

Martinus' Spiritual Science:
An Original Contribution
to Western Esotericism?

**Martinus' Spiritual Science:
An Original Contribution
to Western Esotericism?**

Submitted by Kent Mikael Krall to the University of Exeter
as a dissertation towards the degree of Master of Arts
by advanced study in Western Esotericism, October 2008

Second printing (with corrections), 2019

Title: Martinus' Spiritual Science: An Original Contribution to Western Esotericism?

Author: Mikael Krall

Includes bibliographical references and appendices.

Copyright © Mikael Krall, 2008

First printing, 2008. Hardbound, A4-format, not published.

Second printing, 2019, with corrections. Hardbound, book-format, published.

Published by the author

Västra Skansgatan 1A, 413 02 Göteborg, Sweden

mikael.krall@telia.com

Typesetting: StjärnDistribution, Sweden

Cover layout: Mikael Krall

Print: Print Group Sp. z o. o., Poland 2019

ISBN: 978-91-639-2445-3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author.

Abstract

The objective of this study is threefold: (a) to present the life and spiritual science of the Danish author Martinus Thomsen (1890-1981), and (b) to compare his worldview with the worldviews of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), and Alice Bailey (1880-1949), as representatives of the most comprehensive Western esoteric philosophies, in the context of Western esoteric traditions in general, (c) in order to see if Martinus' work is an original contribution to Western esotericism, and, if so, what his main contributions are. This is the first academic study in English that presents Martinus and his work to the scholarly field of Western esotericism and presents the first comparison between these esoteric writers. This study introduces a new analytical instrument, comprising the *vertical* (hierarchical) and *horizontal* (developmental) *esoteric perspectives*, and the *esoteric inclusiveness perspective*, which are used in the comparative study to structure and analyse content. These three dimensions have scope to cover every content aspect of esoteric philosophies and appears to be a fruitful tool in comparative studies in esotericism. In 1921, Martinus claimed to have gained what he described as cosmic consciousness, which, according to own account, permitted him the ability to apprehend all eternal laws and principles behind the physical world. Based on this consciousness, Martinus dedicated his life from 1921 onwards to presenting his spiritual science in texts, symbols and lectures. Three chapters in this study address the research questions raised in the introduction and the study arrives at the following conclusions: (i) Martinus' worldview represents an 'independent invention'. (ii) Martinus claimed, and this study concludes, that he himself was the source of the knowledge of which he wrote, a characteristic he shared with Steiner. This is in contrast to Blavatsky and Bailey's claims to being a conduit for external sources of knowledge. As his own source, Martinus seems to be a remarkable case in the history of Western esotericism and mysticism since he declares to have been in a state of indissoluble contact with 'God's ocean of Divine wisdom'. (iii) On the structural level this study investigates Martinus' claim that he delivers the logic of eternal wisdom. The empirical finding is that he uses logical reasoning to a far greater degree than Blavatsky, Steiner and Bailey, and, in this respect, represents a clear contribution and even adds to Western esotericism on the structural level. This study thus presents the evidence which permits me to define Martinus' presentation of his worldview as representing what I term a *logically explained ontology*, in contrast to the *proclaimed ontology* expressed in the accounts of Blavatsky, Steiner and Bailey. (iv) Martinus' most important contribution to Western esotericism, on the content level, is a clear and consistent theory as to how experience occurs, and the way in which it generates both involuntional and evolutional processes through the principle of hunger and satiation. Martinus identifies the I (X1) as the focal point of this theory, as the aspect of the living being which experiences; a theory not found in Blavatsky, Steiner or Bailey's works. The body of memory, the account of 'pole transformation', and the microcosmos (understood not as man, but in terms of cells and organs in bodies etc.) as a moral horizon, represent three clear contributions to Western esotericism, in terms of the vertical, horizontal and inclusiveness perspectives. With respect to the totality of these three dimensions, Martinus also clearly contributes in presenting an entire and coherent world picture. The final conclusion is that Martinus' spiritual science represents, all in all, an original contribution to Western esotericism.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Esoteric Knowledge, Initiates, and Seekers of Truth	3
Western Esotericism – Demarcation of the Field of Inquiry and Methodology	9
The Character of Western Esotericism Before Blavatsky – A Sketch	17
The Analytical Instrument –	
The Vertical and Horizontal Esoteric Perspectives	23
The Analytical Instrument –	
The Esoteric Inclusiveness Perspective	23
Blavatsky, Steiner, and Bailey	25
Previous Research	29
Research Questions	32
 Chapter 1 – The Life of Martinus	 35
School Years, 1897-1904	37
Martinus’ Working Life, 1905-1920	38
The Initiation in 1921 – Martinus Attains ‘Cosmic Consciousness’	39
Martinus Meets Lars Nibelvang	40
Martinus’ Meditation, Initiation, and ‘Cosmic Consciousness’	41
Martinus’ Spiritual Work, 1921-1981	45
Letters to Jiddu Krishnamurti and Annie Besant	45
The Contact with Bernhard Løw and the Prophecy of Steiner	48
Livets Bog, Livets Bogs Bureau, The Magazine Kosmos, and Kosmos Summer Camp	52
Martinus, Ingrid Okkels, and Paul Brunton	54
Travels, The Eternal World Picture, and The Third Testament	56
The End, 1980-1981	58
The Work of The Martinus Institute, 1981 to the Present	59
Martinus’ Spiritual Science in Historical Perspective –	
An ‘Independent Invention’?	59

