an increase from 51% to 76% in the numbers of astrologers using social media for astrology, again significantly greater than that of society as a whole.

Research Area 2

We need studies of the nature and quality of people's experiences doing religious things online. In this regard we need surveys and interviews of users and case studies of groups, Web sites, or particular activity.

Although the idea of the Internet as dualistic was initially rejected, the descriptions of the astrologers' online experiences, in many cases, echoed the dualistic views of the early authors. The astrologers tended to experience the online world as different from the offline world and most viewed it as a world of the mind, using terms like 'disembodied' and 'a mental experience'. Some described it as a territory.

¹¹³⁷ Anon, "Skype Now Accounts for a Third of International Calls," PhoneArena.com, http://www.phonearena.com/news/Skype-now-accounts-for-a-third-of-international-calls_id39861/. [Accessed 14/01/2015]

While they did not perceive the Internet as a sacred space in itself, the majority felt that it could be an appropriate venue for sacred activity. The Internet is not seen as a safe venue by some astrologers, either because the territory is new and somewhat unknown or because they feel exposed in the online world . While only one expressed a sense of unease online, 36% of the questionnaire respondents used a false name on the Internet at least some of the time. The main reason given for using a false identity was to avoid being identified as an astrologer. However they rejected the idea that the rules of the offline world do not apply on the Internet. They also rejected the concept that it promotes feelings of omnipotence or immortality.

There was strong agreement that online astrological communities have become established on the Internet, strongly supported by Facebook. These were viewed as highly positive because they enabled astrologers to contact other astrologers from all over the world and share information. They were seen as beneficial to people who have no offline contact with other astrologers due to living in a remote location or living in an offline community hostile to astrology.

Research Area 3

We need studies of the relationships between people's religious activities online and offline, as well as their religious activities online and offline and other kinds of activities online and offline. We need to gain a better grasp of the overall social context of cyber-religiosity.

The majority expressed a preference for the offline world and preferred carrying out astrological activities offline when possible, such as consultations. Although the vast majority of professional astrologers interviewed used Skype for consultations most expressed a preference for face-to-face consultations. Online consultations tended to be shorter but at the same time, it took longer to develop a rapport with the client. The inability to read body language was seen as a disadvantage in online consultations, in that the astrologer was less able to pick up on non-verbal cues.

One of the uses of the Internet by astrologers is social media for astrological social activity and work, and while most astrologers considered online work and social activity as important to their astrology as offline, most preferred offline. Similarly, most read online astrological material, but prefer reading offline material.

Research Area 4

We need detailed and comparative studies of the specific religious activities online. How is the Internet being used to engage in such things as prayer, meditation, ritual, education, and organizational tasks, and to what effect?

Astrologers read, teach, post in forums and blogs, communicate, tweet, take part in Facebook groups, conduct research, hold meetings, see clients, and advertise using the Internet. Software for meetings, consultations, online learning environments, and email that are used in the general world are also being used for astrology. The functionality provided by these technologies is seen as positive by the majority of astrologers in that it enables a sense of community and connection with people that they could not otherwise meet. Astrology itself is being practised online in online consultations, classes, conferences, and discussions. With respect to the actual practice of astrology online, astrologers have mixed feelings. The fact that these activities can take place is viewed as positive but, at the same time, inferior to the offline experience. That these events occur is considered beneficial to astrology as they promote learning and the spread of quality astrological information. However the same activities carried out offline are seen as somehow better and more 'real'.

Research Area 5

We need studies of how the features of the technology itself are being utilized in the service of religious ends and with what consequences for the intrinsic and the social aspects of religious life. What are the actual and potential implications of hypertextuality for religion, for example? Are there special interface issues affecting the religious uses of this

technology? How can the technology be changed or improved to facilitate its religious utilization?

The ease with which any material can be posted on the Internet was seen as negative by the astrologers. The Internet was seen as an environment where a person with little or no knowledge of a subject could make themselves appear as authoritative as a person with qualifications and experience. This was the greatest concern expressed by astrologers in connection with the use of the Internet for astrology. It was seen as dangerous in two different ways. Firstly, it was considered that the image and nature of astrology could be greatly tarnished in the eyes of the general public by what the astrologers viewed as poor quality material masquerading as astrology. Secondly and, more importantly, beginners trying to learn astrology were likely to pick up inaccurate and poor quality material and this could, over time, have a detrimental effect on astrology and on the clients of the poorly educated Internet astrologer.

Many astrologers expressed a belief that the astrology on the Internet, even that posted by qualified and experienced astrologers, was lacking in depth. It was frequently described as superficial, and this was felt to be due to the nature of the Internet, where information was, of necessity, presented in bite-sized chunks. This too, it was believed, would over time, have a negative impact on astrology.

Research Area 6

We need to discern whether the technological and cultural aspects of the Internet are better suited to the advancement of one style or type of religion over another. Is the preponderance of Neopagan activities online, for example, coincidental? Or is the Internet better suited, for instance, to the practices and organizational structure of Hinduism than Catholicism? What is the case, why, and with what implications for the future.

About half the astrologers stated that they believed that the Internet could benefit some types of astrology more than others. One group of astrologies seen in this light were the less well-known astrologies, such as Hellenistic or Babylonian astrologies. Because of the smaller numbers of people interested in these astrologies, the Internet allowed them to find each other and form communities based on their shared interests. It was also thought, and feared in some cases, that the Internet favoured Sun sign astrology and what one interviewee termed the 'Madam Wanda' type of astrology, meaning a type where the person did not need to know any astrology, but portray themselves a mystical or psychic.

As previously stated, there has been no previous academic research in the area of astrologers' use of the Internet. Instead I used the online religion literature as a guide. Dawson and Cowan's six research areas proved a useful guide in helping me formulate the questions for the quantitative study and for the general areas that needed to be investigated in the qualitative study.

Dualism

In Chapters Two, Three, and Four, certain recurring themes were identified in the Internet and cyberspace literature, with the most prevalent being that of the Internet as dualistic. Bell and Karaflogka identify what Bell calls 'the space behind the screen, between screens, everywhere and nowhere'.¹¹³⁸ Karaflogka calls this cyberspace to differentiate it from the physical network called the Internet.¹¹³⁹ Other forms of dualism found in the literature include the notion of cyberspace as a sacred space or cyberspace as a representation of mythical spaces such as the American Wild West, both in terms of being a new frontier to be explored and conquered, and being a place where the laws of the civilised world could not be enforced.¹¹⁴⁰ The question of the appropriateness of cyberspace as a venue for online ritual also emerged from the literature.

¹¹³⁸ David Bell, *Cyberculture Reader*, p. 3.

¹¹³⁹ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 3.

¹¹⁴⁰ Dave Healy, *Cyberspace and Place*, p. 55.

Key themes that emerged from the research were the issue of online astrological communities that have been facilitated by the Internet and which have increased in number with the use of Facebook, and the impact that vast quantities of astrological material of varying quality, has on astrology.

Using Ladd's typology of cosmological and anthropological dualism, the questionnaires and interviews asked the astrologers' views on the question of the Internet as dualistic. Although astrologers rejected the concepts of cyberspace as cosmologically and anthropologically dualistic when confronted with these statements in the questionnaires, when these ideas were explored with them in the interviews, most of them described a separate world that is Cartesian in its lack of physicality and, as argued by Heim, Platonic in its description as a world of ideas.¹¹⁴¹ A large portion of the interviewees referred to the Internet as a mental space, a place of the intellect or a disembodied reality. To the astrologers it is a place where they are 'in their minds', suggesting a view of cyberspace that is both anthropologically and cosmologically dualistic.

According to Descartes the mind and the soul are the same thing and the only real source of truth.¹¹⁴² This is an area where the majority of the astrologers cannot be called Cartesian. Although a small number of them, such as the astrologer who said he lives in his head, did describe the Internet as somehow magical or supernatural, the majority did not privilege the mental world or mental space over the physical. In some cases there was a distrust of the online world and a frequent comment was that it was somehow 'not as good' as the offline world. This view is a reversal of what Rudolph calls the 'anti-cosmic' Gnostic belief, where matter is identified with evil.¹¹⁴³ It is the opposite of Gibson's Case, who 'lived for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace' and who had 'a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh'.¹¹⁴⁴ It is not

¹¹⁴¹ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 64.

¹¹⁴² Rene Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy*, p. 221.

¹¹⁴³ Kurt Rudolph and Robert McLachlan Wilson, *Gnosis*, p. 60.

¹¹⁴⁴ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 12.

Ryle's 'ghost in the machine'.¹¹⁴⁵ To the majority of the astrologers the physical world of matter was viewed as superior, which is a belief Boler calls 'New Digital Cartesianism'.¹¹⁴⁶ While Descartes saw the mind and soul as the source of truth, in New Digital Cartesianism the reverse is true.¹¹⁴⁷ When the information from the virtual conflicts with that from the physical, it is the body and the physical world that determines what is true.

Another example of cosmological dualism found in the cyberspace literature is the depiction of cyberspace as the new frontier, a place to be explored and conquered. Authors such as Healy, Leary, Barlow and Stockton have all used the metaphor of the American frontier in their dealings with cyberspace.¹¹⁴⁸ Gibson himself coined the term 'console cowboy'.¹¹⁴⁹ Healy wrote that the Internet as the new frontier meets a need in the American psyche.¹¹⁵⁰ Karaflogka suggests that Americans are more attracted to the Internet than other nationalities for this reason.¹¹⁵¹ However the results of the questionnaires did not show the American astrologers as having a greater affinity for the Internet than non-Americans. Neither do the interviewees show the American astrologers as having a more dualistic view of cyberspace than the UK astrologers. Therefore the idea that cyberspace is more attractive to Americans does not hold true, at least in the astrological community.

Closely related to the concept of cyberspace as the new frontier, is the view that, like the Wild West, cyberspace operates outside of the laws of society. The concept that cyberspace is a place where the rules of the physical world do not apply became known as Barlovian cyberspace, following Barlow's 'Declaration of the

¹¹⁴⁵ Gilbert Ryle and Daniel C. Dennett, *The Concept of the Mind*, pp. 15-16.

¹¹⁴⁶ Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, pp. 185-86.

¹¹⁴⁷ Rene Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy*, p. 221; Megan Boler, *Hypes, Hopes and Actualities*, pp. 185-86.

¹¹⁴⁸ Dave Healy, *Cyberspace and Place*, p. 55; Timothy Leary, *Cyberpunk*, p. 245; John Perry Barlow, "Electronic Frontier Foundation, <http://homes.eff.org/~barlow>. [Accessed 26/04/2015]; Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 588.

¹¹⁴⁹ William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 11.

¹¹⁵⁰ Dave Healy, *Cyberspace and Place*, p. 57.

¹¹⁵¹ Anastasia Karaflogka, *E-Religion*, p. 18.

Independence of Cyberspace'.¹¹⁵² The perception of cyberspace as a place where different rules apply is, according to Cohen, still prevalent, even in legal circles.¹¹⁵³ The questionnaire respondents in both 2009 and 2012 disagreed that with the idea that cyberspace was a place where the rules of the physical world did not apply. Neither did any of the interviewees express a view that supported this statement. From that it can be concluded that astrologers do not see the Internet as a lawless place or a place where they can do whatever they want. Thus the concept of Barlovian Cyberspace is a form of cosmological dualism that has been rejected by the astrologers.

In Chapter One, I posed the question: are astrologers attracted to cyberspace because they are attracted to dualism? Partridge and Jonveaux both proposed the idea that cyberspace held an attraction for people who are religious or spiritual because of its non-physical nature.¹¹⁵⁴ Campion found that the majority of astrologers described themselves as spiritual.¹¹⁵⁵ Given his conclusion that astrology is a vernacular religion, and the fact that astrologers are used to working with a transmudane world that they cannot physically touch, it is possible that it is cyberspace's non-physical nature that also holds an attraction for astrologers. Brady's survey showed 46% of astrologers strongly agreed with dualistic theories of fate in astrology.¹¹⁵⁶ My surveys showed a high level of rejection for dualistic theories of cyberspace, as discussed above. However the interview analysis showed a higher outright agreement with the idea of cyberspace as cosmologically dualistic than Brady's 46%, with many more describing an anthropologically dualistic view. From these figures it can be concluded that there is a high level of dualism in astrology and that astrologers, in general, view cyberspace as dualistic.

¹¹⁵² John Perry Barlow, "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," <http://homes.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>. [Accessed 13/08/2015]

¹¹⁵³ Julie E. Cohen, 'Cyberspace as/and Space', p. 210.

¹¹⁵⁴ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 135; Isabelle Jonveaux and Gabrielle Varro, 'Virtuality as a Religious Category?', p. 39.

¹¹⁵⁵ Nicholas Campion, 'Belief in Astrology', pp. 240-41.

¹¹⁵⁶ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 213.

The dualism that Brady found in the views of 46% of her astrologers tended to be Platonic with some Cartesian traits.¹¹⁵⁷ However, Brady was concerned with astrologers' views of astrology and fate. My research found that in astrologers' views of the Internet, their dualism was both Platonic and Cartesian, in the separation of the mental and physical and the association of cyberspace with a world of ideas and information. However unlike Descartes, my astrologers saw the physical as superior to the mental. The cyberspace literature has portrayed cyberspace in ways that could be considered Gnostic, such as Gibson's Case, and Heim's cyberspace trapped in the 'prison of the body'.¹¹⁵⁸ With their almost unanimously privileging of the physical, the astrologers were decidedly not Gibsonian or Gnostic.

Cyberspace as Sacred Space

The cosmological dualism of Plato consisted of a perfect and unchanging world of Being, inhabited by a creator God, and an imperfect and unstable world of Becoming that contained the visible universe, including the Earth.¹¹⁵⁹ To the Gnostics the world of the divine, separate from the cosmos, offered salvation.¹¹⁶⁰ This separation between the mundane world as the abode of the living and the world of the divine is also a fundamental concept of Christianity, as described by Augustine.¹¹⁶¹ In these models of cosmological dualism, the transmundane world is portrayed as superior to the mundane, and this is also the case with the portrayals of cyberspace in the early literature. Cowan queries the nature of this place called cyberspace which, he notes, is portrayed as qualitatively different from more mundane places.¹¹⁶² Heim viewed it as a place offering salvation.¹¹⁶³ Partridge writes that it offers a doorway to a digitised sacred space.¹¹⁶⁴ Ulansey claims that

¹¹⁵⁷ Bernadette Brady, 'Theories of Fate', p. 256.

¹¹⁵⁸ *The Teachings of Silvanus*; William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 12; Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 64.

¹¹⁵⁹ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28a-c.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Tripartite Tractate*, 1.15.

¹¹⁶¹ St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, XI.I.

¹¹⁶² Douglas Cowan, 'Online U-Topia', p. 257.

¹¹⁶³ Michael Heim, *Realism*, pp. 149-55.

¹¹⁶⁴ Christopher Hugh Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, p. 154.

the world has a new cosmology and its gods are in cyberspace.¹¹⁶⁵ Wertheim, Benedikt and Stenger all call cyberspace a vision of Heaven.¹¹⁶⁶

In the questionnaires of both 2009 and 2012 the respondents firmly rejected the concept of cyberspace as a sacred space. Of the interviewees, only a small minority believed that cyberspace was of itself sacred, but the majority believed that it could be sacred, in that it could be used as a venue for sacred activity. Almost all of the astrologers who were asked if they believed that a consultation between astrologer and client had a sacred dimension, said they believed it did, and almost all of those who did believe that this irruption of the sacred, Eliade's hierophany, Radermacher's meeting with the divine, or George's 'space for the presence of the transcendent', could take place online.¹¹⁶⁷ The view of the majority of the interviewees was that it is the consultation itself, the practice of astrology, that causes the manifestation of the sacred, regardless of the medium. This is the argument put forward by Radermacher, who claims that it is within the space between astrologer and client during a consultation 'That dialogue occurs, centred on a living symbolic presence that is the birthchart itself'.¹¹⁶⁸ It is this dialogue that she considers a meeting with the divine.¹¹⁶⁹ Another view expressed by some interviewees was that it is the astrologer who, through a type of ritual or mental focus, actually creates the space. The astrologers' descriptions of the steps they take to create the space online bear striking resemblance to the descriptions by O'Leary, Helland, and Cowan of the steps taken before an online Pagan ritual. According to O'Leary and later Helland, the preparation for the ritual is the means by which the sacred space is created and cyberspace is transformed into a place

¹¹⁶⁵ David Ulansey, 'Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace', <<http://www.mysterium.com/cultural.html>>.

¹¹⁶⁶ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, p. 21; Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: First Steps*, p. 38; Nicole Stenger, 'Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow', p. 52.

¹¹⁶⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, pp. 11-12; Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 175; Demetra George, *Astrology and the Authentic Self*, p. 251. Quoted in Gunzburg, 'How Do Astrologers Read Charts?', p. 183.

¹¹⁶⁸ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. vii.

¹¹⁶⁹ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. x.

where the ritual can occur.¹¹⁷⁰ Cowan observed that it was the mental attitude of the participants in a Pagan ritual that allowed 'for blessings to occur'.¹¹⁷¹

In an interview with Davis, Pesce, a Technopagan, describes how the practice of magic requires the creation of a space that is 'manifest in the imagination'.¹¹⁷² Radermacher, Gunzburg, and Hyde describe the same process occurring in an astrological consultation.¹¹⁷³ Each of them describes a space, which Hyde terms 'Divinatory Space', opening up that is qualitatively different from the surrounding space.¹¹⁷⁴ In her research Gunzburg found that many astrologers experience this space as sacred or religious.¹¹⁷⁵ There is a strong similarity to Pesce's description of the creation of a magical space and the descriptions of Divinatory Space. Radermacher, like Pesce with his magical space, uses the word 'imagination' and likens it to Corbin's 'mundus imaginalis', or 'imaginal space'.¹¹⁷⁶ She argues that both are what she calls 'interworlds' and that both can bring the power of the imagination into 'the faculty of knowledge'.¹¹⁷⁷ As Wertheim did with cyberspace, Corbin connected his imaginal space with the soul.¹¹⁷⁸ As Benedikt did with cyberspace and Radermacher did with the space in an astrological consultation, Corbin saw imaginal space as an 'intermediary between the sensible world and the intelligible world'.¹¹⁷⁹ Pesce, like one of my interviewees with experience in magic, likens his magical space to cyberspace and states, 'Both cyberspace and magical space are purely manifest in the imagination. Both spaces are entirely constructed

¹¹⁷⁰ Stephen D. O'Leary, *Sacred Space*; Christopher Helland, *Ritual*, p. 30.

¹¹⁷¹ Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge*, p. 134.

¹¹⁷² Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 229.

¹¹⁷³ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 91; Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, pp. 182-83; Maggie Hyde, 'Pigs and Fishes', p. 2.

¹¹⁷⁴ Maggie Hyde, 'Pigs and Fishes', p. 2.

¹¹⁷⁵ Darrelyn Gunzburg, *How Do Astrologers Read Charts?*, pp. 182-83.

¹¹⁷⁶ Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 2; Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 91.

¹¹⁷⁷ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 91.

¹¹⁷⁸ Margaret Wertheim, *Pearly Gates*, pp. 38-39; Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, p. 5.

¹¹⁷⁹ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 124; Henry Corbin, *Mundus Imaginalis*, pp. 6,11.

by your thoughts and beliefs'.¹¹⁸⁰ Another interviewee likened cyberspace to Corbin's imaginal space.

