

A Universal Cosmology

Book review on

Martinus, Darwin and Intelligent design - A new theory of Evolution

by Ole Therkelsen (2010)

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This is a remarkable book and a timely one. It is topical on two counts. Firstly, 2009 marks a double Darwin anniversary; it is 200 years since his birth and 150 years since the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. Secondly, it addresses itself to the contemporary version of the perennial debate about fundamental issues currently taking place within a postmodern context that is suspicious of overarching narratives, be they religious or scientific.

The title of this book is in itself intriguing, as it juxtaposes three very disparate elements. *Darwin* is an eloquent symbol for the power of a great idea and its part in creating our modern post-religious sensibility. *Intelligent design* alerts us to the reluctance among many people, particularly those to whom a religious world-view remains meaningful, to wholeheartedly accept evolution as an explanation of our origins. And *Martinus* (1890-1981) is, to begin with, the name of a little-known Danish writer.

And yet this book deals primarily with Martinus, using Darwinism and its critics as a foil against which to bring out the stupendous cosmic vision that we owe to this Danish seer. It is time he was more widely known, not least in the English-speaking world. Martinus developed a cosmic model that can sharpen our awareness of what it means to be human and deepen the sense of mystery about our existence that a superficial scientism appears to have banished. And yet he was neither a philosopher, nor a scientist nor even an imaginative novelist. He was a man of little schooling who experienced a momentous enlightenment in his thirtieth year which never left him throughout his long life. He spent the rest of it, some sixty years, in expounding his ever-present vision. There seems no better word for it, for his cosmic model claims to be neither theory nor speculation, but a straightforward description of the world in its totality (not just the physical world that is the legitimate object of science) as seen from the perspective of infinity and eternity. It is this latter viewpoint that saves his vision from becoming just another meta-ideology: indeed, it respects our humanistic sensitivities while honouring our link to an open-ended matrix of experience.

It would be easy, if premature, to dismiss his work on the basis of its origin, which smacks of "revelation", a source that is rightly rejected as a basis of knowledge. However, if we venture to examine his ideas, we will find ourselves seeing our familiar world in a fascinating new light. His cosmic model bears the hallmarks of elegance, harmony, simplicity and coherence that we look for in a good scientific theory. It presents a satisfying explanation of the underlying structure of the universe on the basis of a very few fundamental principles -

William of Ockham would have approved. Moreover, it offers us concepts and approaches that have the power to harmonise the most disparate competing claims of science and religion (in their best aspects) to give us a broad picture of reality. The sheer optimism of his world picture is exhilarating, as is its grounding in the twin elements of eternity and infinity (so troublesome to science and religion alike) and its surprising take on the vexed question of consciousness.

One aspect of Martinus' work does need explanation. He places it in a spiritual context, while making a sharp distinction between his spiritual science and religions. He would thus appear to plunge into the morass of untestable assertions that bedevil any discussion of spirituality. And yet, his writings breathe an empiricism that is both astonishing and beguiling - he makes us blink and look anew at what we imagined reality to be. But the avowed pantheism of this cosmic model will appeal no less to those of a secular cast of mind, simply because it transcends such categories and reconfigures them within a broader context. We should not stumble over words, but see what he means by them. After all, he had to draw the words available in his surrounding culture to give expression to a vision that by its nature represents the very crucible of pre-verbal experience.

It is as if Martinus' personal consciousness had been raised to a point at which we hear the living universe speaking through him about itself. And yet he is no mouthpiece of dubious "higher beings", but steadfastly remains his own source: he describes reality almost prosaically, if *sub specie aeternitatis*, and yet in a way that resolves the deepest puzzles of existence in an appealingly human way. Simply to allow these thought pictures to pass before our inner vision is a deeply stimulating experience: there emerges a way of understanding the world which is entirely consistent with our scientific mindset while allowing us to see pre-scientific, religious and mythological world-views as symbolic expressions of a vast underlying reality that surrounds us today as much as it ever did.

He throws detailed light onto our pre-natal and post-mortal existence in a way that weaves the periscope of a human life into a richly meaningful tapestry and shows us how we can resolve the conundrums of time and eternity in an intuitively satisfying way.

His description of the evolution of human sexuality is perhaps one of his most intriguing contributions. Our contemporary culture, characterised as it is by changing patterns of sexuality and gender, gains in depth when seen from the perspective of a gradual transformation away from the male and female states to a new kind of human being who combines the best aspects of both sexes, in a process that will gradually give rise to a transfigured human body.

His insights into the nature of health and disease are scarcely controversial in an age so aware of psychosomatic relationships. He effectively scotches the myth that ill-health strikes randomly and shows us convincingly that we can indeed be the masters of our fate, and not least of our health. In short, Martinus cosmology is a deeply inspiring well of insights into the human condition and our profound interconnections with the entire cosmos through space and time.

From a humanistic angle, Martinus' cosmic model offers a perspective that avoids the twin pitfalls of a theistic threat to our hard-won individual autonomy (characteristic of religion) and a narrow interpretation of reality (typical of scientism) that ignores the fundamentally provisional nature of the scientific enterprise. It consequently fits happily into the

enlightenment project that lies at the heart of Western culture while lending it wings to expand into breathtakingly limitless dimensions.

Before Darwin, so much of life appeared inexplicable that it seemed reasonable to accept the existence of a deity. In a post-Darwinian world, we can see through the fallacy of explaining the unknown by something even more unknown. The triumphant march of science since his time has bequeathed to us a rich explanatory matrix rooted in a reasoned observation of reality. It has perhaps been less successful in describing a universe in which human beings can feel truly at home. That is where Martinus comes in. His vision gives us the tools to reinterpret our scientific world-view, and not least the powerful explanatory principle of evolution, so that we begin to sense our central role as knowers within an evolving cosmos of which we are, as individuals, an indispensable and eternal part.

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