Chapter 2 – Martinus’ Spiritual Science	61
Humankind’s Relationship to Good and Evil – Ignorance and Knowledge	62
The New World Impulse	63
Humankind’s Receptivity to the New World Impulse.....	67
Six Eternal Kingdoms	69
The Basic Energies of the Universe	70
The Basic Analysis of the Living Being.....	73
Illustrated Overview of the Evolutionary Spiral	76
The Eternal World Picture, the Eternal Godhead, and the Eternal Sons of God	78
Martinus’ Cosmology and Faivre’s Six Characteristics for Western Esotericism	79
 Chapter 3 – A Comparison of Source, Structure, and Content of the Esoteric World Pictures of Martinus, Blavatsky, Steiner, and Bailey	 85
Esoteric Knowledge Acquisition: The Source of Martinus, Blavatsky, Steiner, and Bailey’s World Pictures	85
Structural Level – Esoteric Knowledge Justification: Proclaimed and Logically Explained Ontology	89
Presence of Logical Reasoning in Works of Blavatsky, Steiner, Bailey, and Martinus	91
Content Level 1: The Vertical Esoteric Perspective	94
The Utmost Principle and the I.....	94
The Constitution of the Living Being.....	99
Martinus and the Body of Memory	107
Content Level 2: The Horizontal Esoteric Perspective	110
Similarities between the World Pictures of Blavatsky, Steiner, Bailey, and Martinus	111
Martinus and the Pole Transformation	112
Content Level 3: The Esoteric Inclusiveness Perspective	116
Martinus and the Microcosmos as a Moral Horizon.....	117

Conclusion	119
Endnotes (longer footnotes)	123
Bibliography	137
Appendix A: Translations of Martinus' Works (English, German, and French)	161
Appendix B – The Structure and Content of <i>Livets Bog</i> , 7 vols	167
Appendix C-1: Presence of Logical Reasoning in Texts of Blavatsky	169
Appendix C-2: Presence of Logical Reasoning in Texts of Steiner	172
Appendix C-3: Presence of Logical Reasoning in Texts of Bailey	175
Appendix C-4: Presence of Logical Reasoning in Texts of Martinus	177
Commentary to the Second Printing (2019)	181
Acknowledgements (2019)	183

List of Tables, Figures, and Symbols

Figure 1. The Vertical (Hierarchical) and Horizontal (Developmental) Esoteric Perspectives	24
Figure 2. A Proposed Difference between Pre-Blavatskyan Esoteric Worldviews and Blavatsky's, in Terms of the Horizontal Esoteric Perspective	25
Figure 3. The Esoteric Inclusiveness, Vertical, and Horizontal Perspectives	26
Martinus' Symbol No. 1: <i>Impulses of the Creative Principle</i>	65
Figure 4. The Categories of Consciousness in Terrestrial Mankind	68
Martinus' Symbol No. 12: <i>The Combination of the Basic Energies</i>	71
Martinus' Symbol No. 6: <i>The Living Being I</i>	75
Figure 5. One Evolutionary Spiral, encompassing Six Kingdoms	77
Martinus' Symbols No. 8, 9, and 10: <i>The Divine Something – X1; The Living Being's Creative Power – X2; Creation – X3</i>	80
Martinus' Symbol No. 11: <i>The Eternal World Picture, The Living Being II, The Eternal Godhead and the Eternal Sons of God</i>	81
Table 1. Presence of Logical Reasoning in Main Works of Blavatsky, Steiner, Bailey, and Martinus	93
Table 2. The Constitution of Man, according to Blavatsky	103
Table 3. The Constitution of Man, according to Steiner	104
Table 4. The Constitution of Man, according to Bailey	105
Table 5. The Constitution of the Living Being, according to Martinus	106
Table C-1a. Logical Reasoning in Blavatsky's <i>The Secret Doctrine</i> , I.....	169