I have argued that Divinatory Space is from the same family of ideas as magical space. Both have been described as related to Corbin's imaginal space which, like magical space, has been likened to cyberspace. Divinatory Space, being qualitatively different from the surrounding space, represents a dualistic view of space by the interviewees whether the consultation takes place online or offline. While the questionnaires suggested that astrologers are not dualistic, the interviewees suggested the opposite. Divinatory Space suggests that the astrological consultation creates a dualistic situation and opens the astrologer and client to a dualistic cosmos which the interviewees also perceive, like Pesce, in cyberspace.¹¹⁸¹ From these arguments and the views of the interviewees, I have concluded that Radermacher's 'meeting with the divine' and Eliade's hierophany can take place over the Internet.¹¹⁸²

Cyberspace and God

Chapter Two discussed the association between the mind and God in both Plato and Descartes. Plato wrote that the world of Being which contained God could only be grasped by understanding.¹¹⁸³ According to Descartes, God could not have an imperfect body, and so therefore was pure mind.¹¹⁸⁴ Cyberspace has been called Cartesian because it has been associated with the mind, by Heim, by Stockton, and by Gibson himself, who refers to the 'bodiless exultation of cyberspace', as an escape from the prison of the flesh.¹¹⁸⁵ As discussed below, the connection between cyberspace and God can be found in the literature. Also found is the claim that cyberspace represents the divine characteristic of immortality. The views of the astrologers were sought on the association of cyberspace with the divine.

¹¹⁸⁰ Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 229.

¹¹⁸¹ Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* p. 229.

¹¹⁸² Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 175; Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, pp. 11-12.

¹¹⁸³ Plato, *Timeaus*, 28d.

¹¹⁸⁴ Rene Descartes, *Philosophical Works*, Vol 1, p. 102.

¹¹⁸⁵ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 64; Sharon Stockton, 'Self Regained', p. 609; William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, p. 12.

According to Gibson the Matrix, or the original Gibsonian cyberspace, contained a god.¹¹⁸⁶ In 2000 Ulansey wrote that the gods of the twenty-first century were in cyberspace.¹¹⁸⁷ In both 2009 and 2012 the questionnaire respondents rejected the idea that the Internet contained a god or gods. Some of those who agreed with the statement commented that they believed God is everywhere. This also tended to be the response from the interviewees. As with the idea, discussed above, of cyberspace being fundamentally sacred the astrologers did not see the Internet as containing a divine presence. This could be viewed as another expression of New Digital Cartesianism. While the view of cyberspace as a separate world can be considered Platonic the nature of cyberspace, although strongly associated with the mental realm by the interviewees, was not viewed as divine as was Plato's world of Being. For the astrologers, while the Internet may be a venue where a meeting with the divine can take place, it is the physical world that is viewed as somehow superior.

The view that cyberspace has become God is found in some of the literature; for example, Ward calls cyberspace a God who sees and knows all things, existing in pure activity and realized presence, in perpetuity.¹¹⁸⁸ Cox and Paul believed that uploaded minds could collectively out-deify God.¹¹⁸⁹ The view that the Internet gave humanity god-like powers was expressed by Heim, who wrote that the ability to enter this heavenly world while still alive and return to Earth at will gave the human being 'a god-like instant access' to heaven.¹¹⁹⁰ The god-like power to live forever is, according to Heim and Lupton, one of the attractions of cyberspace and, according to Cox and Paul, and Moravec, a distinct possibility.¹¹⁹¹

¹¹⁸⁶ William Gibson, *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, p. 138.

¹¹⁸⁷ David Ulansey, 'Cultural Transition and Spiritual Transformation: From Alexander the Great to Cyberspace', <<http://www.mysterium.com/cultural.html>>.

¹¹⁸⁸ Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God*, p. xvi.

¹¹⁸⁹ Earl Cox and Gregory S. Paul, *Beyond Humanity: Cyberevolution and Future Mind*, pp. 1-7.

¹¹⁹⁰ Michael Heim, *The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace*, p. 69.

¹¹⁹¹ Michael Heim, *Realism*; Deborah Lupton, *Embodied Computer*, p. 479; Earl Cox and Gregory S. Paul, *Beyond Humanity: Cyberevolution and Future Mind*, pp. 1-7; Hans Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*, pp. 124-27.

The idea of the Internet as a god or as enabling people to become as powerful and immortal as a god, was rejected by both questionnaire respondents and interviewees. Yet quite a few referred to it as somehow being a collective representation of human thought, a view echoing that of the creator of Web 2.0.¹¹⁹² One interviewee called the Internet an outward manifestation of the human brain en masse and stated that humanity had become the brain of God. Teilhard de Chardin wrote of the noosphere, which he viewed as the converged consciousness of all the world, believing it was the soul of the world and equating it with the Supreme Being.¹¹⁹³ Pesce wrote that cyberspace is the manifestation of the noosphere, as did Cobb.¹¹⁹⁴ Campbell, quoting Cobb's statement, wrote that interpretations such as this illustrate how individuals are seeking out, not just new technological realities, but spiritual realities as well.¹¹⁹⁵ While the interviewees were not happy with the concept of the Internet as God, there was strong support for it as global mind or global consciousness.

The claim that the Internet promotes a sense of knowing everything was rejected by the respondents of both questionnaires, but not by the interviewees. Although they did not claim that it made them personally omniscient, the Internet was frequently portrayed as an enabler, in that it enabled them to find any information they wanted about any subject or to connect with and communicate with anyone in the world. A frequent comment was that the Internet levelled the playing field, and while some believed this worked against them as high quality astrologers, many believed it had provided them with the ability to do things that they would not have otherwise been able to do. Many of them spoke of being able to access any information they required, with several using the term 'at my fingertips', and one astrologer calling it a treasure box that had been opened. Referring to the ability to find and distribute vast amounts of information in cyberspace Ward, in 1997, called

¹¹⁹² Tim O'Reilly, *What Is Web 2.0?*, p. 41.

¹¹⁹³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 182-83.

¹¹⁹⁴ Mark Pesce, "Proximal and Distal Unity, <http://hyperreal.org/~mpesce/>. [Accessed 25/08/2015]; Jennifer J. Cobb, *Cybergrace: The Search for God in the Digital World*, p. 97.

¹¹⁹⁵ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 59.

the Internet 'a God who sees and knows all things'.¹¹⁹⁶ This view of the Internet was frequently expressed by the interviewees, with several speaking of 'the great god Google'.

Cyberspace and Thirdspace

Foucault wrote of Heterotopias and Lefebvre wrote of social space.¹¹⁹⁷ Both of these spaces encompassed all space and were an attempt to solve what they perceived as the problem of a dualistic view of space. Soja wrote that Heterotopias and social space were the same view of space and called this other way of looking at space, 'thirdspace'.¹¹⁹⁸ Thirdspace encompasses both theoretical space and physical space or, to use Newton's model, absolute space and relative space.¹¹⁹⁹

The attempt by Foucault, Lefebvre and Soja to find an alternative view of space, a third space encompassing the existing mental and physical concepts of space, appears to be a twentieth and twenty-first century trend that occurs in a variety of different ways. Shiner's lived space encompassed Eliade's sacred and profane spaces.¹²⁰⁰ Primiano coined the term 'vernacular religion' in an attempt to encompass theoretical and lived aspects of religion.¹²⁰¹ The dualism of the Internet and cyberspace was challenged theoretically by some of the second wave of Internet research, such as Robinson, who coined the term 'online life' and wrote, 'our cyberselves have been materialised'.¹²⁰² Graham wrote of the global-local world which comprises the material and virtual worlds.¹²⁰³ The thirdspaces created by Robinson and Graham, like those of Lefebvre and Soja, are perspectives. They are views of cyberspace and of offline space. Augmented reality, however, attempts

¹¹⁹⁶ Graham Ward, *The Postmodern God*, p. xvi.

¹¹⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 23; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 2-3.

¹¹⁹⁸ Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace*, pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁹⁹ Isaac Newton, *Principia*, p. 13.

¹²⁰⁰ Larry E. Shiner, 'Profane Space, Human Space', p. 428; Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, p. 21.

¹²⁰¹ Leonard Norman Primiano, 'Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife', p. 51.

¹²⁰² Wendy Robinson, *Catching the Waves: Considering Cyberculture, Technoculture, and Electronic Consumption*, pp. 56-57.

¹²⁰³ Stephen Graham, *End of Geography*, p. 96.

to create a space that literally merges the virtual and the physical.¹²⁰⁴ In 2000 Bell had described cyberspace as a thirdspace that he, like Corbin with imaginal space, linked to the imagination.¹²⁰⁵ Unlike Corbin, Bell's space of the imagination incorporated the physical network and the 'space behind the screen'.¹²⁰⁶ However the cyberspace Bell was describing was not the cyberspace of the early theorists. Gibson's matrix, what Benedikt called 'That wonderful, phantasmagoric three-dimensional alternative reality imagined by William Gibson' did not, as he added, 'shape itself online as he and many others thought it surely would'.¹²⁰⁷ Benedikt wrote this in 2003 and in 2015 Gibson's cyberspace is still confined to the pages of the *Sprawl* trilogy. Gibson's cyberspace is a cosmological dualism where a person can only be in one of the worlds at any given time. Augmented reality, however, is a currently existing technological thirdspace, in that the user is in both worlds simultaneously.¹²⁰⁸

Astrologers however, saw the two worlds as separate. As stated above, they viewed the physical world as 'real' and superior and the Internet or cyberspace as a non-physical world of the mind. While some described the Internet as an extension of the offline world they continued to speak of it as a mental and non-physical world which was different from the 'real' world. They spoke about their offline astrological communities and online astrological communities as also being very different. Even when the online and offline communities overlapped, which was the case with a lot of astrologers, they were still perceived by the astrologers as somehow different. As yet, for the astrologers, there is no astrological thirdspace.

¹²⁰⁴ Alan B. Craig, *Understanding Augmented Reality*, p. 2.

¹²⁰⁵ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cybercultures*, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁰⁶ David Bell, *Cyberculture Reader*, p. 3.

¹²⁰⁷ Michael Benedikt, 'Towards a General Theory of Value: An Interview with Michael Benedikt', <<http://gain2.aiga.org/content.cfm?ContentAlias=michaelbenedikt1>>. [Accessed 31/05/2015]

¹²⁰⁸ Alan B. Craig, *Understanding Augmented Reality*, p. 2.

Astrologers and Virtual Communities

The view of cyberspace as a different and separate world could be found in the astrologers' views of astrological virtual communities, which they repeatedly viewed as different and separate from their offline astrological communities.

The role of cyberspace as an enabler of, and venue for, virtual communities, has been discussed from the early days of the Internet up to the present day's literature on community and social media. Debates in the literature include whether or not virtual communities merit the term 'community' and whether or not virtual communities are simply extensions of offline communities, with people befriending, online, people they already know in the offline world. While on social media the trend is for people to form communities with people they already have as contacts, it is argued, for example, by Campbell, Wellman et al., and van Dijk, that the Internet enables communities based on shared interests rather than geographic location.¹²⁰⁹

The overwhelming majority of the astrologers viewed the creation of astrological online communities as highly positive for reasons of sharing of information about astrological events, about what other people are doing, for the pleasure of connecting with other astrologers, and the general emotional support that many of them found there. Online community is seen as particularly beneficial for astrologers living in remote areas where they may not have access to an offline astrological community. Also frequently expressed was the view that cyberspace enabled astrologers to unite against common foes such as scientific or religious polemicists. There is widespread use of Facebook among astrologers and the interviewees expressed a belief that the sense of community generated there is one of the most positive effects of social networks on astrology. Unlike social media

¹²⁰⁹ Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, p. 23; Barry Wellman, Janet Salaff, Dimitrina Dimitrova, Laura Garton, Milena Gulia, and Caroline Haythornthwaite, 'Computer Networks as Social Networks: Collaborative Work, Telework, and Virtual Community', p. 2013; Jan A.G.M. van Dijk, 'Reality', pp. 40-41.

users in general, most astrologers claimed to have a large number of Facebook friends whom they have never met in the offline world, but with whom they share a common interest in astrology. Even where they overlapped the interviewees continued to hold a dualistic view of the online and offline worlds, and described their online astrological community as being very different from their offline astrological community.

The four criteria for a sense of community listed by McMillan and Chavis were,

- A sense of membership
- Influence or a sense of mattering to the group
- Integration with the group
- Fulfilment of needs and a shared emotional connection.¹²¹⁰

McMillan and Chavis define membership of a group as a sense of belonging to and identification with the group, with boundaries between the people who belong and the people who do not belong to the group.¹²¹¹ These criteria for membership could be found in the statements of the interviewees when speaking about community. They spoke about the Internet's abilities to keep astrologers aware of events in the astrological community at home and internationally, and to enable communication and connection between astrologers in different parts of the world; these were cited by the interviewees as positive expressions of community. The knowledge that there were other people 'out there', doing what they do, encouraged a sense of belonging in the community. According to McMillan and Chavis group cohesiveness brings with it pressure on group members to conform to the group's world view.¹²¹² The interviewees however, although aware of some ideological debates, did not consider these a frequent occurrence and most did not consider them a problematic feature of the online astrology groups.

¹²¹⁰ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 4.

¹²¹¹ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 9.

¹²¹² David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 11.

The second of McMillan and Chavis's criteria for community is a feeling of influence and mattering to the group and the astrologers' statements confirmed that this was something they considered important to them. One astrologer talked about the importance of feeling that they were vital to the functioning of the group and considered that the Internet gave astrologers that feeling.

McMillan and Chavis's third criterion for community is integration with the group.¹²¹³ They claim that people join groups that seem to offer rewards such as status of membership, competence of other members and a feeling of shared values with other group members. Several interviewees talked about the value of being able to discuss their branch of astrology with fellow group members and benefiting from the skills and knowledge of other astrologers. According to McMillan and Chavis status of membership is seen as a potential reward, and several high-profile and successful astrologers reported being added to groups without their permission, which they believed was done to increase the prestige of the group.

A shared emotional connection is the fourth of McMillan and Chavis's criteria for community.¹²¹⁴ Of the four criteria, this is the one that is the most clearly satisfied for the astrologers interviewed, with almost every interviewee making a positive comment concerning emotional connections with other astrologers, many of whom they had never met in the offline world. The most commonly expressed explanation for the bond with other group members was a shared interest in astrology.

The views expressed by the majority of the astrologers interviewed suggest that the criteria for community laid down by McMillan and Chavis are being met, and it can be concluded that, for astrologers, the Internet provides the opportunity for them to be part of an online community of astrologers.

¹²¹³ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', pp. 12-13.

¹²¹⁴ David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, 'Sense of Community', p. 13.

Challenge to Authority

Online astrological communities, it was argued by Astrologer 10 in Chapter Eight, are no longer content with what she perceived as a hierarchy in the offline astrological community, with the established astrological institutions controlling the dissemination of information.

It is claimed that the Internet has affected institutional religions, as their traditional authority is challenged by the alternative religions' presence on the Internet. Religious information can be published by unofficial religions or by alternative sects within traditional religions, and the information published can appear as authoritative as that published by institutional religions.¹²¹⁵ For this reason, it is argued that the Internet facilitates and favours the growth of alternative religions.¹²¹⁶ This argument is challenged by Teusner, who points out that software can manipulate what is seen by Internet users, and Cheong who argues that the Internet is also used by the traditional religions to spread their message.¹²¹⁷ However the idea that the Internet could be a recruiting tool for online religions is challenged by Dawson and Hennebry.¹²¹⁸

Astrology, unlike traditional religions, does not have any formal authority figures who could be challenged by the Internet. However it was believed that the traditional organisations such as the Astrological Association are likely to be challenged. The reason expressed by the astrologers who held this view was that new astrologers can find everything they need on the Internet, including contact with other astrologers, and have no need of the astrological organisations. This was less the case with the astrological schools where it was believed that people wishing to learn would sooner or later find a reputable school. The views of people

¹²¹⁵ Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*, p. vii.

¹²¹⁶ Nadja Miczek, "Go Online!", p. 215; Jeff Zaleski, *The Soul of Cyberspace: How New Technology Is Changing Our Spiritual Lives* pp. 111-12; Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, p. 30.

¹²¹⁷ Paul Emerson Teusner, *Formation of a Religious Technorati*, p. 182; Pauline Hope Cheong, *Authority*, p. 79.

¹²¹⁸ Lorne L. Dawson and Jenna Hennebry, *Recruiting*, p. 153.

from the schools tended to be in accord with Teusner and Cheong, in that they consider they have benefited from the Internet.¹²¹⁹ They stated that it allowed more people to find them and allowed communities based around the schools to form online.

Conclusions

Crucial to my investigation was Benedikt's view of cyberspace as a Gibsonian three-dimensional world that could be entered with all five senses.¹²²⁰ Developed countries were 'at the threshold' of making this vision a reality.¹²²¹ Chapter Three contained a summary of Benedikt's ten definitions of cyberspace, of his vision of the new world that was about to be created. In his ten definitions cyberspace is a place, separate from the mundane, physical world or, in Ladd's terms, a separate level of existence.¹²²² Benedikt repeatedly associated cyberspace with the mind and with information and portrayed it as a space that can be entered anywhere on Earth, by anyone with a modem, but where all is not what it seems.¹²²³ Gibsonian cyberspace has not, as yet, materialised in the way Benedikt believed it would. Yet, as stated in Chapter Three the ideas in his definitions continue to reflect the way the Internet is actually viewed today. The views of the interviewees have upheld this statement. Like Benedikt, they repeatedly associated the Internet with the mind and used terms similar to his 'mental geography'. They viewed it as a separate world where they could contact and communicate with people anywhere on Earth who had a modem. And some believed it was an unknown territory where all may not be what it seems.

As stated in Chapter One, the theories found in the first wave of academic literature on cyberspace did not appear to have been tested on an Internet using public. This thesis puts a wide range of them to the test. While some of them, such as

¹²¹⁹ Paul Emerson Teusner, *Formation of a Religious Technorati*, p. 182; Pauline Hope Cheong, *Authority*, p. 79.

¹²²⁰ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*.

¹²²¹ Michael Benedikt, *Cyberspace: Some Proposals*, p. 131.

¹²²² George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 435-36.

¹²²³ Michael Benedikt, *Introduction to Cyberspace: First Steps*.

cyberspace as God or cyberspace having a greater appeal to Americans, have not been supported by the findings, the most prominent of the early claims has. Cyberspace has been found to be, in the views of the astrologers who have an above-average rate of Internet use, dualistic. While not viewing it in an anti-materialist Gnostic or Gibsonian way, they have expressed a view of the Internet that is both cosmologically and anthropologically dualistic. Their view is both Platonic in that they see it as a separate world, and Cartesian in that they strongly associate the Internet with the mind, distinct from the body and the physical world. However their Cartesianism is New Digital Cartesianism in which the physical world is seen as the superior realm. The favouring of the physical and the rejection of the concept of the superiority of the non-physical world was repeated in different ways. The astrologers repeatedly stated views that were in opposition to the descriptions of Plato's, the Gnostics', and the Christian non-physical worlds. The non-physical realm was not the more real world. It was not inherently sacred and it did not contain a god or endow god-like powers. However the association of cyberspace with the mind was also repeatedly expressed and, it was mostly seen as separate from the physical world. The idea of the Internet as a global mind was frequently expressed, suggesting Teilhard de Chardin's noosphere.¹²²⁴ However, unlike Teilhard de Chardin, the majority did not associate cyberspace with a Supreme Being.

My conclusion is then, in contrast to what was claimed by Wertheim, Benedikt and Stenger, astrologers do not view cyberspace as inherently sacred. However they believe it can be, in that it is an appropriate venue for sacred activity. For example, astrological consultations are believed to have a mystical element which Radermacher calls a 'meeting with the divine'.¹²²⁵ My research indicates that this meeting can take place in consultations that take place online.

¹²²⁴ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 182-83.

¹²²⁵ Lindsay Radermacher, 'The Role of Dialogue in Astrological Divination', p. 156.

It also became clear that the second wave view of cyberspace as a merger of the virtual world and the physical world has strong parallels with Soja's thirdspace which contains both mental and physical space. Augmented reality is a physical representation of this concept. However my data suggests that astrologers continue to differentiate between their online and offline worlds and, contrary to Soja, do not appear to experience a sense of thirdspace.

I found that online astrological communities meet McMillan and Chavis's criteria for community. There is strong support for online communities among astrologers and they are viewed very positively. Their relationships with the online communities are similar to the relationship Rheingold had with his early virtual community.¹²²⁶ This conclusion supports Partridge's observation that the trend in the online community literature is moving back to Rheingold's understanding of virtual community.¹²²⁷

The Internet's facilitation of the widespread dissemination of information has both positive and negative consequences in the views of astrologers. The sharing of astrological material of an acceptable quality is considered positive in that it spreads knowledge and may inform the non-astrological public and attract them to astrology. However, there are vast quantities of online astrological material that is considered to be of poor quality. My data indicates that most astrologers consider that the spread of such poor quality material can have negative consequences, not just for astrology, but also for clients who visit astrologers who have learned astrology from this material. This finding is in keeping with the findings of Dawson and Cowan, Helland, Brasher, and Berger and Ezzy, in the study of online religion, who found that uncensored material posed a challenge to established religions and their claims of absolute sacredness.¹²²⁸

¹²²⁶ Howard Rheingold, *Homesteading*, p. xvii.

¹²²⁷ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 145.

¹²²⁸ Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, *Religion Online*, pp. 1-14; Christopher Helland, *Popular Religion*, pp. 33-34; Brenda E. Brasher, *Online Religion*; Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy, *Teen Witches*.

The figures suggest that astrologers use the Internet significantly more than the general population and use does not decline with age. Their use of Facebook is also greater than that of the general population. Partridge and Jonveaux both proposed the idea that cyberspace held an attraction for people who are religious or spiritual because of its non-physical nature.¹²²⁹ However, despite the high use of the Internet by astrologers and their repeated emphasis on the Internet as a non-physical world of the mind, they repeatedly stated a preference for the physical embodied world. Therefore I have concluded that the Internet does not hold a particular attraction for astrologers, despite greater use of it by them.

At the beginning of this thesis I outlined my research aims. The aims were to investigate how astrologers use the Internet, to examine their relationship with the Internet and to identify if use of the Internet has impacted their practice of astrology or astrology itself. From the results of the research I have concluded that the astrology of the practicing astrologers has not been impacted negatively and may be aided by greater community and greater access to information. However there is a real fear in the astrological community that astrology itself may become more superficial to suit the medium of the Internet.

The wider aim of this thesis was to reflect on the wider debates concerning cyberspace. In Chapter One I quoted Douglas Cowan who stated in 2015, that he was unable to find any scholarship in the area that tested the claims of the early theorists in connection with cyberspace and dualism.¹²³⁰ These theories were tested in this thesis and, contrary to the move away from a dualistic view of cyberspace found in the second wave of literature, the first wave theories of dualism favoured by, for example, Benedikt, Davis, and Heim have been supported by the professional astrologers interviewed. While the questionnaire respondents rejected these ideas, the trend from 2009 questionnaire to the 2012 questionnaire was moving towards an acceptance of them. Therefore I have concluded that it is

¹²²⁹ Christopher Partridge, *Re-Enchantment of the West - Vol 2*, p. 135; Isabelle Jonveaux and Gabrielle Varro, 'Virtuality as a Religious Category?', p. 39.

¹²³⁰ Douglas Cowan.

possible that peoples' perception of the Internet, is moving back towards the dualistic views portrayed in the literature of the late 1990s.

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Appendix 1 - 2009 Questionnaire



The Sophia Centre

for the study of Cosmology in Culture

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Astrological Association of Great Britain

Annual Conference, Wyboston, September 2009

Astrologers and the Internet Questionnaire

We would be very grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire, which is part of a research programme at the Sophia Centre, at the University of Wales Lampeter.

Please return completed questionnaire to the registration desk or return by post to the university address above. If you do not wish to complete the questionnaire, please return to the registration desk for re-cycling.

Introduction

The purpose of the questionnaire is to determine the relationship between astrologers and the Internet. The survey will attempt to identify the usage of the Internet by the astrological community and the nature of the usage. It is divided into two sections.

Section One attempts to find out how astrologers use the Internet and to what extent there is an online astrological community. It is hoped that the respondents will range from those who just use it to browse, through those who have a simple one or two page website to those who have a fully interactive commercial website. If you are an astrologer who does not use the Internet at all, that too is valuable information, so please answer Section One up to and including Question 5.

Internet usage differs from country to country and among different age groups. The first three questions of Section One are designed to enable a comparison to be made between the respondent's replies and the average for a person in that age group and country of residence.

Section Two attempts to determine if astrologers are attracted to cyberspace because of its other-worldly qualities or if their use of it is mainly commercial and social. Although the terms 'Internet' and 'cyberspace' are often used interchangeably, for the purpose of this survey, there is a difference between the two. ***The Internet refers to the physical network of computers and software, while cyberspace refers to a place or space entered when a person logs on. This is where the act of connectivity and interactivity takes place.*** Studies in both the US and the UK indicate that the Pagan community and magic workers in general have a strong affinity with cyberspace as both are about creating other worlds that are not bound by the limitations of the mundane world. Parallels have been drawn with numerous other worlds from the Christian Heaven to outer space. It is hoped to find out whether or not this also applies to astrologers.

If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, please leave them blank.

Section One – Internet Usage

1. Age group

<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 25	<input type="checkbox"/>	25-34	<input type="checkbox"/>	35-44	<input type="checkbox"/>	45-54
<input type="checkbox"/>	55-64	<input type="checkbox"/>	65-74	<input type="checkbox"/>	75-84	<input type="checkbox"/>	85+

2. What is your nationality? _____

3. What is your country of residence? _____

4. Are you an astrologer?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes - Full-	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes - Part-	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	-	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
	time		time		Amateur			

5. Do you have regular access to an internet connection?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes – but do not use it
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------	-------------------------

6. How often do you access the internet?

<input type="checkbox"/>	More than	<input type="checkbox"/>	Daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weekly
	once a day				once a week		
<input type="checkbox"/>	More than once	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than once a month		
	a month						

7. How long is it since you first started using the Internet regularly?

8. What percentage of your Internet usage is concerned with astrology?

9. What percentage of your time spent on astrology is spent online?

10. Do you consider yourself part of an online astrological community?

Yes No

If yes, please specify _____

11. How would you personally compare participation in an online astrological community to participation in an offline astrological community?

Online more important to you Offline more important to you Both equally important to you Too different to compare

Please explain the reason for your choice

12. Do you use the Internet to read astrological material such as articles, tutorials, book reviews, etc.?

Yes No

13. How would you personally compare reading online material to reading material offline?

Prefer reading online Prefer reading offline No preference Too different to compare

Please explain the reason for your choice

14. How would you personally compare your online astrological contacts/friendships with offline astrological friendships?

Online more important to you Offline more important to you Both equally important to you

Please explain the reason for your choice

15. Are your online and offline astrological friendships with the same people?

Yes No Some are with the same people

16. How would you rate the astrology **YOU** practice/teach/discuss online?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Generally better than your offline	<input type="checkbox"/>	Generally not as good as your offline astrology	<input type="checkbox"/>	Generally the same as your offline astrology	<input type="checkbox"/>	Too different to compare
--------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------	---	--------------------------	--	--------------------------	--------------------------

Please explain the reason for your choice

17. Do you belong to any general social networking websites, like Facebook, Twitter or MySpace

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----

If yes, please specify _____

18. If you answered 'Yes' to Question 17, does astrology play any part in your online social network?

19. Do you visit Blogs?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know what they are
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------	--------------------------

If yes, in which of the following activities do you participate? (You may choose more than one option)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Posting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading Posts	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moderating
--------------------------	---------	--------------------------	---------------	--------------------------	------------

20. Do you participate in any of the virtual reality(VR) websites, such as Second Life, World of Warcraft or the Google version – Lively?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----

If yes, please specify _____

21. If you answered 'Yes' to Question 20, does astrology play any part in your VR world?

22. Do you belong to any specialist astrological message boards, forums or instant message systems like MSN?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----

If yes, please specify _____

23. Other than the categories mentioned in previous questions, what do you use the internet for?
(You may choose more than one category)

Research News Distance education Meetings

Other purposes (please specify) _____

24. Do you have an RSS (Really Simply Syndicated) system – to provide up to the minute alerts about news and other features which are likely to be of interest to you as an astrologer?

Yes No

If yes, please specify _____

25. Do you use your own identity when you are on the Internet?

Always Usually Sometimes Usually Not Never

If you use false identity/identities can you explain why?

Section Two – Cyberspace

The Internet refers to the physical network of computers and software, while cyberspace refers to a place or space entered when a person logs on. This is where the act of connectivity and interactivity takes place.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

a. When I log on to the Internet, I enter another world

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

b. When I log on to the Internet, I lose touch with the offline world

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

c. Cyberspace can be a sacred space

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

d. There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

e. Cyberspace is god

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

f. I feel safe in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

g. I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

h. I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

i. I feel powerful when I'm in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

j. In cyberspace I never feel lonely

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

k. In cyberspace I feel immortal

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

l. In cyberspace I can know everything

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

m. In cyberspace I can do anything I want

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

Have you any further information which you feel might be of use to the researcher?

If you would be prepared to be interviewed for further research, please give your name and e mail address (please print clearly)

email: frances.clynes@gmail.com

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Appendix 2 - 2012 Questionnaire



Frances Clynes c/o Dr. Nicholas Campion,
The Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture,
School of Archaeology, History and Anthropology,
University of Wales Trinity Saint David,
Ceredigion, Wales, SA48 7ED, UK.

The Use of the Internet by Astrologers

United Astrology Conference, New Orleans, May 2012

We would be grateful if you would complete the following questionnaire, which is part of my PhD research at the Sophia Centre, at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Please return completed questionnaire to the MA in Cultural Astronomy desk (Booth No. 40 in the Trade Show), or return by post to the university address above. If you do not wish to complete the questionnaire, please return to the desk for re-cycling. **Thank you for your contribution to this research.**

1. Age group

Under 25 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75-84 85+

2. Gender

M F

3. What is your

nationality? _____

4. What is your country of

residence? _____

5. Are you a professional astrologer?

Full Time Part Time No

6. How would you personally compare your online (Internet) astrological social activity to your offline astrological social activity?

Online more important to you Offline more important to you Both equally important Too different to compare

7. How would you personally compare your online (Internet) astrological work to your offline astrological work?

- Online more important to you
 Offline more important to you
 Both equally important
 Too different to compare

8. Do you post astrological material in any social networking/social media websites?

- Facebook Twitter MySpace YouTube Flickr Second Life Google Plus
 LinkedIn Other Visit but don't post visit sites for non-astrological activity only
 Don't visit social media sites

If Other, please specify _____

If your answer is 'Don't visit social media sites', can you say why?

9. On a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 being 'of no importance' and 10 being 'very important', how important are social media/social networks to your astrological social activity?

10. On a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 being 'of no importance' and 10 being 'very important', how important are social media/social networks to your astrological work?

11. Do you visit astrological Blogs?

- Posting Reading Posts Moderating Don't Visit

12. Do you participate in an online astrological forum? Yes No

If yes, please specify _____

13. Do you edit or contribute astrological content in Wikipedia?

- Create Content Edit Existing Content Just Read Content Use for non-astrological purposes Don't Use Wikipedia

If your answer was 'Don't Use Wikipedia', can you say why?

14. Have you ever been involved in online controversy concerning astrology? Yes No

If yes, please specify _____

15. Other than the categories mentioned in previous questions, how else do you use the Internet for astrology?

Research News Distance Education Meetings Advertising Services Consultations (Skype) No Other Uses

Other purposes (please specify) _____

16. Do you use your own identity when you are on the Internet?

Always Usually Sometimes Usually Not Never

If you use false identity/identities can you explain why? _____

17. In the literature on the Internet, cyberspace was the term given to the place we go to when we log onto the Internet. Much has been written about the nature of the place called cyberspace. We would like your views on some of the concepts discussed. Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

a. When I log on to the Internet, I enter another world

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

b. When I log on to the Internet, I lose touch with the offline world

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

c. Cyberspace can be a sacred space

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

d. There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

e. Cyberspace is god

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

f. I feel safe in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

g. I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

h. I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

i. I feel powerful when I'm in cyberspace

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

j. In cyberspace I never feel lonely

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

k. In cyberspace I feel immortal

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

l. In cyberspace I can know everything

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

m. In cyberspace I can do anything I want

Strongly agree Agree Don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

If you would be willing to discuss your views in more detail, please enter your name and email address below:

Name: _____

eMail: _____

Appendix 3 - Results of the Questionnaires of 2009 and 2012

2009 Questionnaire

750 questionnaires were issued. The number of returned questionnaires was 115, slightly more than 15% of the number issued. In the responses to the questions below, the exact numbers are give where applicable. They are followed by the percentage of the total that the number represents. The percentage is always a percent of 115 unless explicitly stated otherwise - the total number of returned questionnaires, even if some respondents declined to answer the question. Percentages in most cases, are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

Questionnaire

Question one asks the respondent to specify their age group from a range of age groups.

Responses

The ages ranged from the twenty-five to thirty-four age group to the over eighty-five age group with the average age being fifty-five.

Question two asks for the nationality of the respondent

Responses

Table A3.1 - Nationality of respondents in 2009 questionnaire

Nationality	No.	Percent
American	49	43%
British	44	38%
Australian	4	3%
Irish	4	3%
Canadian	2	2%
French	2	2%
Brazilian	1	<1%
Danish	1	<1%
New Zealander	1	<1%
Dutch	1	<1%
Polish	1	<1%
Slovenian	1	<1%
Turkish	1	<1%

Uruguayan	1	<1%
Mixed Nationality	1	<1%

Question three asks their country of residence.

Responses

Table A3.2 - Country of residence of respondents in 2009 questionnaire

Country	No.	Percent
United States	54	47%
Britain	44	38%
Canada	4	3%
Australia	2	2%
Holland	2	2%
Slovenia	1	<1%
Denmark	1	<1%
Russia	1	<1%
Poland	1	<1%
Switzerland	1	<1%
Turkey	1	<1%
Germany	1	<1%
Ireland	1	<1%

Question four asks if they are an astrologer and if so, whether or not this is their full time occupation.

Responses

Table A3.3 - Astrological professional status of 2009 questionnaire respondents

Status	No.	Percent
Full-time astrologers	30	26%
Part-time astrologers	38	33%
Amateurs	39	34%
Not an astrologer	6	5%

Three of those six people who stated they were not astrologer, qualified their answer. For example one person said, 'I don't consider myself an astrologer as I don't teach'. Another said 'I love astrology but I don't do charts for people.'

Question five asks if they have regular access to the Internet

Responses

Only two of the respondents said they did not have regular access to the Internet.

Question six asks how often they access the Internet

Frequency of Internet Use

Table A3.4 - Frequency of Internet use by 2009 questionnaire respondents

Frequency	No.	Percent
>Once a day	78	68%
Daily	19	17%
>Once a week	13	11%
Weekly	3	3%

Question seven asks how long it is since they started using the Internet regularly

Responses

Table A3.5 - Number of years using the Internet - 2009 questionnaire respondents

No of Years	No. of Respondents
30 years	1
27 years	1
23 years	1
20 years	3
19 years	1
18 years	1
17 years	3
16 years	2
15 years	6
14-15 years	1
14 years	5
13 years	6
12 years	7
11-12 years	1
11 years	1
10-15 years	1
10 years	25
9 years	7
8-10 years	1
8-9 years	1

8 years	4
7-8 years	1
7 years	4
6-7 years	1
6 years	8
5-6 years	1
5 years	2
4 years	3
3 years	1
2-3 years	1
2 years	1
1 year	2
>1 year	2

The majority of the respondents answered in terms of the number of years they had been using the Internet regularly. Others were less specific. One person replied, 'since it became available. I was the first person to write my MA thesis on a computer in 1981', while another wrote, 'since just after it became viable with enough people. ? Year'. Other people answered without specifying the exact number of years, such as, 'always used the Internet', 'a long time ago', 'ages ago', or 'years and years'. The responses expressed in years were as follows:

The average number of years (1122/106) was 10.58 years.

Questions eight asks about the percentage of online time concerned with astrology

Responses

Table A3.6 - Percentage of online time concerned with astrology - 2009 questionnaire respondents

Percentage	No. of Respondents
100	1
90	6
85	2
80	5
75	5
70	4
65	2

60	4
50	16
45	2
40	2
38	1
34	1
33	1
30	9
25	5
20	11
15-20	1
15	3
13	1
10-20	1
10	19
5	2
0	2

While most respondents answered in terms of a percentage, some of the answers were vague, for example, 'little', or 'a fair bit'.

The average percentage was $(4215.5/105) = 39.77\%$

Question nine asks about the percentage of their astrological time that is spent online.

Responses

Table A3.7 - Percentage of astrological time spent online - 2009 questionnaire respondents

Percentage	No. of Respondents
100	1
90	2
80	3
75	2
65	1
60	2
50	13
45	1
40	6
30	8
25	4
20	8

15	4
13	1
12	1
10-20	1
10	17
5-10	2
5	15
1	5
0-2	1
0	2

Again while some of the comments were vague, such as, 'varies', 'too little', or 'no idea', most gave their response in percentages.

The average percentage was $(2656/100) = 26.56\%$

Question ten asks if the respondent considers themselves part of an online astrological community

Responses

Table A3.8 - If the respondents feel part of an online community - 2009 questionnaire respondents

Community	No	Percent of those who answered the question	Percent of total respondents
Part of an online community	45	53%	39%
Not part of an online community	40	47%	35%
Did not answer the question	30		26%

Forty people commented on their response. Most specified the community they felt part of, with the most popular being Facebook, followed by chat rooms belonging to some of the larger American organisations such as the Association for Astrological Networking (AFAN). Others specified the technology they use, for example, forums or email.

Question eleven asks the respondent how they would compare participation in an online astrological community to participation in an offline astrological community.

Responses

Table A3.9 - Comparison between online and offline astrological communities - 2009 questionnaire respondents

Participation in online astrological community compared to participation in offline astrological community	No.	Percent
Online more important	10	9%
Offline more important	41	36%
Online and offline of equal importance	37	32%
Too different to compare	25	22%

Questions twelve asks if the respondent uses the Internet to read astrological material such as articles, tutorials, book reviews, etc.

Responses

Ninety-four people or 82% of the respondents said they use the Internet to read astrological material. Seventy-two people commented on their answer. Only two of these comments were from people who did not read online. One person simply replied 'rarely', while the other commented, 'If I wish to read it, I'd print it off'. Of the comments from people who read material online, most of them state that they liked to read from websites of astrologers whose work they admire or they just specified a particular website, for example, *Skyscript*, the website of British astrologer Deborah Houlding. Other online material specified included emails, newsletters, *The Mountain Astrologer* magazine, and book reviews.