Table C-1b. Logical Reasoning in Blavatsky's <i>The Secret Doctrine</i> , I cont. and II	170
Table C-1c. Logical Reasoning in Blavatsky's <i>The Secret Doctrine</i> , II cont.	171
Table C-2a. Logical Reasoning in Steiner's <i>Occult Science</i>	172
Table C-2b. Logical Reasoning in Steiner's <i>Occult Science</i> , cont., and <i>Theosophy</i>	173
Table C-2c. Logical Reasoning in Steiner's <i>Knowledge of the Higher Worlds: How is it Achieved?</i>	174
Table C-3a. Logical Reasoning in Bailey's <i>A Treatise on Cosmic Fire</i>	175
Table C-3b. Logical Reasoning in Bailey's <i>A Treatise on Cosmic Fire</i> , cont	176
Table C-4a. Logical Reasoning in Martinus' <i>Livets Bog</i> , I and II	177
Table C-4b. Logical Reasoning in Martinus' <i>Livets Bog</i> , II cont. and III.....	178
Table C-4c. Logical Reasoning in Martinus' <i>Livets Bog</i> , IV	179
Table C-4d. Logical Reasoning in Martinus' <i>Livets Bog</i> , V, VI, and VII	180

Introduction

In 1932, in Copenhagen, Denmark, a book was published – a book largely unnoticed by the general public. The title of the book was *Livets Bog* ('The Book of Life'), and the name of the author was Martinus Thomsen.¹ Born in 1890 in Sindal, a small town in the rural province of Vendsyssel in the north of Jutland, Denmark, with only seven years of basic education, earning his living mainly as a dairyman, Martinus had in 1921 unexpectedly undergone a dramatic change of his consciousness during two meditations. What had happened? One day, Martinus reported, he was sitting in a chair blindfolded, intending to meditate on God.² Suddenly he felt that he was facing something indescribably sublime. A human figure appeared before his inner eye – it was the statue of Christ by the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844). The figure disappeared, but soon returned, and this time it was alive. It disappeared and returned once more. The Christ-like figure finally entered directly into Martinus' body, filling him with divine light. He could then survey the entire Earth. The following day, as he was again sitting in his chair, he was suddenly surrounded by the divine light once more, and eventually he found himself without any body in an overwhelming golden light, a sea of fire. As Martinus commented, 'I felt that this was the consciousness of God'.³ The transformation of his consciousness, as a result of these experiences, was so dramatic that most psychologists would reject it as impossible – at least in terms of a healthy state of mind. What, according to Martinus, was it all about?

The cosmic baptism of fire through which I had passed [...] released in me entirely new sensory abilities, abilities which enabled me – not in glimpses – but on the contrary in a *permanent state of awake day-consciousness* – to apprehend all *main spiritual forces, invisible causes, eternal world laws, basic energies and basic principles* behind the physical world. The mystery of existence was therefore no longer a mystery to me. *I had become conscious in the life of the whole Universe.*⁴

¹ The author name is always given without his family name.

² Martinus, *Martinus' Erindringer* ['Martinus' Memories'], ed. by Sam Zinglensen ([Frederiksberg]: Zinglensen's Forlag, 1987), pp. 64-66.

³ Martinus, *Erindringer*, p. 65.

⁴ Martinus, *Livets Bog*, 7 vols (Copenhagen: the author, 1932-1960), I, section 21; italics in original. Quote taken from the English translation of *The Third Testamente: Livets Bog*, 7 vols (Copenhagen: The Martinus Institute, 1987-), I (1987), trans. by Jeanne Haahr, section 21. The Danish title, *Livets Bog*, is the international title.

In the first volume of *Livets Bog*, and in his following books, Martinus describes the nature, processes, and laws of life in logical terms, setting his reader on a journey through a living, evolving, and eternal Universe built on and pervaded by love and wisdom.⁵ Until his death in 1981, Martinus produced around forty books, one hundred symbols, held a number of lectures, founded the periodical *Kosmos*, established a summer school, and founded an institute. In accordance with Martinus' wish, there is no society founded on his teachings and therefore no membership in an organization.

Martinus' books abound in ideas and perspectives found in esoteric traditions in general, in the Theosophy of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), and the Neo-Theosophy of Alice A. Bailey (1880-1949) and similar systems in particular, yet apparently without being influenced by any such sources:

*I had not been in connection with either theosophy, anthroposophy, spiritualism or any other particular school of thought of the time until after I had experienced the entire world picture and then manifested it in the form of my symbols and drawings.*⁶

This possible circumstance, that Martinus was not influenced by other esoteric philosophies in presenting his own, will, however, be examined below. A comparison between the philosophy of Martinus and other Western esoteric philosophies, represented chiefly by the modern Theosophists and Steiner, will be especially interesting if Martinus' statement is found to be correct.⁷ The juxtaposition is also interesting because hardly any such comparison has previously been undertaken by scholars (see below). The reason for this is that Martinus – in terms of written academic texts or references to him and his works – must be regarded as unknown in the scholarly fields of religious studies and Western esotericism *outside* Scandinavia, since such texts or references are

⁵ In Martinus' view, the Universe, infinite in its extension, is eternal in the sense that it will forever exist, not that planets, solar systems, galaxies etc. would remain the same. Thus, eternal in terms of principles, but not as separate, concrete bodies (which will come and go, so to speak).

⁶ Martinus, *Livets Bog*, I, section 22; italics in original. The term 'world picture' is the translation of the Danish word *verdensbillede*, and is the same as 'worldview'. The concept *verdensbillede* is often used by Martinus.

⁷ A comparative study is interesting regardless of whether esoteric philosophies refer to one and the same reality, or only to the same type of idea(s); that is, that they are carriers of meaning but not necessarily referential statements, in the Austrian-born philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1889-1951) sense. The implied ideological tension in the previous sentence reflects contrasting positions in methodological discussions in the field of Western esotericism: to what degree should statements of esotericists be understood and treated in their own terms? This issue will be dealt with below.

non-existent.⁸ This is most likely a result of the fact that Martinus predominantly lived and worked in intellectual isolation.⁹

Esoteric Knowledge, Initiates, and Seekers of Truth

The short introductory account of Martinus' life and worldview above reflects what is a recurrent and thereby an essential tripartite idea in the history of esotericism, that (a) something may be known outside the ordinary world or domain of knowledge, (b) someone knows it, and, as will be discussed below, (c) someone seeks such knowledge and is able to learn, experience, and know it as well.

Such knowledge – esoteric knowledge – has explicitly or implicitly been claimed by esoteric writers or traditions to reflect an absolute and thereby eternal wisdom or truth: that the world has certain basic characteristics that will never change.¹⁰ In the scholarly study of Western esotericism, Kocku von Stuckrad identifies this claim to absolute knowledge and the means to reach it as a recurrent esoteric 'element of discourse' in the European history of religion.¹¹ It is, according to Stuckrad and myself, possible to gain access to the esoteric field of discourse through esoteric worldviews and beliefs (ideas).¹² The content and structure of esoteric philosophies as presented in texts are therefore the indispensable ground on which every esoteric discourse takes place, at least to begin with. To gain access to the esoteric field of discourse through the esoteric worldviews themselves is one interpretational framework by which comparative studies that focus on these worldviews or philosophies in Western esotericism may be motivated. If discourses are defined in the

⁸ The calibre of Martinus' work would certainly have attracted the attention of scholars if his works and the content had been known. In general, however, as Olav Hammer states, 'the least studied [...] esoteric traditions are those closest to us in time', Olav Hammer, 'Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age' (doctoral dissertation, University of Lund, 2000), p. 13. Consequently, Martinus is not found in scholarly works produced outside Scandinavia. See endnote i to see the evidence that supports this statement.

⁹ Martinus claims that in relation to 'all prevalent authoritative, religious notions, philosophies and natural science', he represented an 'isolated mental condition', in Martinus, *Den Intellektualiserede Kristendom* ['Intellectualized Christianity'] (Valby: Borgens Forlag, 2004), section 5, p. 20, my translation.