Question thirteen asks them to compare it reading online to reading material offline in terms of which they prefer

Responses

Table A3.10 - Comparison between reading online and reading offline - 2009 questionnaire respondents

Reading online material compared to offline	No	Percent
Prefer reading online	0	0%
Prefer reading offline	77	67%
No preference	24	21%
Too different to compare	5	4%
Did not answer question	9	8%

Some of the longest comments of the questionnaire were written in response to this question. Most of them were from people explaining why they preferred reading offline and these were usually for practical reasons such as 'Less stress on the eyes'. One example was,

Offline can be taken more slowly and is digested at deeper level involving emotion, proprioception + kinaesthesia, all of which tend to be blanked out online. Offline material is therefore recalled better. Reading online is tiring.

Another one was,

Online ok for quick fact checking or researching. Printed material for reflection, meditation - for really studying something. Also, it's easier and you can take it in the tub or in bed.

Some of the comments just expressed a preference for offline material, such as, 'books are forever', 'I like real paper books', or 'I just like books'.

Question fourteen asks the respondent to compare their online astrological contacts and friendships with offline friendships in terms of which is most important to them

Responses

Table A3.11 - Comparison between online and offline astrological contacts and friendships - 2009 questionnaire respondents

Importance of online astrological contacts compared to offline contacts	No	Percent
Online more important	10	8.5%
Offline more important	57	50%
Equally important	38	33%
Did not answer question	10	8.5%

As with the previous question most of the comments to question fourteen came from people explaining why they preferred offline friendships. The most common answer was that the respondents preferred face-to-face interaction with people. Examples include, ' You can get to know someone better when you meet them for real', and ' human contact is most important'.

Of the people who felt online and offline friendships were equally important, the most common reason given was that the Internet allowed them to become friends with people from different geographical locations that they otherwise might not have met. Others stated that they valued all friendships whether online or offline, for example, ' the friendship is important by any means'. The most common response from the people who considered their online friendships more important was that they had no offline astrological contacts.

Question fifteen asks if their online and offline friendships are with the same people

Responses

Table A3.12 - If online and offline astrological friendships are with the same people - 2009 questionnaire respondents

Online and offline friendships with the same people	No	Percent
With the same people	13	11%
Not with the same people	27	23.5%
Some are with the same people	50	43.5%
Did not answer question	25	22%

Question sixteen asks the respondent to rate the astrology they practice and teach online in terms of whether it is the same or better or worse than their offline astrology

Responses

Table A3.13 - Astrology taught and practiced online compared to astrology taught and practiced offline - 2009 respondents

Astrology taught and practiced online compared to astrology taught and practiced offline	No	Percent
Online astrology better	9	8%
Offline astrology better	17	15%
Both the same	30	26%
Too different to compare	29	25%
Did not answer question	30	26%

Of the nine people who considered their online astrology better than their offline astrology, two of them commented that they write better than they speak, one commented that online saved money, and two felt ill at ease in the offline community, for example, ' I feel isolated in offline community', and 'online I'm with likeminded people'. Of the people who rate the astrology they practice and teach offline to be superior, the most common reason give was that they preferred personal contact, for example, ' In person equals greater depth', and ' It feels more comfortable'.

There were very few comment from the people who felt online and offline astrology were too different to compare. Those who did comment tended to say that the principles of astrology were the same regardless of the medium.

Question seventeen asks if they belong to any general social networking websites, like Facebook, Twitter or MySpace

Responses

Table A3.14 - Use of social networking sites - 2009 respondents

Social networks	No	Percent
Facebook	52	45%
Twitter	16	14%
MySpace	9	8%

Question eighteen asks if astrology plays any part in the online social network

Responses

Of the fifty-nine people who stated in question seventeen that they use a social network, thirty-eight of those stated that astrology plays a part in their network. That figure represents 33% of the respondents overall, and 65% of those who use a social network.

Question nineteen asks about blogs and the activities in which they participate in terms of posting, reading or moderating

Responses

Table A3.15 - Use of blogs - 2009 respondents

Blogs	No	%	Post		Post & Moderate		Read but do not post	
			No	%	No	%	No	%
Use blogs	47	41%	16	14%	6	5%	23	20%
Do not use blogs	43	37%						
Did not know what a blog is	6	5%						
Did not answer the question	19	17%						

Question twenty asks about Virtual Reality (VR) websites such as Second Life, World of Warcraft or the Google version – Lively

Responses

Only one person stated that they used a virtual reality site. The site was World of Warcraft.

Question twenty-one asks if astrology plays any part in the VR world

Responses

The person who stated they use World of Warcraft in question twenty answered that astrology plays no part in it.

Question twenty-two asks if they belong to any specialist astrological message boards, forums or instant message-like systems like MSN

Responses

Table A3.16 - Use of messaging systems, message boards and forums - 2009 respondents

Messaging systems, Message boards and forums	No	Percent
Messaging systems	8	7%
Forums	26	23%
Both	0	0%
Message boards	0	0%

Question twenty-three asks if they use the Internet for research, news, distance education or meetings

Responses

Table A3.17 - Use of Internet applications - 2009 respondents

Internet application	No	Percent
Research	90	78%
News	84	73%
Distance education	37	32%
Meetings	26	23%

Only two of the 115 respondents did not use the Internet for one of these reasons, with most people using it for two or more. The most frequently cited 'other' reason for using the Internet for astrology was consultations, with many people stating that they used Skype, a technology that allow online 'telephone' calls with video.¹²³¹ Other reasons stated were email, communication, advertising, chart calculation, and paying bills.

Question twenty-four asks if the respondent has a RSS system that they use for news that are likely to be of interest to them as an astrologer.

Responses

Only twelve people or 10% use an RSS system. The most common RSS specified was Google.

Question twenty-five asks if they use their own identity or a false identity on the Internet, how often and why

Responses

Table A3.18 - Use of own identity or false identity on the Internet - 2009 respondents

Own identity	No	Percent
Always use own identity	62	54%
Usually use own identity	24	21%
Sometimes use own identity	14	12%
Usually do not use own identity	9	8%
Never use own identity	2	2%
Did not answer	4	3%

¹²³¹ Microsoft, "Skype," <http://www.skype.com>. [Accessed 19/07/2015]

Question twenty-six asks how much the respondents agree or disagree with the statements in the table below:

Responses

The figures entered in *Table A3.19* represent the number of respondents who gave the answer specified in the heading and those entered in *Table A3.20*, the percentages.

Table A3.19 - Cyberspace questions by number of respondents - 2009

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Did Not Answer
When I log on to the Internet, I enter another world	4	17	11	65	14	2
When I log on to the Internet, I lose touch with the offline world	0	8	2	77	24	2
Cyberspace can be a sacred space	4	21	35	35	16	2
There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace	5	14	31	31	34	3
Cyberspace is god	1	4	10	43	51	4
I feel safe in cyberspace	6	30	22	35	17	3
I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace	0	8	15	58	29	3
I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace	1	16	31	40	22	3
I feel powerful when I'm in cyberspace	1	8	30	45	25	4
In cyberspace I never feel lonely	2	18	24	47	15	7
In cyberspace I feel immortal	0	1	8	54	46	4
In cyberspace I can know everything	0	11	10	47	40	5
In cyberspace I can do anything I want	0	5	10	55	38	5

Table A3.20 - Cyberspace questions by percentages - 2009

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Did Not Answer
When I log on to the Internet, I enter another world	3.5%	15%	10%	57%	12%	2%
When I log on to the Internet, I lose touch with the offline world	0	7%	2%	67%	21%	2%
Cyberspace can be a sacred space	3.5%	18%	30%	30%	14%	2%
There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace	4%	12%	27%	27%	30%	3%
Cyberspace is god	0.8%	3.5%	9%	37%	43%	3.5%
I feel safe in cyberspace	5%	26%	19%	30%	15%	3%
I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace	0	7%	14%	50%	25%	3%
I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace	0.8%	14%	27%	35%	19%	3%
I feel powerful when I'm in cyberspace	0.8%	7%	26%	39%	22%	3.5%
In cyberspace I never feel lonely	2%	16%	21%	41%	14%	6%
In cyberspace I feel immortal	0	0.8%	7%	47%	40%	3.5%
In cyberspace I can know everything	0	10%	9%	41%	35%	4%
In cyberspace I can do anything I want	0	4%	9%	48%	33%	4%

2012 Questionnaire

1500 questionnaires were issued in 2012 and 374 were returned, giving a return rate of just under 25%. As with the 2009 results, in the responses to the questions below, the exact numbers are given where applicable. They are followed by the percentage of the total that the number represents. The percentage is always a percent of 374 unless explicitly stated otherwise - the total number of returned questionnaires, even if some respondents declined to answer the question. Percentages in most cases, are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

Question one asks the respondent to specify their age group from a range of age groups.

Responses

The ages ranged from the under 25 age group to the 75 to 84 with the average age being 55-64 years.

Question two asks about gender

Responses

Eighteen people or 5% of the respondents declined to answer this question. 266 people or 71% of the respondents were female and ninety people or 24% were male.

Question three asks for the nationality of the respondent

Responses

Three people declined to answer this question. More of the respondents were American than any other nationality. Eleven of these qualified it by adding a second nationality, such as 'American-Irish' or 'American-Italian'. I have listed these as American. Also included as American is a respondent who listed their nationality as Texan. Two people gave their nationality as 'Caucasian' and one person gave it as 'White'. The percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

Table A3.21 - Nationality of respondents in 2012 questionnaire

Nationality	No.	Percentage
American	158	42%
British	99	26%
Dutch	15	4%
Canadian	9	2%
Irish	8	2%
Turkish	7	2%
Australian	7	2%
Swiss	6	2%
German	5	1%
Norwegian	5	1%
French	4	1%
New Zealander	4	1%
Chinese	4	1%
Brazilian	3	<1%
Polish	3	<1%
Danish	2	<1%
South African	2	<1%
Spanish	2	<1%
Swedish	2	<1%
Taiwanese	2	<1%
Czech	2	<1%
Greek	2	<1%
Japanese	2	<1%
Mexican	2	<1%
Portuguese	2	<1%
Russian	2	<1%
Caucasian	2	<1%
Argentinean	1	<1%

Chilean	1	<1%
Hong Konger	1	<1%
Hungarian	1	<1%
Israeli	1	<1%
Italian	1	<1%
Moldavian	1	<1%
Slovene	1	<1%
Ukrainian	1	<1%
White	1	<1%

Question four asks about their country of residence.

Responses

Three people declined to answer this question. People who listed their country of residence as England, Scotland, Wales, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, have been listed as living in Britain. The percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

Table A3.22 - Country of residence of respondents in 2012 questionnaire

Nationality	No.	Percentage
United States	170	45%
Britain	108	29%
Netherlands	14	4%
Canada	10	3%
Australia	8	2%
Turkey	7	2%
Switzerland	5	1%
Germany	5	1%
Italy	3	<1%
Norway	3	<1%
Cayman Islands	3	<1%

Brazil	3	<1%
Denmark	3	<1%
Ireland	2	<1%
Greece	2	<1%
Japan	2	<1%
Mexico	2	<1%
Sweden	2	<1%
Hong Kong	2	<1%
French	1	<1%
New Zealand	1	<1%
China	1	<1%
Poland	1	<1%
South Africa	1	<1%
Taiwan	1	<1%
Czech Republic	1	<1%
Portugal	1	<1%
Russia	1	<1%
Costa Rica	1	<1%
Argentina	1	<1%
Chile	1	<1%
Hungary	1	<1%
Israel	1	<1%
Moldova	1	<1%
Slovenia	1	<1%
Reunion Island	1	<1%

Question five asks if the respondent is an astrologer and if so, whether or not this is their full time occupation

Responses

Three people declined to answer this question. 110 people or twenty-nine percent, were full-time astrologers, 132 people or thirty-five percent were part-time astrologers, and 129 people or thirty-four percent, described themselves as not professional astrologers.

Table A3.23 - Astrological professional status of 2012 questionnaire respondents

Status	No.	Percent
Full-time astrologers	110	29%
Part-time astrologers	132	35%
Not professional	129	35%
Did not answer	3	1%

Question six asks the respondent how they would personally compare their online astrological social activity to their offline social activity

Responses

Thirteen people or three percent, declined to answer this question. Of the remainder, 142 people or thirty-eight percent said that online and offline activity were equally important to them. A further forty-one people or eleven percent, said that online was more important while 120 people or thirty-two percent considered offline more important. Fifty-six people or fifteen percent felt they were too different to compare.

Table A3.24 - Comparison between online and offline astrological social activity - 2012 questionnaire respondents

Response	No	Percent
Online more important	41	11%
Offline more important	120	32%
Online and offline equally important	144	39%
Too different to compare	56	15%
Did not answer	13	3%

Question seven asks the respondent how they would personally compare their online astrological work to their offline astrological work.

Responses

Seventeen people or five percent declined to answer this question. Of the remainder, 147 people or thirty-nine percent, said online and offline activity were equally important. A further 39 people or ten percent said online was more important while 130 people or thirty-five percent, considered offline more important. Forty-one people or eleven percent felt they were too different to compare.

Table A3.25 - Comparison between online and offline astrological work - 2012 questionnaire respondents

Response	No	Percent
Online more important	39	10%
Offline more important	130	35%
Online and offline equally important	147	39%
Too different to compare	41	11%
Did not answer	17	5%

Question eight asks about the use of social network and social media websites, like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube

Responses

284 people or 76%, visit social network sites for astrological activity with a further twenty-six people or 7% using them for non-astrological activity only. The most popular social network site was Facebook which is used by 150 people or 41% of

the respondents. This is more than three times the number of people who use Twitter, the second most popular site.

Ninety respondents or 24%, do not visit social network sites. The most common reason for not visiting was lack of time which was given by twenty-eight people or 7%. Thirteen people or 3%, expressed a concern about the lack of privacy or security on social network sites while fifteen people or 4%, expressed a dislike of social media. Examples include, 'they suck', 'I have a life', 'I hate them', and 'Life's too short'. A further twelve people or 3% stated that they found them too impersonal and/or they preferred face-to-face communication.

The responses to this question from people who stated that they were full time professional astrologers were examined separately but the results were the same. Just over 75% of full-time professional astrologers stated that they used social media for astrology.

Table A3.26 - Use of social network sites for astrological activity - 2012 questionnaire respondents

	No.	Percent
Use a social network/media website	284	76%
Facebook	150	40%
Twitter	49	13%
MySpace	7	2%
LinkedIn	34	9%
YouTube	30	8%
Flickr	2	.5%
Second Life	2	.5%
Google Plus	2	2%
Other	37	10%
Non-astrological activity only	26	7%
Do not visit	90	24%

Question nine asks the respondents to rate on a scale of zero to ten, the importance of social networks/social media to their astrological social activity, with zero being 'of no importance', and ten being 'very important'.

Responses

The answers ranged from zero to ten with average being 4.08. The average rose to 5.5 for full time astrologers.

Question ten asks the respondents to rate on a scale of zero to ten, the importance of social networks/social media to their astrological work, with zero being 'of no importance', and ten being 'very important'.

Responses

The answers ranged from zero to ten with average being 3.66. The average rose to 5.1 for full time astrologers.

Question eleven was about the use of astrological blogs

Responses

Table A3.27 - Use of blogs - 2012 respondents

	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Posting	76	20%
Reading posts	212	57%
Moderating	23	6%
Do not visit	122	33%
Did not answer	8	2%

Question twelve was about participation in astrological forums

Responses

107 people or 29% participate and 267 people or 71% do not. Over fifty different forums were listed along with more general descriptions such as 'Mundane Astrology'. The most popular forum was the *Skyscript* forum on the website of the same name owned by British astrologer Deborah Houlding. Some of the forums listed were not actually forums but Facebook groups.

Table A3.28 - Use of astrological forums - 2012 respondents

	No.	Percent
Participate	107	29%
Do not participate	267	71%

Question thirteen asked about the use of astrological content in Wikipedia

Responses

Table A3.29 - Use of Wikipedia - 2012 respondents

	No.	Percent
Use Wikipedia	298	80%
Create content	5	1%
Edit existing content	10	3%
Just read content	213	57%
Use for non-astrological purposes	82	22%
Don't use Wikipedia	73	20%
Did not answer	2	<1%

In Table 29, some respondents appear in more than one category. Of the reasons given for not using Wikipedia the most common reason was that it was not trustworthy. Fifteen of the forty people who gave a reason for not using it, or 4% of the total number of respondents, expressed distrust of its contents.

Question fourteen asked the respondents if they had ever been involved in online controversy concerning astrology.

Responses

323 people or 86%, said they had not while fifty-one people or 14% said they had. Forty-six people specified the nature of the controversy in which they had been involved. The most common controversy cited was the conflict that arose between Brian Cox, Dara O'Briain and the BBC, on one hand, and the then, Astrological Association of Great Britain (AA), on the other. Nine people or 2% of the total number of respondents, stated that they had become involved in the arguments or signed the online petition on the AA website. Of other controversies specified, about half were with ideological disagreements with other astrologers or groups of astrologers, and the other half were with people outside of astrology arguing about

the validity of astrology or defending astrology against what several respondents referred to as 'religious zealots'.

Question fifteen asked about uses of the Internet for astrology, other than those previously mentioned. A list of topics was given and respondents could choose multiple answers.

Responses

Table A3.30 - Uses of the Internet for astrology - 2012 respondents

	No	Percent
Research	260	70%
News	173	46%
Distance Education	121	32%
Meetings	86	23%
Advertising Services	64	17%
Consultations	114	30%
Other Uses	16	4%
No Other Uses	27	7%
No answer	30	8%

In Table 30, most respondents appear in more than one category. The most common other use was online chart calculation which accounted for 25% of the other uses.

Question sixteen asked if the respondent used their own identity while online.

Responses

Only eleven people or three percent, said they never used their own identity while 201 people or fifty-four percent, said they always did. Eighty-three people or twenty-two percent, usually did and twelve people or three percent usually did not. The main reason given for using a false identity was to avoid being identified as an astrologer.

Table A3.31 - Use of own identity or false identity on the Internet - 2012 respondents

	No.	Percent
Always use own identity	201	54%
Usually use own identity	83	22%
Sometimes use own identity	31	8%
Usually do not use own identity	12	3%
Never use own identity	11	3%
No Answer	36	10%

Question seventeen asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

Responses

The figures entered in *Table 32* represent the number of respondents who gave the answer specified in the heading and those entered in *Table A3.33*, the percentages.

Table A3.32 - Cyberspace questions by number of respondents - 2012

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
When I log on to the Internet, I enter another world	13	124	36	133	29	39
When I log on to the Internet, I lose touch with the offline world	4	41	24	205	65	35
Cyberspace can be a sacred space	13	64	101	104	57	35
There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace	14	37	98	96	90	39
Cyberspace is god	8	6	53	110	155	42
I feel safe in cyberspace	8	90	77	110	52	137
I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace	3	29	63	148	88	43
I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace	3	43	88	123	77	40
I feel powerful when I'm in cyberspace	5	29	89	141	69	41
In cyberspace I never feel lonely	4	45	71	147	65	42
In cyberspace I feel immortal	3	6	59	146	120	40
In cyberspace I can know everything	6	37	53	153	87	38
In cyberspace I can do anything I want	4	21	52	140	115	42

Table A3.33 - Cyberspace questions by percentages - 2012

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Answer
When I log on to the Internet, I enter another world	3.5%	33.2%	9.6%	35.6%	7.8%	10.4%
When I log on to the Internet, I lose touch with the offline world	1.1%	11%	6.4%	54.8%	17.4%	9.4%
Cyberspace can be a sacred space	3.5%	17.1%	27.0%	27.8%	15.2%	9.4%
There is a god (or gods) in cyberspace	3.7%	9.9%	26.2%	25.7%	24.1%	10.4%
Cyberspace is god	2.1%	1.6%	14.2%	29.4%	41.4%	11.2%
I feel safe in cyberspace	2.1%	24.1%	20.6%	29.4%	13.9%	9.9%
I feel I've come home when I'm in cyberspace	0.8%	7.8%	16.8%	39.6%	23.5%	11.5%
I feel strong when I'm in cyberspace	0.8%	11.5%	23.5%	32.9%	20.6%	10.7%
I feel powerful when I'm in cyberspace	1.3%	7.8%	23.8%	37.7%	18.4%	11.0%
In cyberspace I never feel lonely	1.1%	12.0%	19.0%	39.3%	17.4%	11.2%
In cyberspace I feel immortal	0.8%	1.6%	15.8%	39.0%	32.1%	10.7%
In cyberspace I can know everything	1.6%	9.9%	14.2%	40.9%	23.3%	10.2%
In cyberspace I can do anything I want	1.1%	5.6%	13.9%	37.4%	30.7%	11.2%

Differences Between 2009 and 2012 Results

The biggest difference was concerning the use of social media or social network sites. When asked this question in 2009, 51% of astrologers used a social network or social media site. In 2012 this has increased to 76% with a further 7% using them for non-astrological activity only.