¹⁰ For instance, Hermes Trismegistus, the leading character or sage (from Greek point of view) in Hermetic literature, tells Asclepius that: 'The cosmos is moved within the very principle of life that comes from Eternity; and its place is within this living eternity. [...] it will never cease to move, nor will it ever be destroyed. [...] [God] is motionless eternity itself into which the movement of all cycles returns and from which the movement of all cycles begin', in *Asclepius: The Perfect Discourse of Hermes Trismegistus*, ed. and trans. by Clement Salaman (London: Duckworth, 2007), pp. 86-87. This is an example of how the world is claimed to be governed by eternal principles.

¹¹ Kocku von Stuckrad, *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge*, trans. by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (London: Equinox Publishing, 2005), p. 10; Kocku von Stuckrad, 'Western Esotericism: Towards An Integrative Model of Interpretation', *Religion* 35 (2005), 78-97 (p. 88 and p. 91).

¹² Stuckrad, 'Towards An Integrative Model of Interpretation', p. 93.

sense of discussions or dialogues, focusing on the philosophical and psychological content, rather than the social organization of tradition, meaning, and knowledge (Stuckrad), such studies could reflect and bring to the fore actual discourses, and also what might be termed *imagined discourses*. While actual discourses or dialogues take place through actual communication (verbal or textual dialogue), a publication of a text, as a separate act, may be regarded a contribution to a discourse, in the context of other publications, even when no actual communication or referencing takes place. This later type of discourse is what I term an ‘imagined discourse’ which can be interpreted and analysed by scholars.¹³ My comparative study, presented later in this work, is focusing on the worldviews of Martinus, Blavatsky, Steiner, and Bailey mostly in terms of an imagined discourse, as philosophical contributions to the esoteric field of thought.

With reference to the second aspect above, esoteric knowledge has often been associated with a chain of initiates, a frequent motif from ancient times up to the present. The most commonly recognised chain in the Renaissance was: Enoch, Abraham, Noah, Zoroaster, Moses, Hermes Trismegistus, the Brahmins, the Druids, David, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and the Sibyls.¹⁴ Such initiates were said to be exponents of a *philosophia perennis*, an eternal philosophy, a term proposed by the Italian humanist Agostino Steuco (1497-1548) in 1540. An earlier and similar idea was that ‘true’ philosophy had not originated from the Greeks and ‘true’ religion had not originated from the Hebrews, but both had a common origin in a *prisca theologia* (ancient theology).¹⁵ However, Paracelsianism, Christian theosophy and Rosicrucianism made almost no

¹³ The specific type of discourse I term ‘imagined discourses’ is probably one part in Stuckrad’s view of ‘fields of discourses’, however, as it appears, it is a minor part. The following clarifies this. Stuckrad, in *Western Esotericism*, p. 6, states that ‘history is always a construction of the past in the light of present interests’ (ibid.). In view of this, Stuckrad makes a distinction between ‘traditions’ and ‘discourses’, in order to distinguish the various approaches to history. Discourses are the answer to the question ‘*why* particular events were remembered or particular historical narratives constructed at particular times’ (ibid.). Discourses are discussions that lend esoteric traditions their particular significance at different times as a result of ‘the social, political, economic, legal and cultural circumstances’ (ibid.). The concept of discourses thus reflects the awareness that what is viewed as ‘tradition’ is a rather minor core that is ‘*used* in the light of contemporary questioning and thereby significantly transformed’ (ibid.). My understanding of Stuckrad’s discussion is therefore that discourses are dialogues and manifestations that take place at a later time in history, at least mostly, than the specific source of the worldview did and the original literature referred to. If I interpret Stuckrad correctly, this would have an effect on the idea of or the presence of ‘discourses’, or ‘fields of discourses’, with respect to esoteric philosophies created or presented close to us in time or in our own time (which consequently, in Stuckrad’s terms, should be more in the process of creating ‘tradition’ than blooming in reinterpretative ‘discourses’), and with respect to my comparative study in this work.

¹⁴ Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 35.