Another significant difference was in the two sets of responses to the statements about the nature of cyberspace and their relationship with it. The following charts show the differences in the responses in terms of percentages:

Chart 1 - 2009

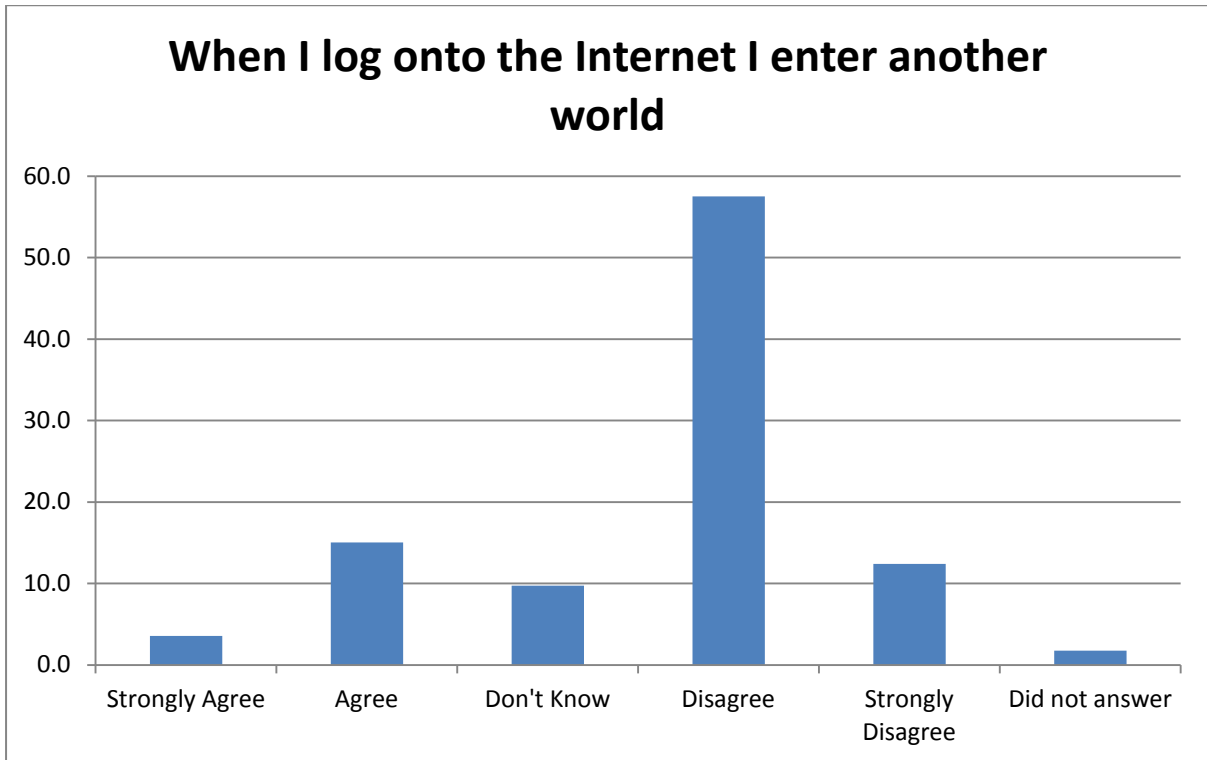


Chart 2 - 2012

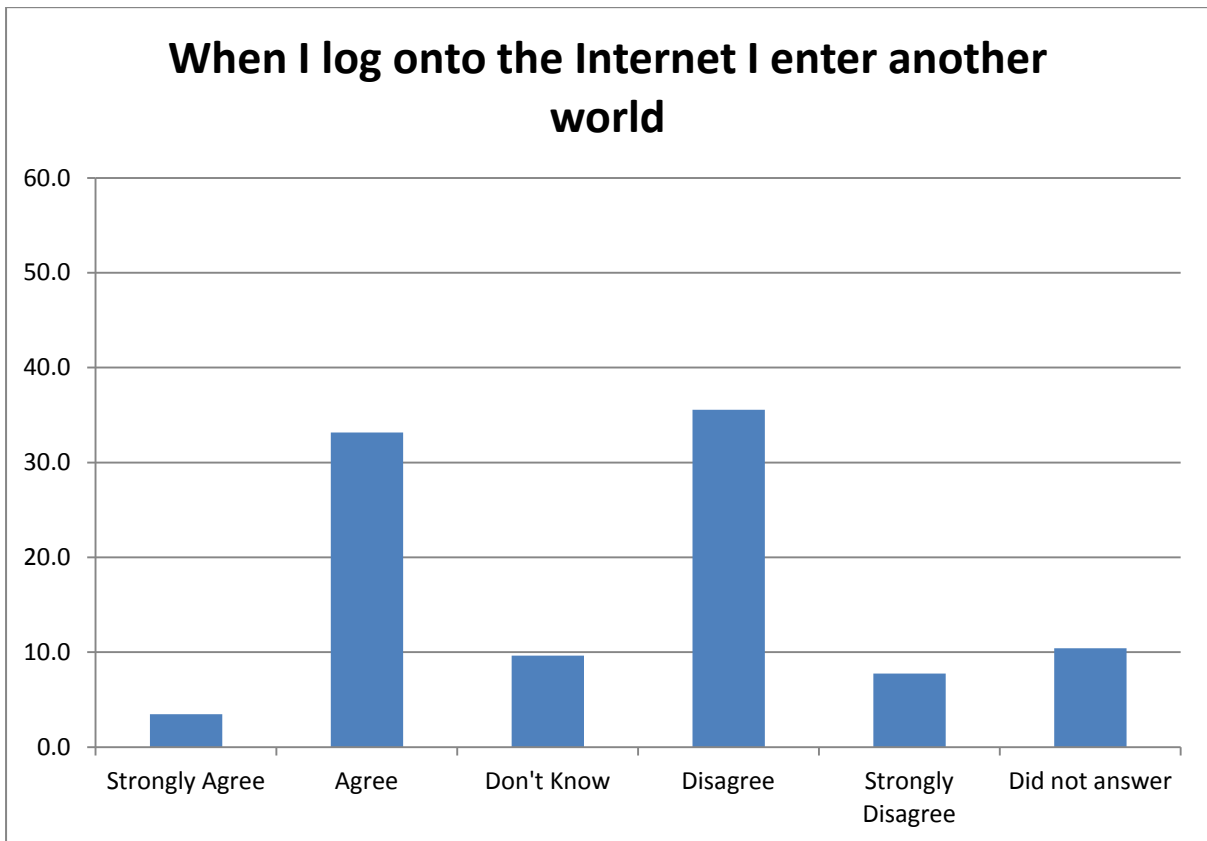


Chart 3 - 2009

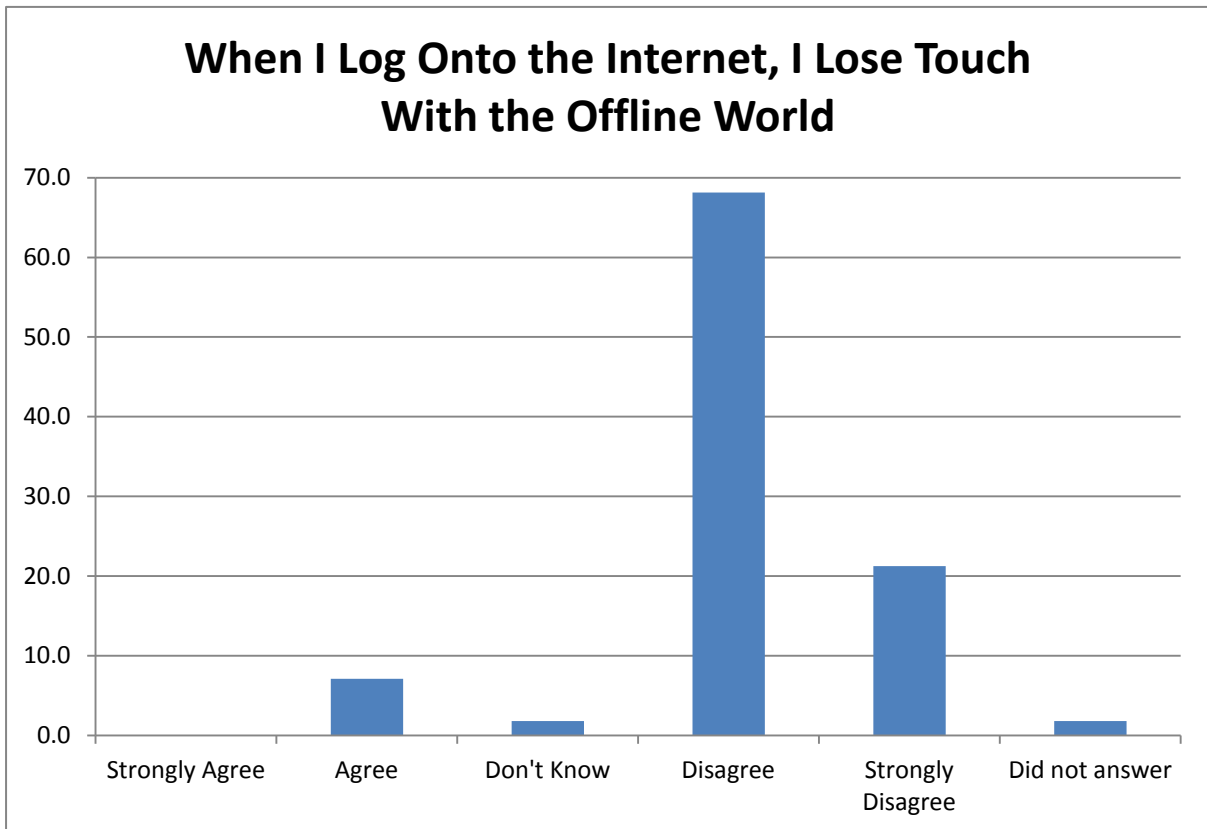


Chart 4 - 2012