¹⁵ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ‘Tradition’, in *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff and others (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 1125-35.

claims to authorities in the distant past.¹⁶ Later, Blavatsky, for instance, claimed that the Theosophy that she expounded ‘could be partially recoverable from a “comparative study and analysis” of selected philosophers (Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Porphyry, Proclus, Patañjali, and Shankara)’.¹⁷ Martinus is also an esoteric philosopher and writer who claims that he knows and presents the eternal wisdom as an entire world picture, partly found among wise men and women.¹⁸ As will be seen below, however, Martinus almost never refers to earlier esoteric worldviews and never to specific or named esotericists in his works.

In esoteric traditions – with respect to the third aspect above, that ‘someone seeks such knowledge and is able to learn, experience and know it as well’ – the idea exists that seekers of truth or salvation need certain qualifications that make them capable of receiving esoteric knowledge. For instance, the German shoemaker Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) claimed that he wrote for ‘the simple’ and not for ‘those that are wise aforehand, that know all things [already]’.¹⁹ The attitude of ‘the simple’ may be exemplified by Hermes Trismegistus, who encountered the *Nous* of the Supreme, *Poimandres*, in *Corpus Hermeticum*: ‘I wish to learn’, Trismegistus said, ‘the things that are and understand their nature and to know God. O how I wish to hear these things’.²⁰ Martinus, likewise, claims that the key to the Gate of Wisdom is humility.²¹

¹⁶ Antoine Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism*, trans. by Christine Rhone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. xvi. It should be noted that in the first Rosicrucian manifesto (1614) it is said that: ‘Our Philosophy also is not a new invention [...] Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras and others did hit the mark, and [...] Enoch, Abraham, Moses, [and] Solomon did excel’, Anonymous, ‘Fama Fraternitatis’, in Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (Boulder: Shamballa Publications, 1972), pp. 238-51 (p. 249). Michael Maier in *Silvium Post Clamores* (1617) claims the existence of Rosicrucian precursors when he asserts, according to the occultist writer and mystic Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942), ‘that from very ancient times philosophical colleges have existed among various nations for the study of medicine and of natural secrets, and that the discoveries which they made were perpetuated from generation to generation by the initiation of new members whence the existence of a similar association at that present time was no subject for astonishment. The philosophical colleges referred to are those of old Egypt, [...] of the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries, of the Samothracian Cabiri, the Magi of Persia, the Brachmans of India, the Gymnosophists, Pythagoreans, &c’, in Arthur Edward Waite, *The Real History of the Rosicrucians* (London: Redway, 1887), pp. 269-70.

¹⁷ James Sanctucci, ‘A Brief Overview of Theosophy’ <<http://www.blavatskyarchives.com/santuccitheosophy.htm#1>> [accessed 27 September 2008], para. 2 of 15.

¹⁸ Martinus, *Livets Bog*, I, section 7; Martinus, ‘Om mig selv, min mission og dens betydning’ [About Myself, My Mission and its Meaning], *Kosmos*, 3 (1991), 43-53.

¹⁹ Jacob Boehme, *Concerning the Three Principles of the Divine Essence*, trans. by John Sparrow, 2 vols ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], [n.d.]; repr. Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, [n.d.]), I, 12 (2:6).

²⁰ *The Way of Hermes: New Translations of ‘The Corpus Hermeticum’ and ‘The Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius’*, trans. by Clement Salaman and others (London: Duckworth, 1999), p. 17.

²¹ Martinus, *The Road to Initiation*, trans. by Anna Ørnsholt (Copenhagen: The Martinus Institute of Spiritual Science, 1957), pp. 114-16.

Martinus asserts that his books are written for people who would be inspired by them – but who would that be? The answer is found in a developmental perspective. Martinus states that the psychological development of humankind has created ‘non-believers’, people who are no longer able to believe in religious doctrines or other such statements:

The ‘irreligiousness’ of modern generations is thus in reality only a kind of ‘religiousness’ that demands not only eternal wisdom as the absolute solution of existence but also the method of calculating this solution so that they themselves can check the calculation and make the same solution their own knowledge.²²

Martinus thus claims that there are secularized seekers of truth, and he thinks it is among a subgroup of these seekers or non-believers that his (potential) readers are to be found.²³ According to Jacob Needleman, this kind of seeker is attracted by ‘modern esoteric spiritualities’ which ‘either de-emphasize, redefine, or eliminate altogether the element of belief that lies at the basis of what the great Western monotheistic religions demand of the individual’,²⁴ and these esoteric teachings and movements are ‘closer to the modern scientific temperament’.²⁵

²² Martinus, *The Fate of Mankind*, trans. by Mary McGovern, 3rd edn (Copenhagen: The Martinus Institute, 2008), Chapter 3.

²³ Martinus’ definition of ‘secularized seekers’, a phrase he does not use himself, is consequently the inability to believe in traditional religious statements. Martinus claims that there is a developmental trend, based on involutional and evolutional processes, which creates three categories of human beings today: (1) *believers*, (2) *non-believers* (who have lost their ability to *believe* in religious statements because of the development of their intelligence, *Livets Bog*, VII, section 2678), subdivided into (a) *materialists*, and (b) *advanced seekers of truth* (who ‘have outlived the materialistic denial of spiritual life’, Martinus, *Livets Bog*, III, section 677, my translation), and (3) *the inspired, those who really know*. The same type of division is made by Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 2001), pp. 17-18, in terms of: (i) *the ignorant* [believers], (ii) *the educated*, and (iii) *the intuitive wise*. While most academics probably would claim that the secularized (materialistic) position is more advanced in intellectual terms than the religious one, Bailey and Martinus claim, as seen above, that there are two different types of religious or spiritual people: the one preceding the (ontological) materialistic state of mind, and the one that comes after it. An attempt to define *secular spirituality* is found in Peter H. Van Ness, ‘Introduction: Spirituality and the Secular Quest’, in *Spirituality and the Secular Quest*, ed. by Peter H. Van Ness (New York: Crossroad, 1996), pp. 1-17. Secular spirituality is a matter of a holistic view applied to ordinary life taking place in an intentional cosmos or on a living planet (or seen *as if* it were alive with intentions), and without the attraction to traditional religions and activities.

²⁴ Jacob Needleman, ‘Introduction II’, in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, ed. by Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. xxiii-xxx (p. xxiii).

²⁵ *Ibid.* The large-scale sociological studies conducted by Ronald Inglehart and colleagues give evidence for the modernization and secularization thesis and shed some light on the secularized seeker. The transition from the agrarian society to the industrial society represented a shift towards a ‘worldview that encourages economic achievement, individualism and innovation, with increasingly secular and flexible social norms’, Ronald Inglehart, Loek Halman and

The question then, is: Do esoteric texts offer the modern or secular seeker what he or she seeks, since many, or perhaps all of them, are indeed characterized by *obscurity* to varying degrees? They are, in fact, difficult to understand or grasp, besides the fact that they mostly state or claim things – not primarily because they deal with complex matters but by the way these perspectives or this knowledge is presented.²⁶ In many instances, this has been intentional, as the Christian teacher Clement of Alexandria (died before 215) claims: ‘It was not only the Pythagoreans and Plato [...] that concealed many things [...] those who instituted the mysteries, being philosophers, buried their doctrines in myths, so as not to be obvious to all’; and the same is present today, for example, in the teaching of Bailey (or rather, as she claims, of the Tibetan master Djwhal Khul [D.K.]): ‘much that I will say will be somewhat “blind” or veiled in symbol; much that I could say [...] will not be said’.²⁷

This obscurity, whether intentional or not, is seen in the following examples as well, and starts before modern times. Gunnar Rudberg, who translated the Neo-Platonic writings of Plotinus (205-270) into Swedish, writes that: ‘Plotinus belongs to the authors of antiquity most hard to read’.²⁸ The English translator of *The Zohar*, Daniel Matt, claims that this work is ‘notoriously obscure, perhaps the most difficult Jewish classic to translate’.²⁹ Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494),

Christian Welzel, ‘Introduction’, in *Human Beliefs and Values: A Cross-Cultural Sourcebook based on the 1999-2002 Values Surveys*, ed. by Ronald Inglehart and others (Coyocán: Siglo XXI Editores, 2004), pp. 1-20 (p. 8). However, some of these trends have reached their limits in advanced industrial society, according to Inglehart and colleagues. A post-modern shift occurs with an increasing emphasis on human choice and self-expression, where people are more intellectually independent and where there is a move from ‘institutionally fixed forms of dogmatic religion to individually flexible forms of spiritual religion. Even one’s religious ideas become a matter of choice, creativity and self-expression’, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Developmental Sequence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 31. In the light of these results, esotericism, including New Age, may be attractive to these seekers of truth, since the doctrinal freedom of the individual here is a characteristic trait.