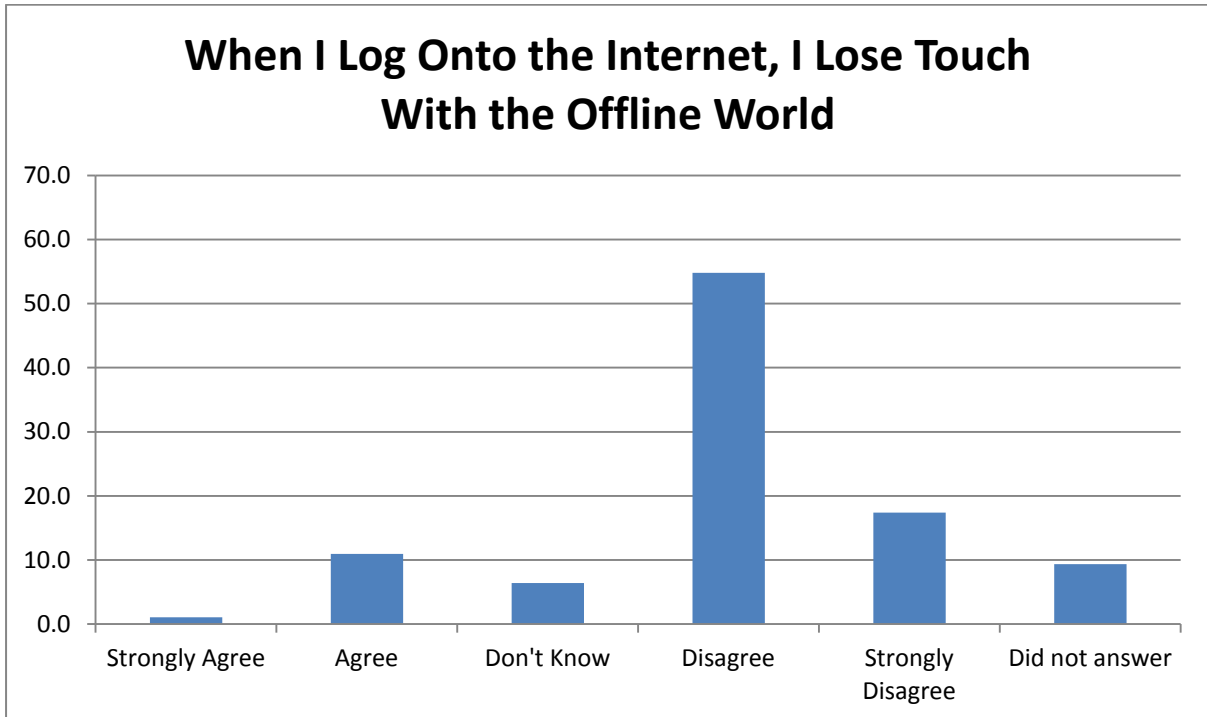


Chart 5 - 2009

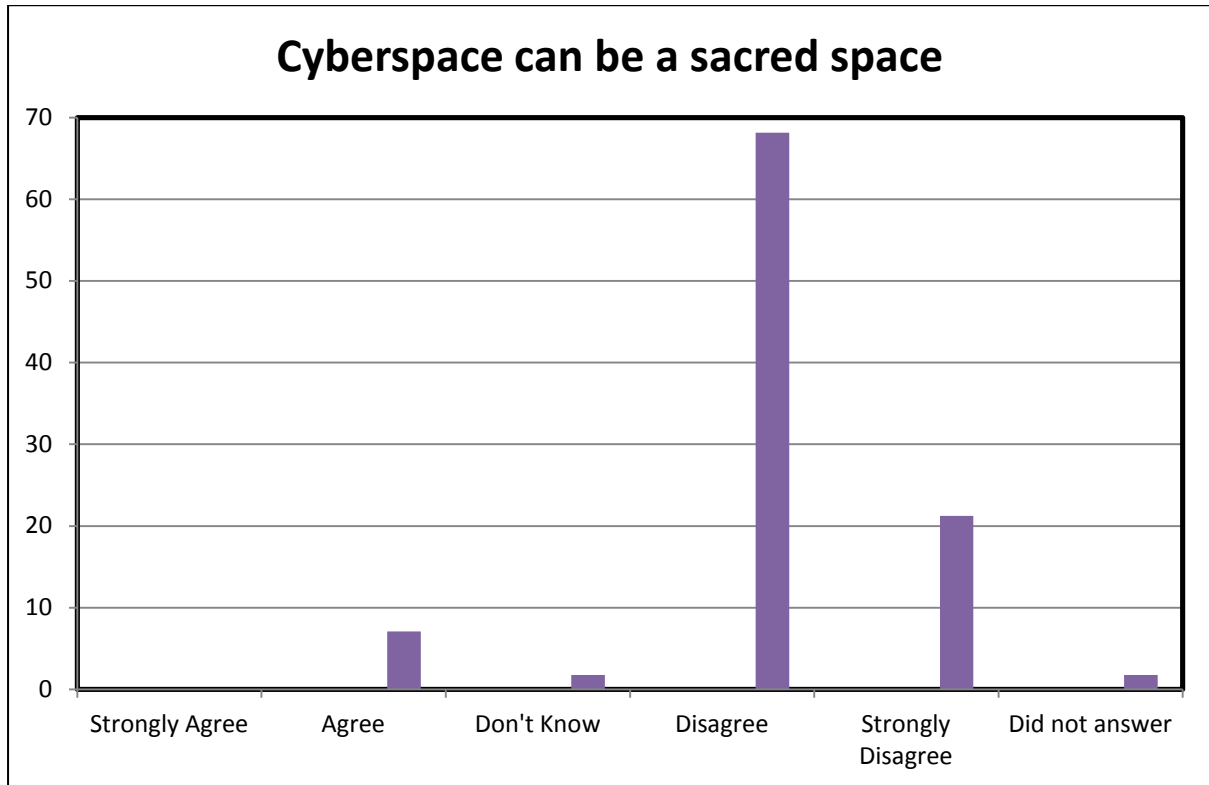


Chart 6 - 2012

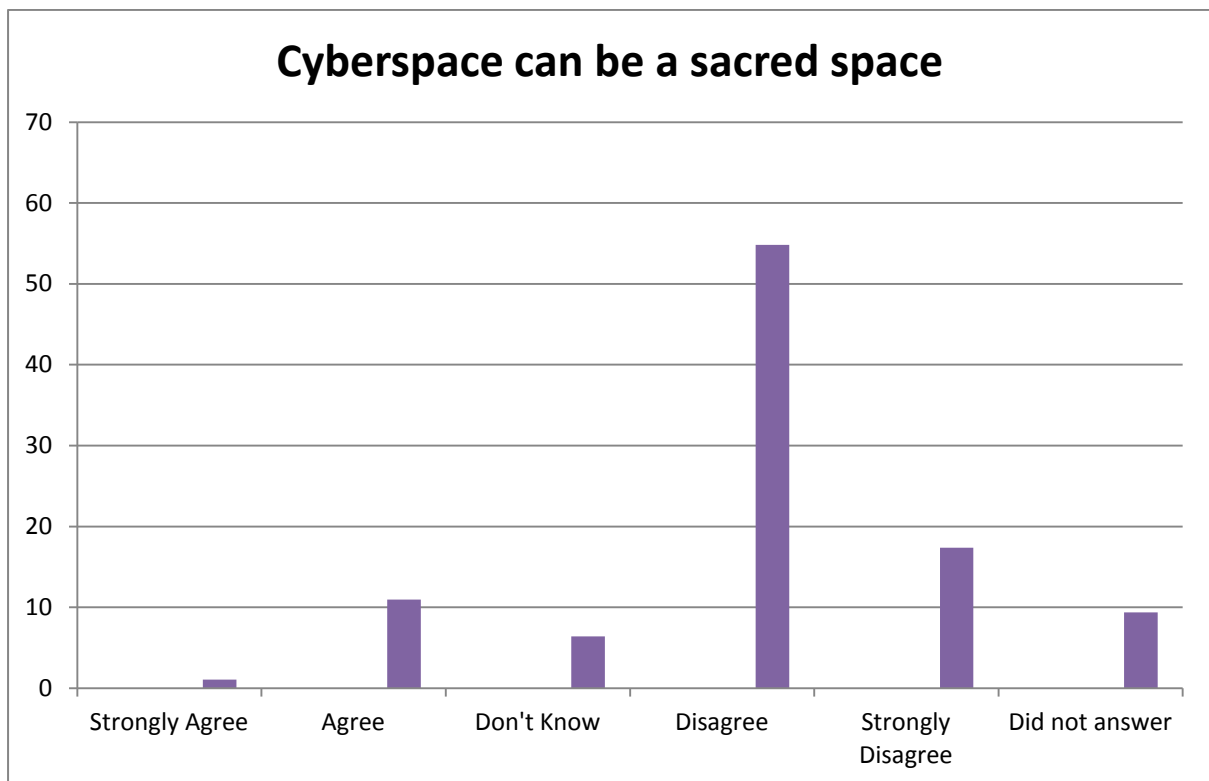


Chart 7 - 2009

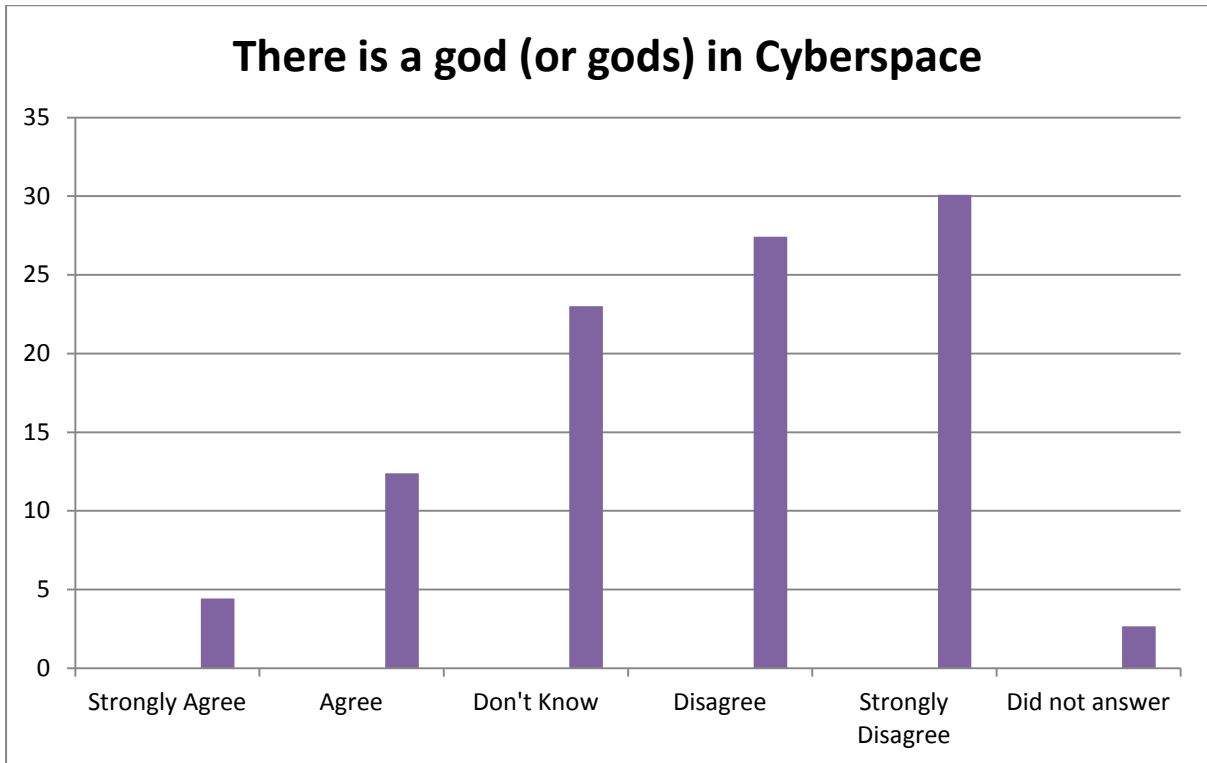


Chart 8 - 2012

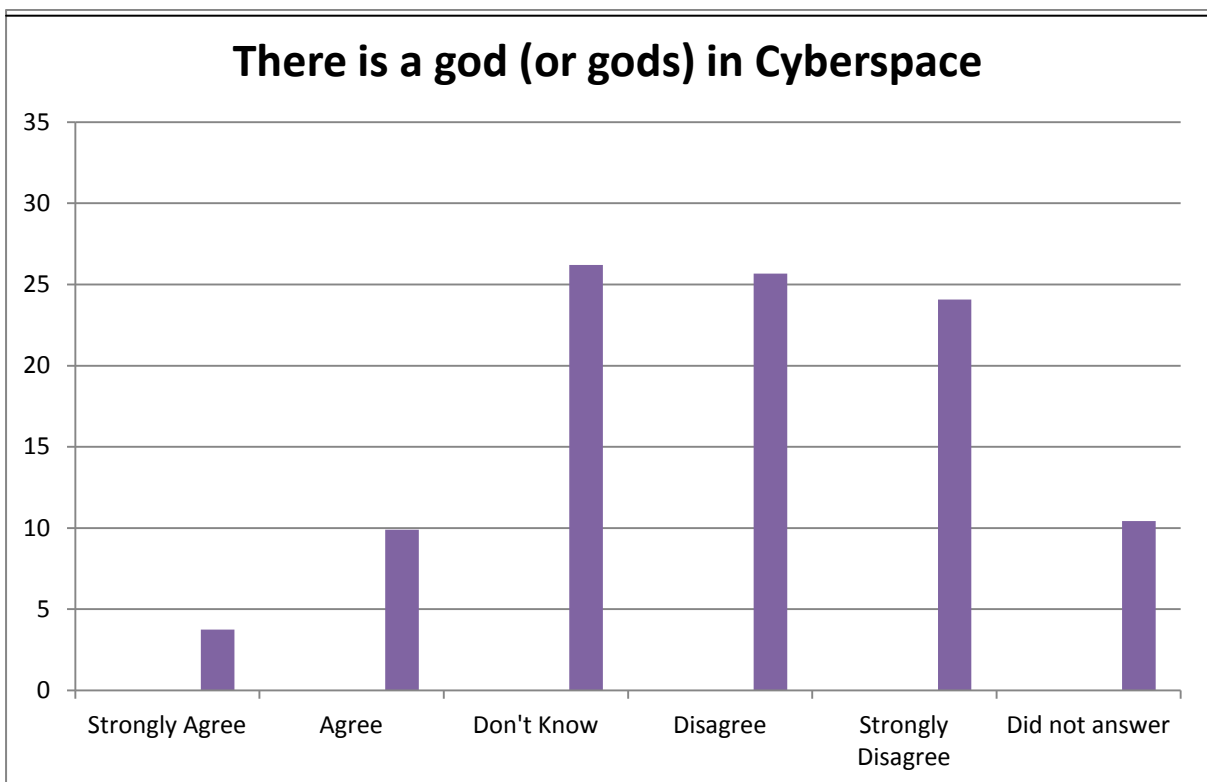


Chart 9 - 2009

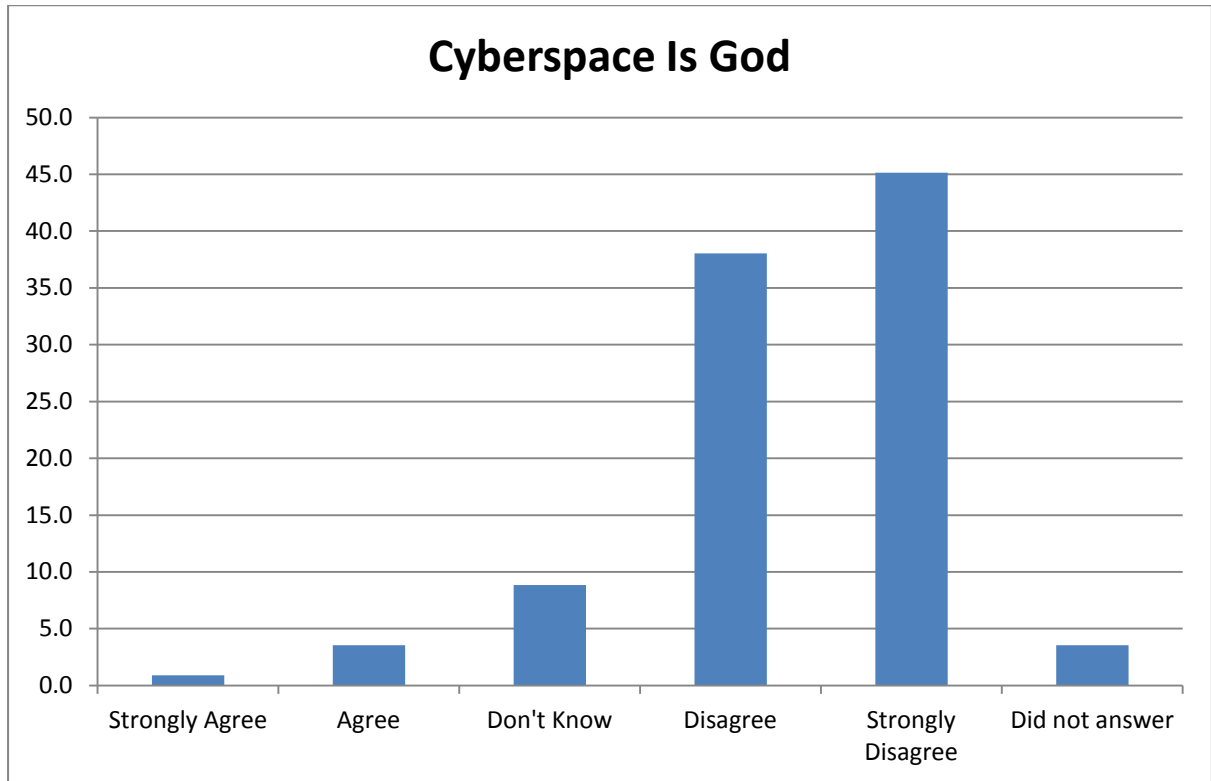


Chart 10 - 2012

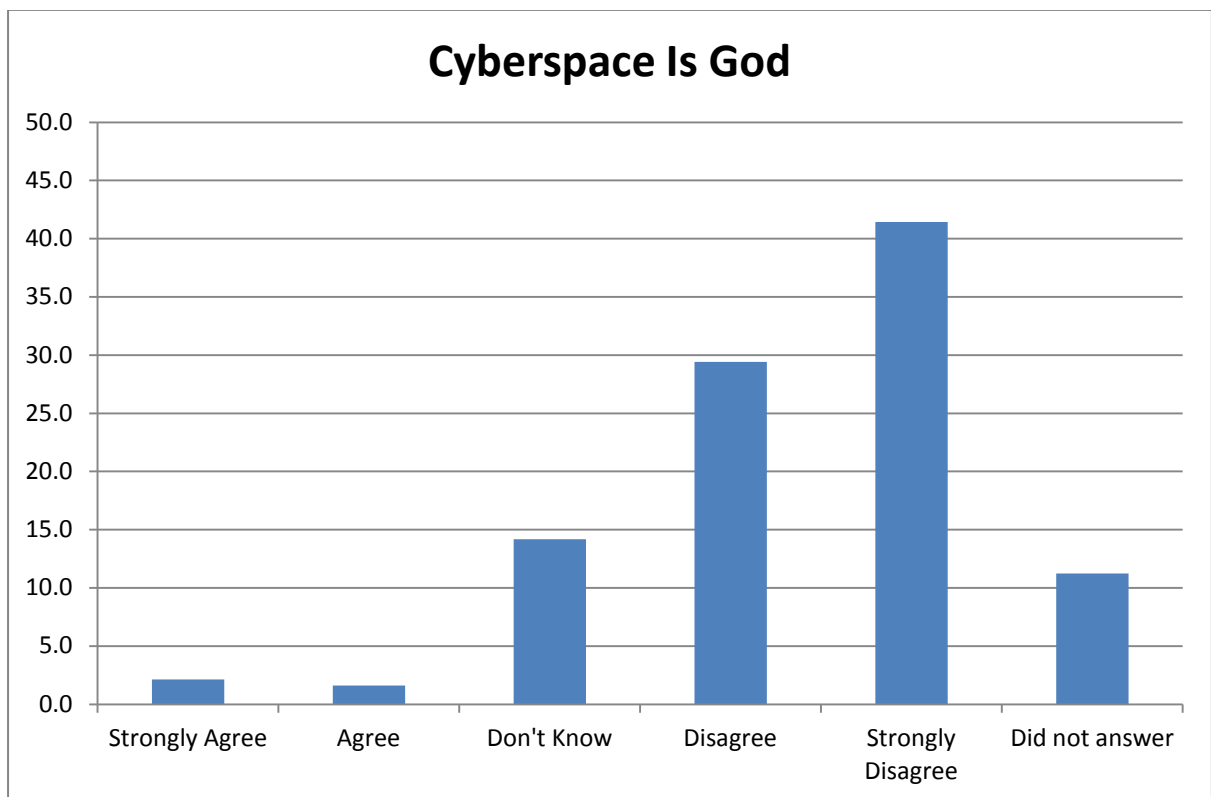


Chart 11 - 2009

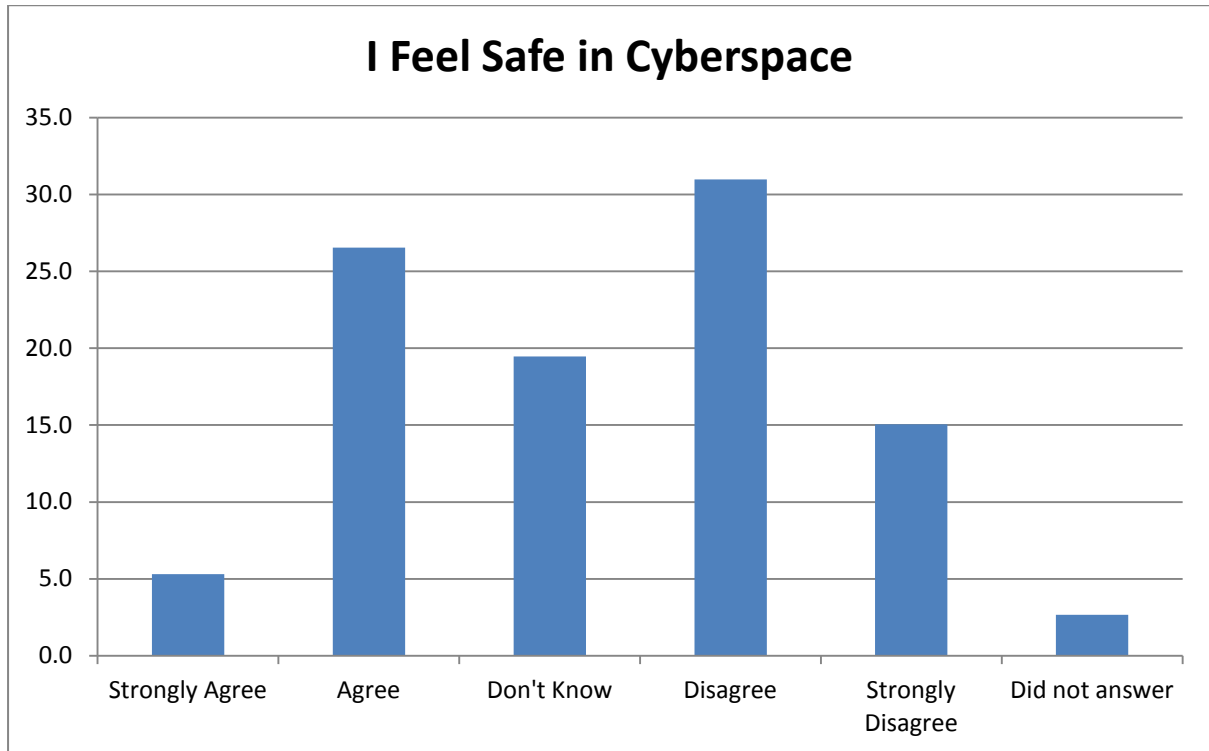