²⁶ It could be argued that whatever text a person reads he or she will create a meaning of it in one or another sense, regardless of its accessibility, and therefore the question of obscurity is not of interest. I agree, but if one wants to understand what the author meant the question is of importance. However, see Faivre’s definition of esotericism below (the second meaning of esotericism), which is related to the process of understanding esoteric texts and symbols.

²⁷ Clement of Alexandria, ‘The Stromata or Miscellanies’, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, American reprint of the Edinburgh Edition, rev. by A. Cleveland Coxe, 10 vols (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885-1896; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), II, 409-76 (p. 458) (book V, Chapter 9, paragraph 4); Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations* (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1960; repr. 1981), p. 328.

²⁸ Plotinos: *Mystikern och reformatorn, valda delar ur Enneaderma* [‘Plotinus: The Mystic and Reformer, selected parts from the *Enneads*’], ed. and trans. by Gunnar Rudberg (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1927), p. 11.

²⁹ Daniel C. Matt, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, in *The Zohar*, trans. by Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004-), I, xv-xxv (p. xviii). *The Zohar* appeared in Spain a little after 1275.

the founder of Christian Kabbalah, claims that: ‘it might be known what a task it was for me, how difficult it was to draw out the hidden meaning of the secrets of philosophy from the intentional tangles or riddles and from the obscurity of fables’.³⁰ In Christian theosophy, ‘Böhme is often confusing not only in terminology, but also in formulation’.³¹ Concerning Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*, Carl Jackson maintains that: ‘For most readers the book is likely to remain a “secret” doctrine’.³² Of Anthroposophy, it has been said that ‘We may regard Steiner’s whole work as a sealed form that has to be opened through one’s own [the seeker’s] activity’.³³ Finally, Bailey’s *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925) is an ‘entire “labyrinth of words”’, according to Basil Crump.³⁴

The clarity and wisdom – in terms of a coherent meaning – that can be gained by careful studies are of course not a problem. But how much effort is needed to reach this position of clarity? How does one know if the interpretation coincides with the intended meaning of the author? Which questions are neglected or not answered in the philosophy? Is the (secular) seeker satisfied with this situation?

Since Martinus claims that he delivers the ‘method of calculation’ – that is, the logic that justifies statements found in esoteric traditions in general, in Theosophy and Anthroposophy and in similar systems in particular, and in additional statements found in Martinus’ own works – he may be a good example of how esoteric philosophies can advance from obscurity into rational exposition, and thereby, perhaps, represent a ‘reply’ to unsatisfied (secular) seekers. My reading of Blavatsky, Steiner, Bailey, and Martinus suggests that Martinus, in contrast to the others, explains in more detail *why* things are as they are in logical terms. Martinus’ claim and my impression of the difference between these authors will be investigated systematically in a small study, which is presented in Chapter 3.

³⁰ Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, ‘Oration on the Dignity of Man’, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. by Ernst Cassirer and others (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [n.d.]), pp. 223–54 (p. 254).

³¹ Arthur Versluis, ‘Introduction’, in Johann Georg Gichtel, *Awakening to Divine Wisdom: Christian Initiation into Three Worlds*, ed. and trans. by Arthur Versluis (St. Paul, MN: New Grail Publishing, 2004), pp. 7–24 (p. 19). Annie Besant states that Boehme was ‘an Initiate in obscurity truly’, in Annie Besant, *Esoteric Christianity or The Lesser Mysteries* ([n.p.]: [n. pub.], 1901; repr. Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1989), p. 85.

³² Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought: Nineteenth-Century Explorations* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 167.

³³ Heinz Zimmerman, ‘Behövs Antroposofiska Sällskapet idag?’ [Is the Anthroposophical Society Needed Today?], trans. by Jürgen Vater, *Forum för antroposofi*, 4 (2007), 24–30 (p. 30) (first publ. in *Nachrichten für Mitglieder*, 43 and 44 (2006), [no pages]).

³⁴ Basil Crump, ‘Notes on “A Treatise on Cosmic Fire”’, in Alice Leighton Cleather and Basil Crump, *A Comparison Between H. P. Blavatsky & Alice Bailey* <<http://www.theosophical.ca/Pseudo-OccultismOfBailey.htm>> (accessed 3 April 2008), para. 39 of 44.