Chart 12 - 2012

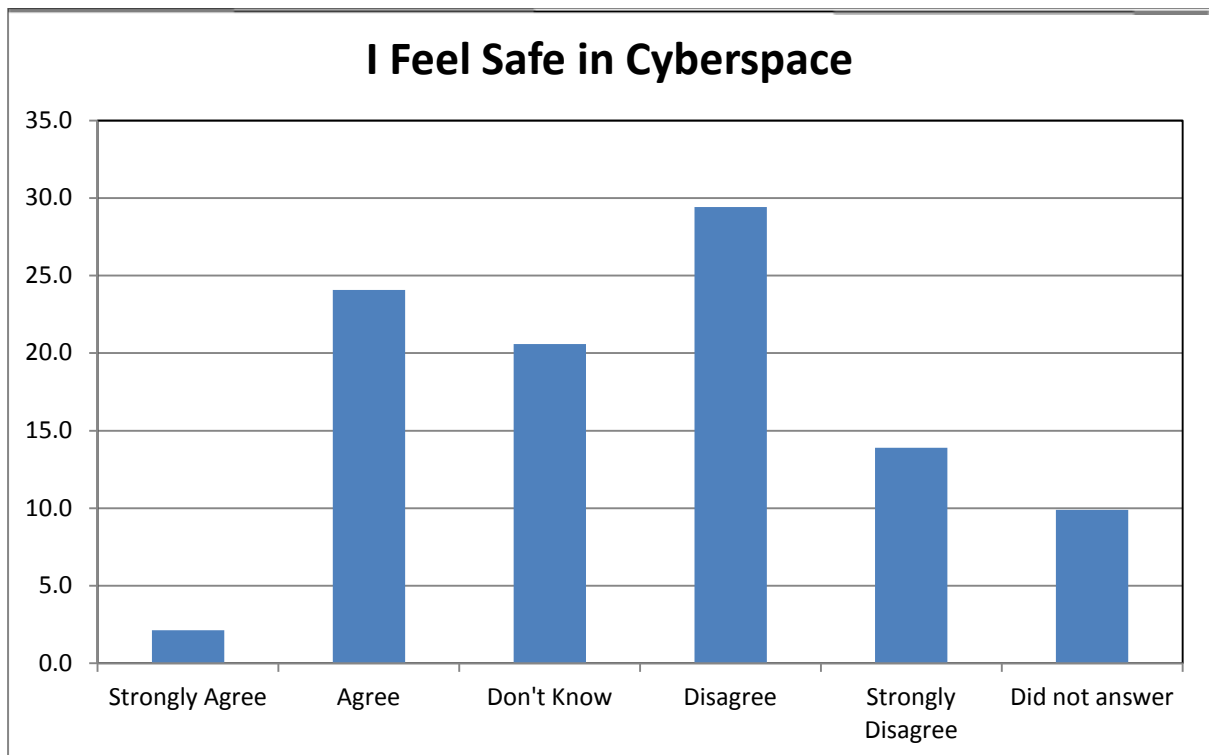


Chart 13 -2009

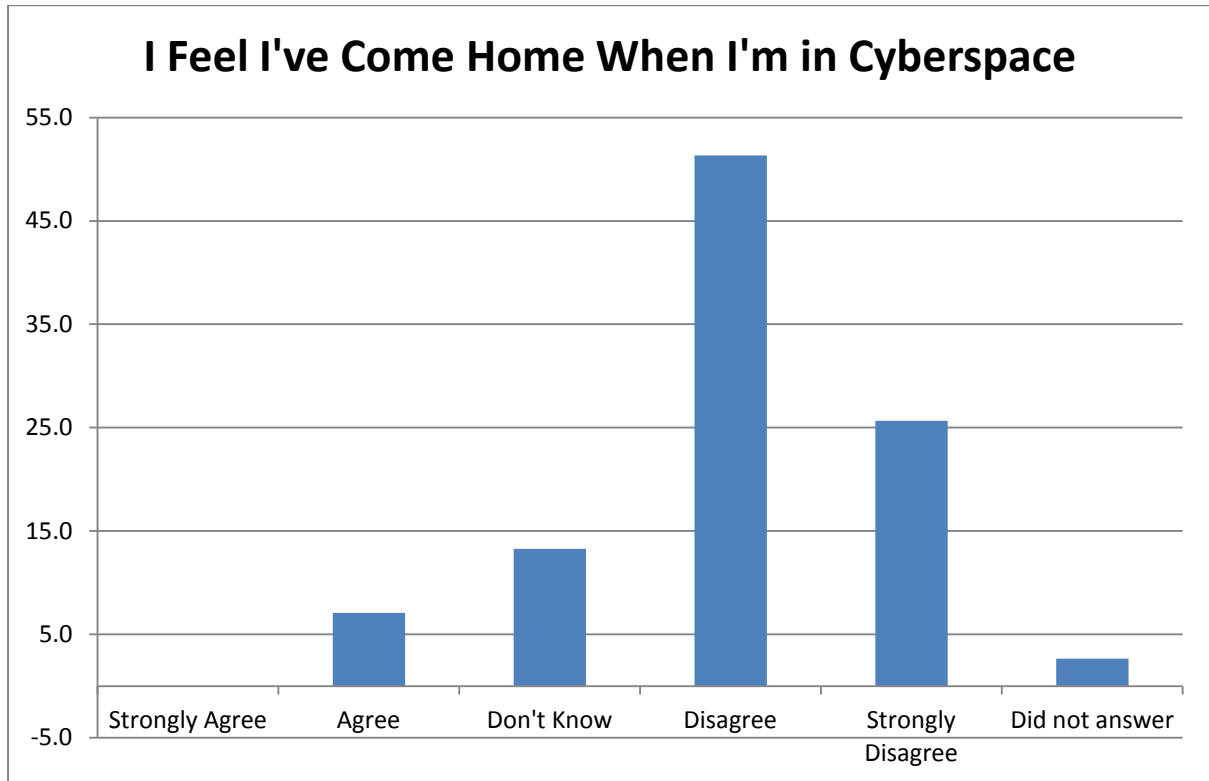


Chart 14 - 2012

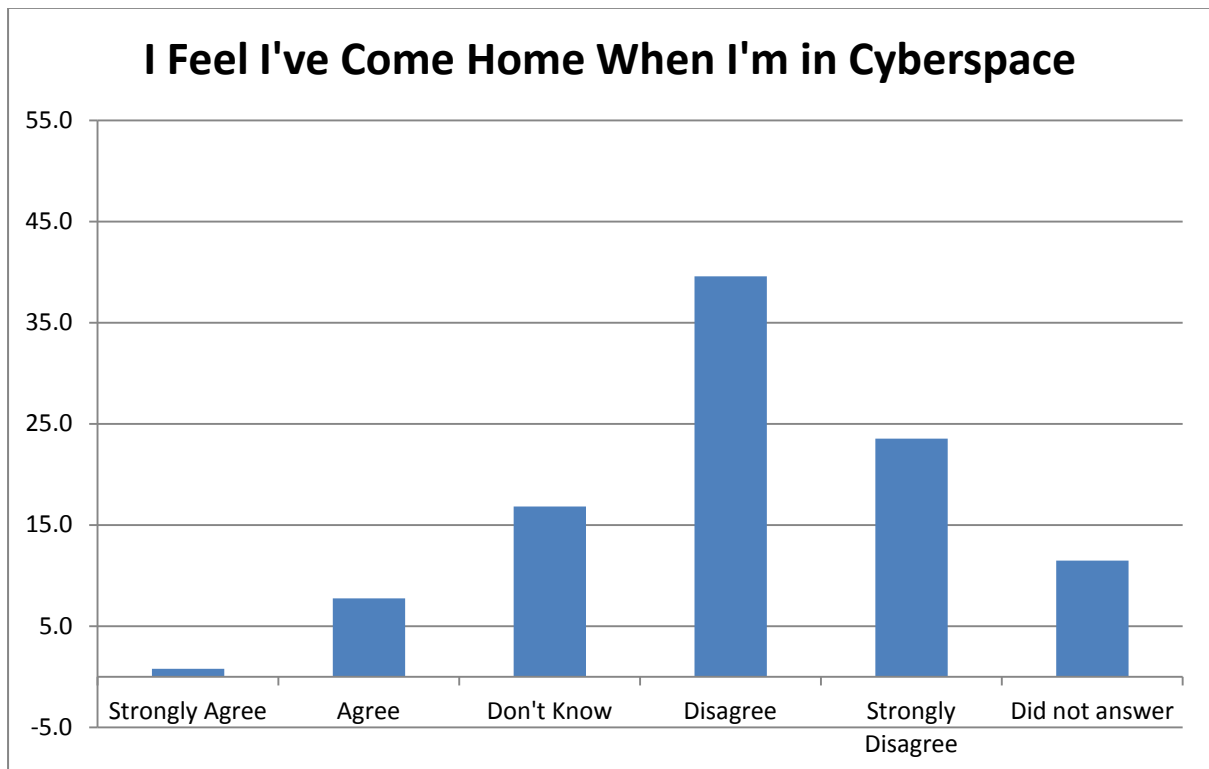


Chart 15 -2009

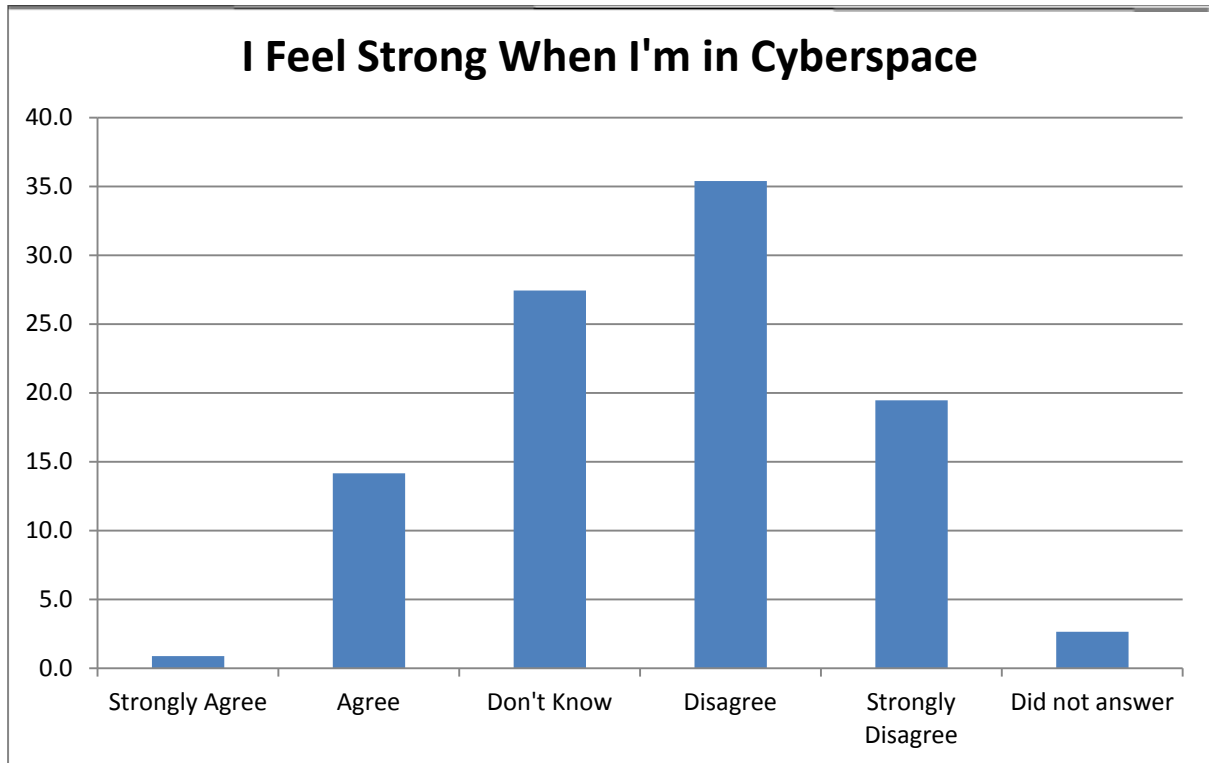


Chart 16 - 2012

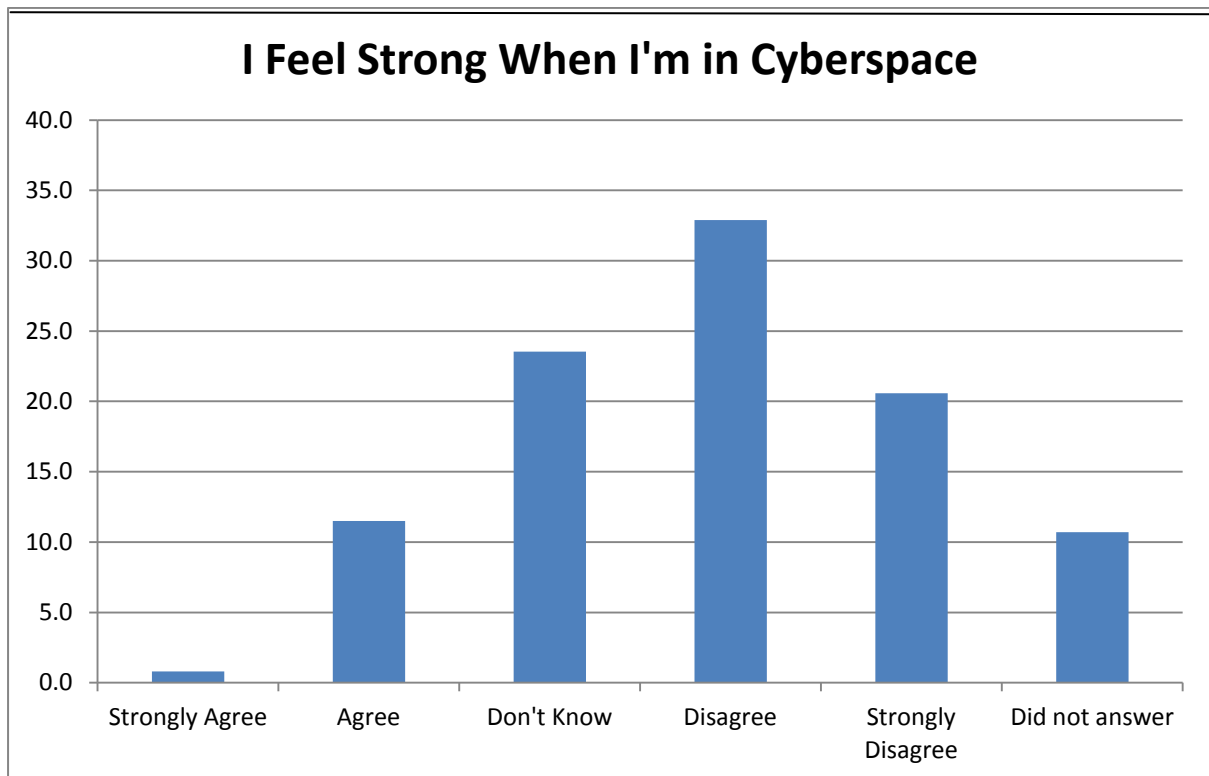


Chart 17 - 2009

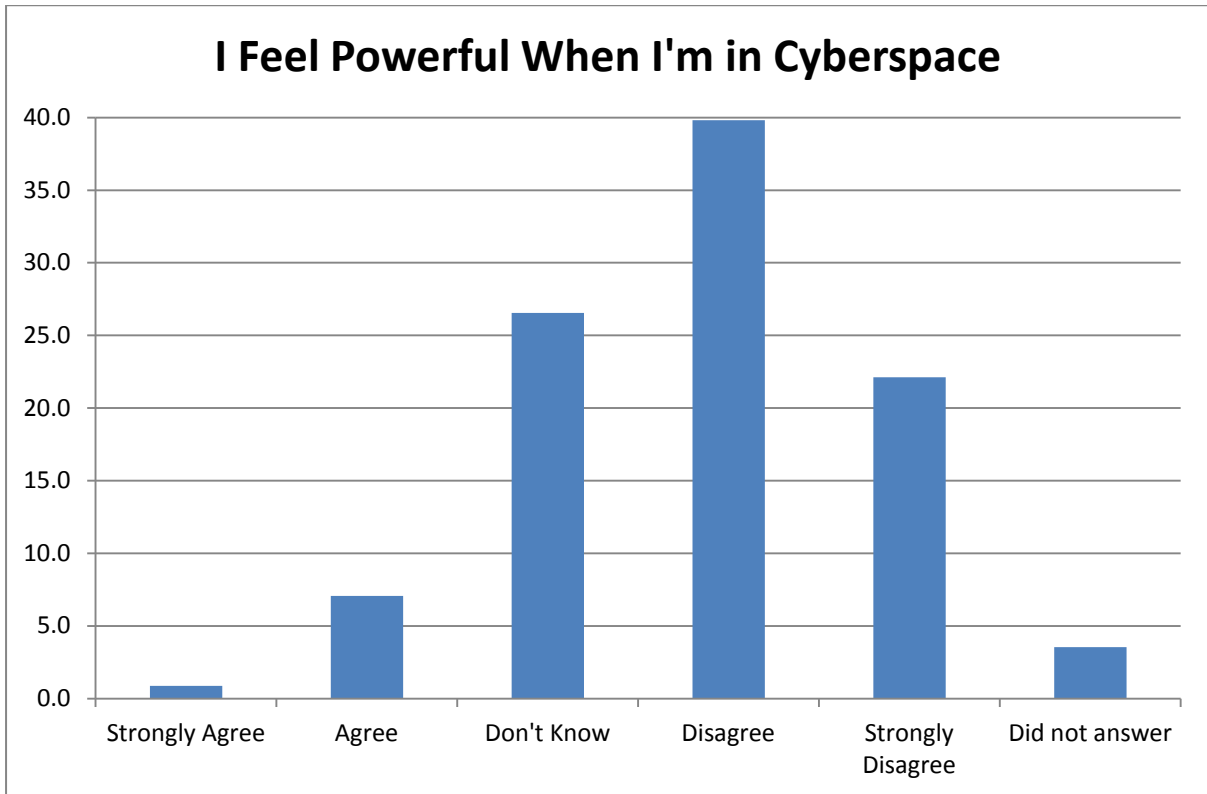


Chart 18 - 2012

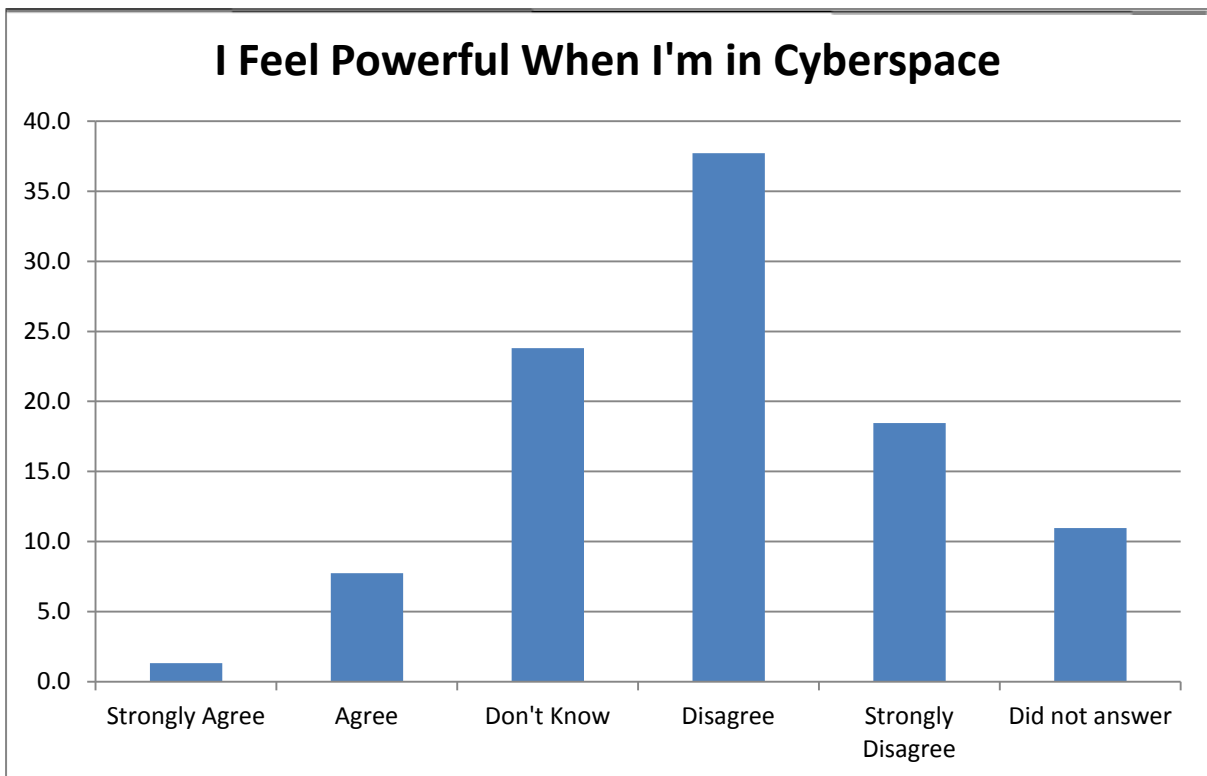


Chart 19 - 2009

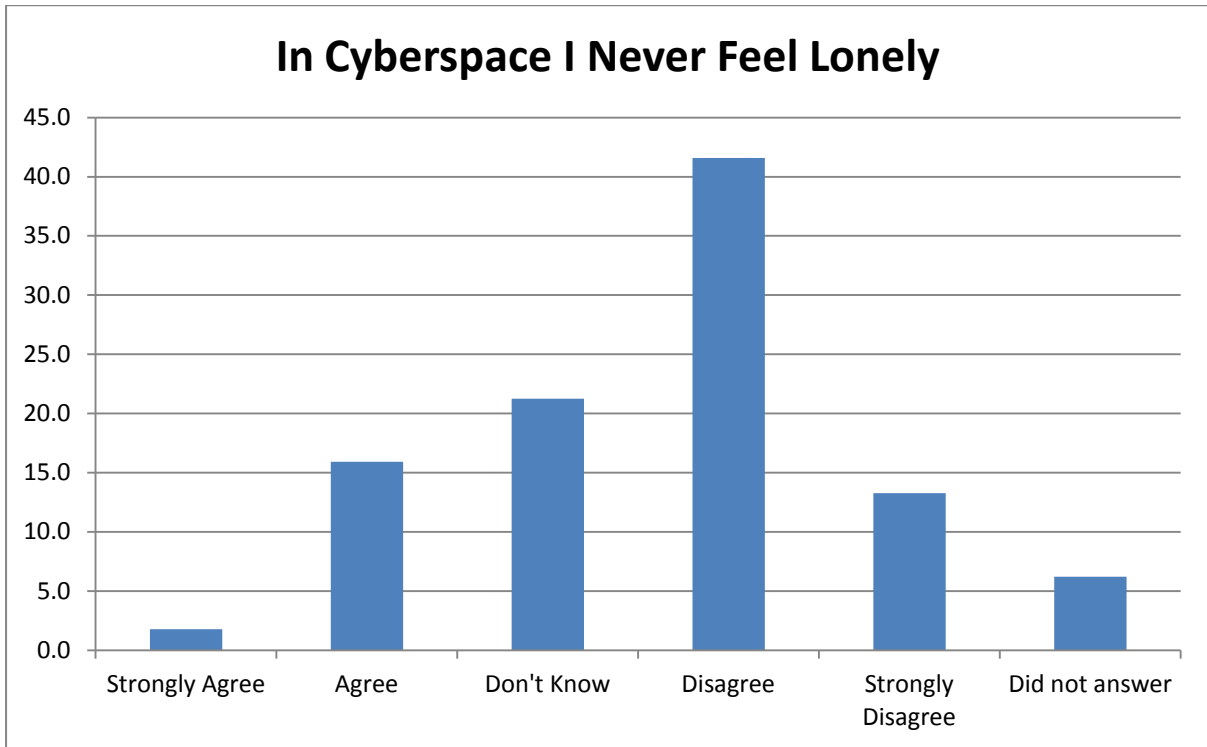


Chart 20 - 2012

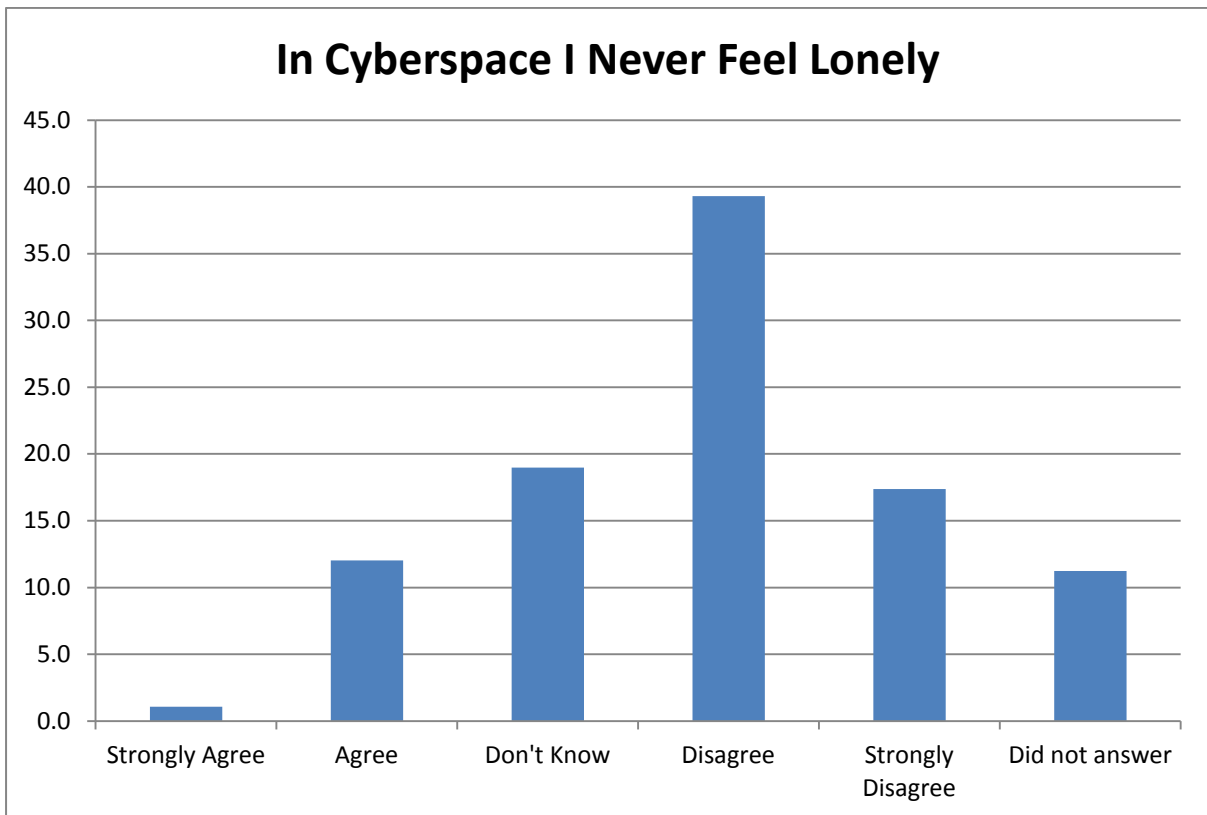


Chart 21 - 2009

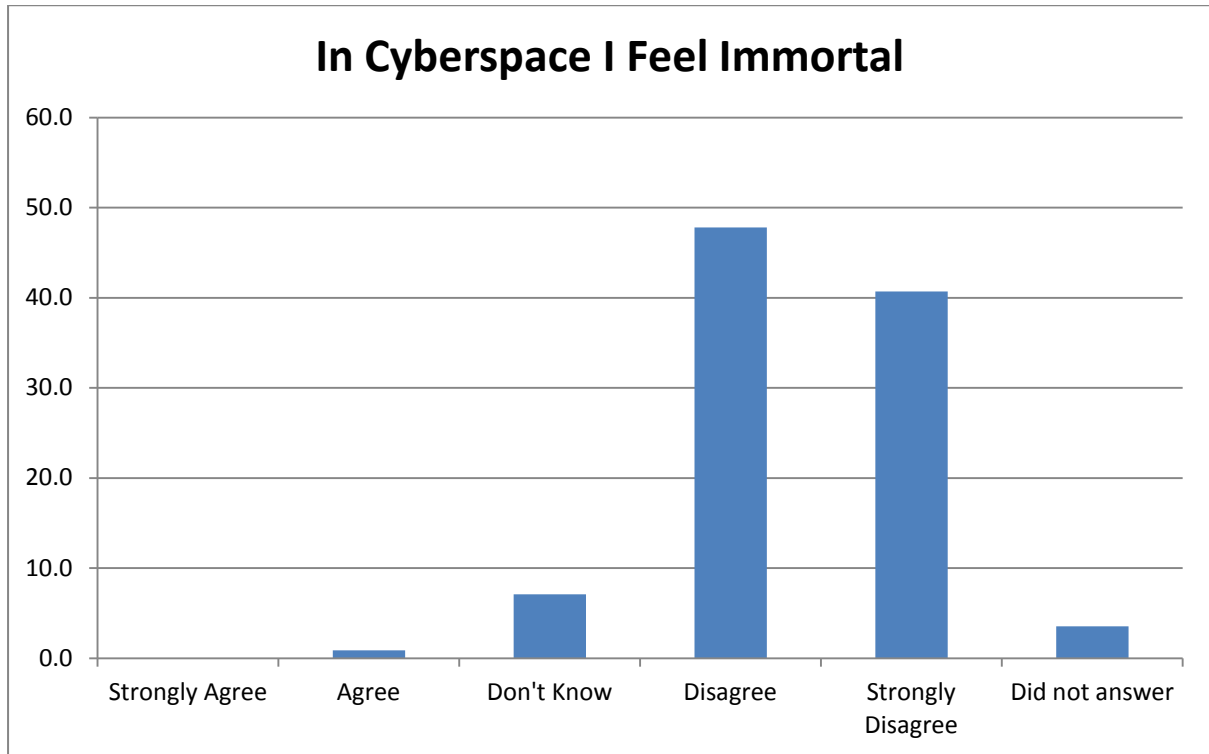


Chart 22 - 2012

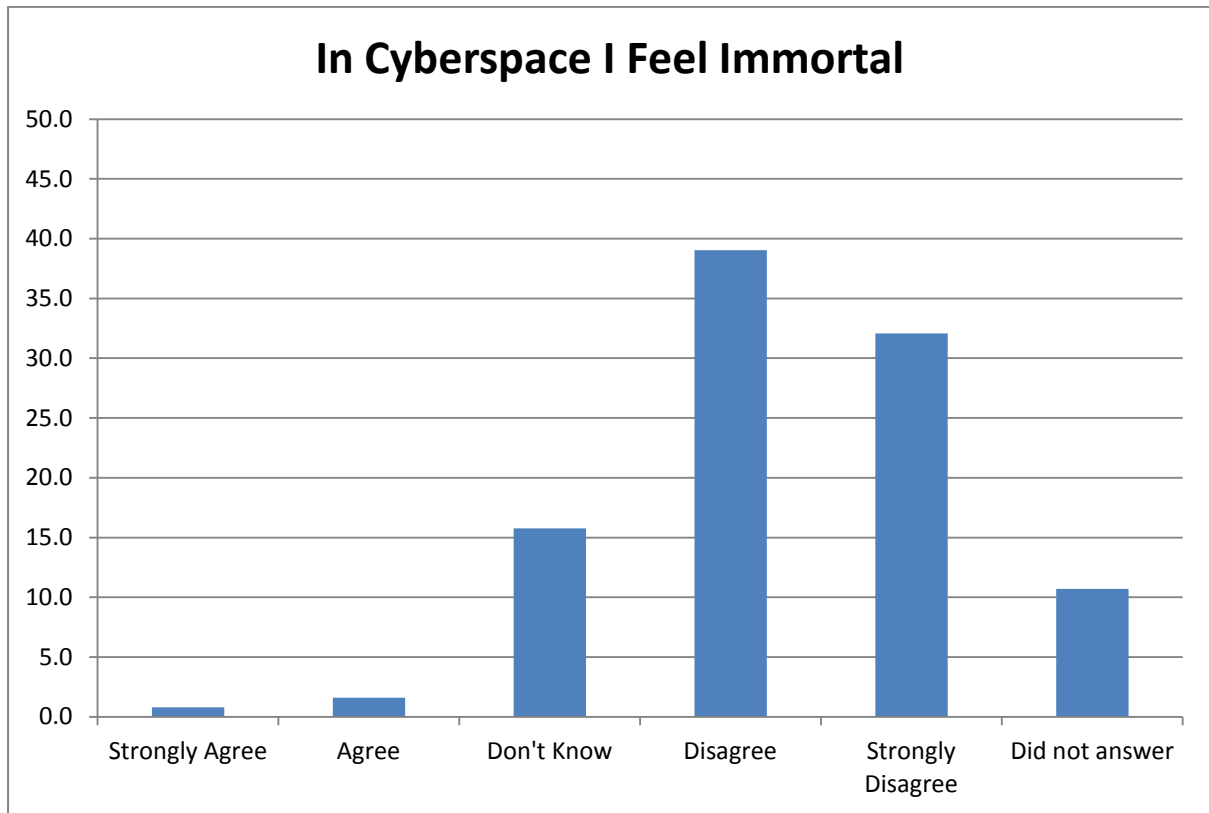


Chart 23 - 2009

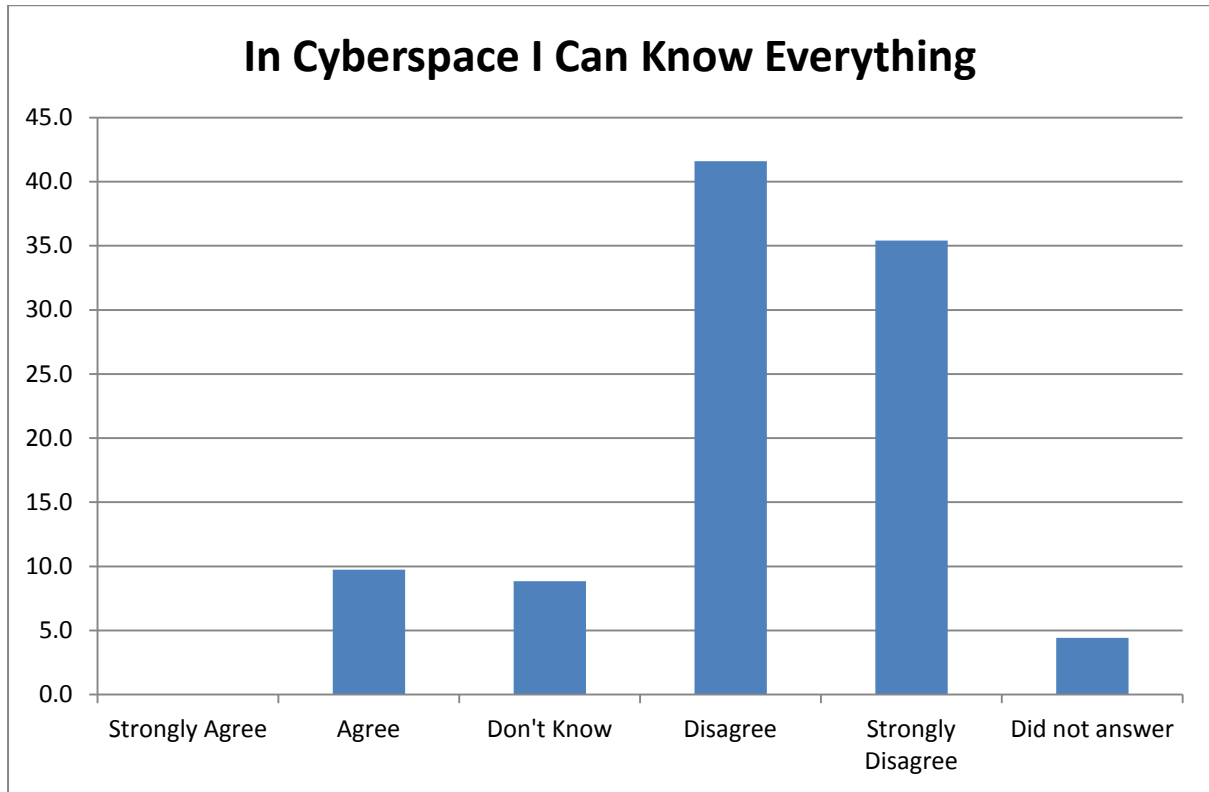


Chart 24 - 2012

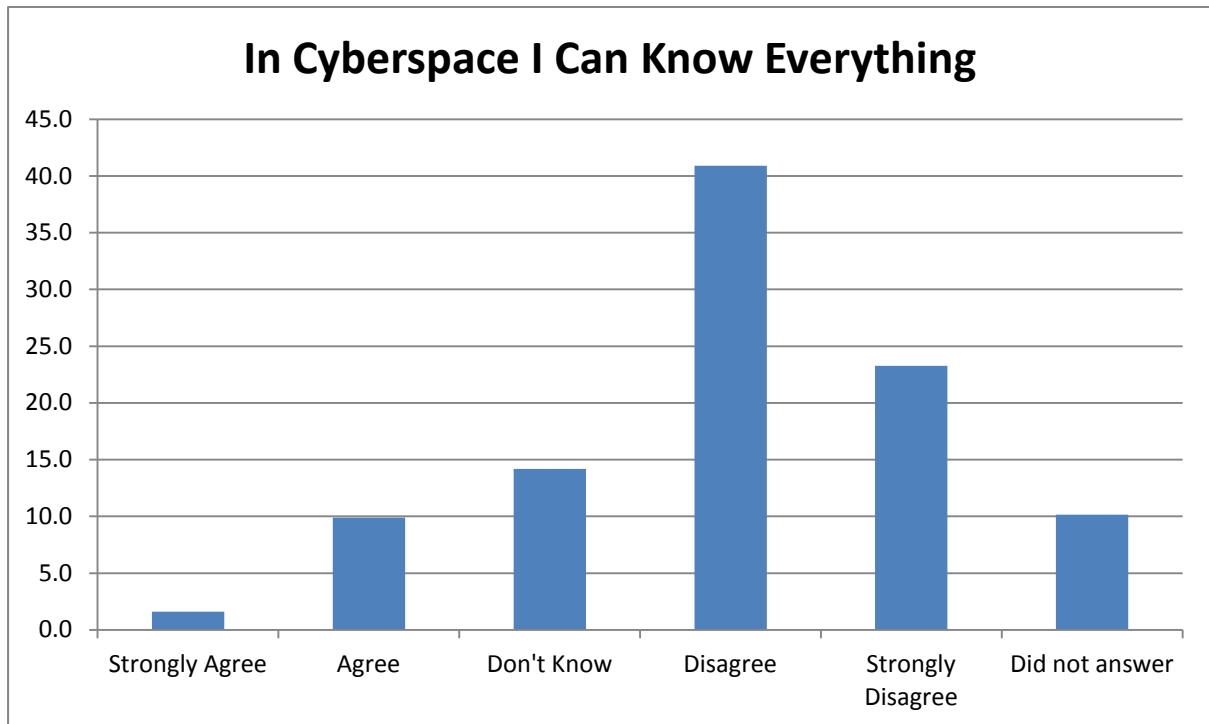


Chart 25 - 2009

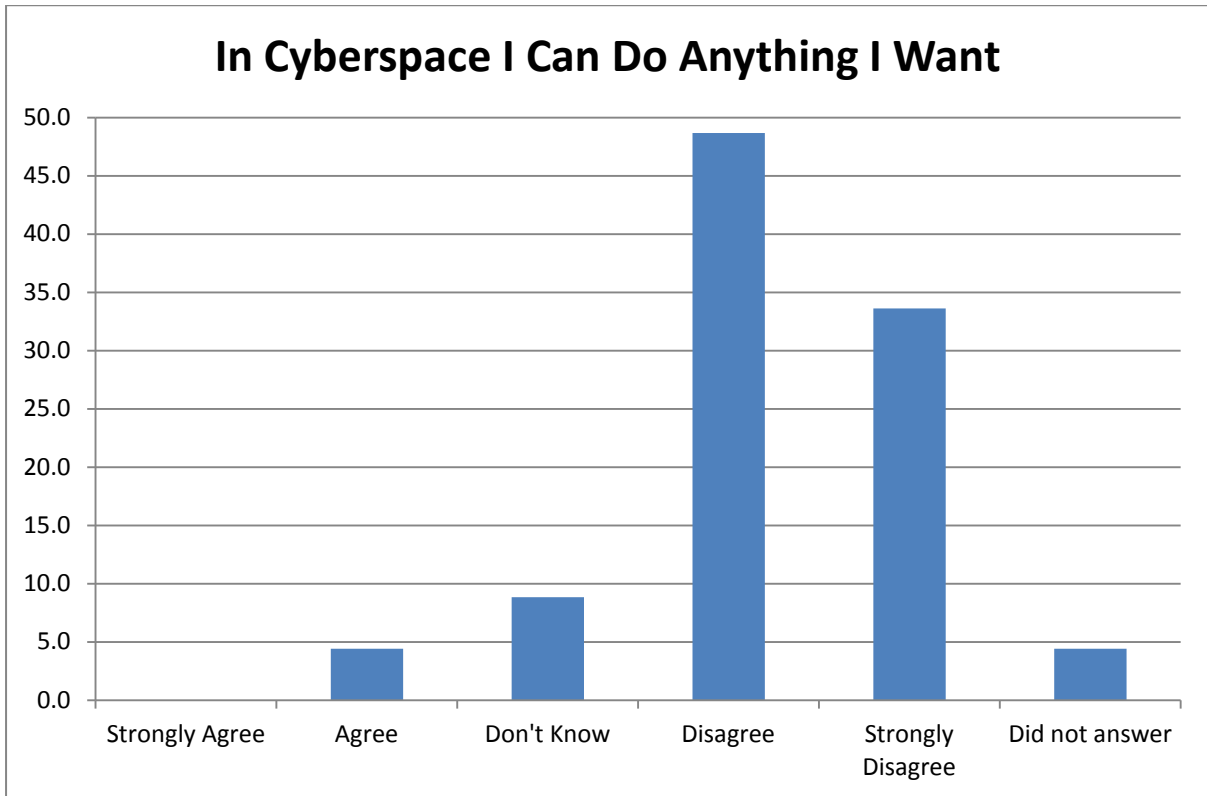


Chart 26 - 2012

