

***Succour for a Fallen World:
Magic and the Powers of Spirit
in Johann Nikolaus Martius's
Unterricht von der Magia Naturali (1717)***

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In 1700, a medical graduate at the University of Erfurt published a dissertation on natural magic.¹ This text would go on to be published in seven further editions before being thoroughly reworked and republished by Johann Christian Wiegleb, apothecary in Langensalza, in 1779; after which it would, in this revised state, continue to be published into the nineteenth century. While the manifest success of this book is to be gleaned from the numerous editions that it enjoyed, until now very little has been known about its elusive author, one Johann Nikolaus Martius, student of Justus Vesti in Erfurt, and later *medicus practicus* in Braunschweig.² A cache of hitherto unexamined archival materials in the Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Wolfenbüttel sheds new light on the career of one Johann Nikolaus Mertz, also known as Martius. The son of an Erfurt tanner named David Mertz and his wife, Ursula Wagnerin (since remarried after Mertz's death),³ Martius travelled to Braunschweig sometime between 1700 and 1706. Beginning in 1706, Martius was appointed to the Vikarie of the Heiliger Geist in Braunschweig by Duke Anton Ulrich on the recommendation of Georg Sievers, former holder of the office and who also held positions as Secretary of the Ducal Library (Bibliothekssekretär) and Canon of the Stift St. Blasii. Martius was also recommended by the Senior Deacon and Council of the Stift St. Blasii, respectively.⁴ Some years later in 1729, Martius was then appointed one of the personal physicians

¹ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *De magia naturali ejusque usu medico ad magica curandam* (Erfurt: Grosch, 1700). The first German edition, and that considered in this article, appeared under the title *Unterricht von der Magia Naturali Und derselben Medicinische Gebrauch auf Magische Weise, wie auch bezauberte Dinge zu curiren [...]* (Frankfurt: Nicolai, 1717). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

² JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 57.

³ JOHANN PHILIPP STREIT, "Letter of Reference from the Prorektor of the University of Erfurt (10 September 1706)", *Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Wolfenbüttel (NLA)*, 7 A Urk, Nr. 1964.

⁴ GEORG SIEVERS, "Letter of Resignation and Recommendation (16 Decemeber 1705)", NLA, 2 Alt, Nr. 9054, fols. 21-22; "Letter of Recommendation from the Senior Deacon and General Chapter of the Stift St. Blasii (19 March 1706)", NLA, 2 Alt, Nr. 9054, fol.23r-v. On the outside of the document, possibly in the Duke's own hand, is scrawled: "Fiat. Wolf[enbüttel] 27 Jan 1706. Anthon Ulr[ich] [sic]." The dating would suggest that the Duke had approved Sievers' resignation and given informal approval to Martius's appointment before the advice of the Deacon and General Chapter of St. Blasii. Formal approval for Martius's appointment was granted shortly after 21 March 1706: NLA, 2 Alt, Nr. 9054, fol.26.

(*Leibmedici*) to Duke August Wilhelm three years before the Duke's death.⁵ Martius continued in both roles until his own death sometime around 1760.⁶

Several years before his move to Braunschweig, the young Martius was involved in the production of a dissertation on the 'hermetic philosophy' at Erfurt by one Johann Kiesling, possibly one of his mentors.⁷ Two years later, he published his own dissertation: at once a theoretical discussion concerning the relationship between spirit and matter inspired, on the author's own admission, by Christian Thomasius's *Versuch vom Wesen des Geistes* (1699), a work of eclectic, Neoplatonic-infused pneumatology.⁸ At the same time, Martius's book was also a text of thoroughly practical nature – an instructional book, as the title indicates – containing numerous cures based on sympathetic magic and involving human body parts and secretions. The text would certainly have been at home within the wide remit of texts comprising the early modern *materia medica*, a designation no less diffuse as it was inclusive of a variety of (at times) competing approaches to early modern medicine. However, unlike many other early eighteenth-century pharmaceutical texts, the *Unterricht* was also, in many respects, a cosmological treatise. The invocation of Thomasius's *Versuch* allowed Martius to present a theory of nature in which spirit and matter collapsed in on one another, ultimately disavowing a metaphysics predicated on a firm distinction between the two ontological orders. I argue that nature was, for Martius, an emanation of the divine spirit, and *magia naturalis* – natural magic – was the manipulation of the outward workings of the numinous. All of this places Martius's text, a hitherto largely overlooked work, at the confluence of a variety of discourses. Indeed, he situates himself within the spiritualist tradition, referring crucially to the ideas of Johann Arndt and Jakob Böhme. The central aim of this article is therefore to show how Martius's

⁵ DUKE AUGUST WILHELM, "Appointment of Martius to the Position of *Leibmedicus* (20 March 1729)", NLA, 3 Alt, Nr. 603, Microfiche.

⁶ The earliest confirmation of Martius's death comes from 14 January 1760 in a document presenting the law student (*stud. jur.*) Georg Alexander Friedrich Rackenius as a potential successor to the position of the Vikarie of the Heiliger Geist. NLA, 7 A Urk, Nr. 2123.

⁷ JOHANN KIESLING, *Dissertatio Academica De Philosophia Hermetica Vera Et Experimentalis: Peregrinationum Subterraneorum Iida ad Tumulum Magni Hermetis consignata, Posteaq[ue] In Alma Electorali Ad Hieram ... Sub Praesidio M. Johannis Kieslingii ... Publicae Eruditorum Disquisitioni exposita A Jobanne Nicolao Martio, Erf. Medicinæ Studioso, Die XXVII. Septembris Styl. Vet. Anno MDCXCIX* (Erfurt: Sumphius, 1698).

⁸For an overview of the key ideas of this text and the immediate context in which it was produced see the introduction in: CHRISTIAN THOMASIUS, *Versuch vom Wesen des Geistes oder Grund-Lehren so wohl zu natürlichen Wissenschaft als der Sitten-Lehre*, ed. KAY ZENKER (Hildesheim; Zürich; New York: Olms, 2004), v-xlviii. For the religious and intellectual context in which Thomasius produced the text, see: WILHELM SCHMIDT-BIGGEMANN, "Pietismus, Platonismus und Aufklärung: Christian Thomasius' *Versuch vom Wesen des Geistes*," in *Aufklärung als praktische Philosophie: Werner Schneiders zum 65. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), 83-98; THOMAS AHNERT, *Religion and the Origins of the German Enlightenment: Faith and the Reform of Learning in the Thought of Christian Thomasius* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 27-42; MARKUS MEUMANN, "Die Geister, die ich rief – oder wie aus 'Geisterphilosophie' 'Aufklärung' werden kann: eine diskursgeschichtliche Rekontextualisierung von Christian Thomasius' *De crimine magiae*," in *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Wege in die Moderne*, ed. MONIKA NEUGEBAUER-WÖLK, RENKO GEFFARTH, MARKUS MEUMANN (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 645-80.

ideas about matter theory and sympathetic medicine ultimately belie a deeply heterodox⁹ understanding of spirit, nature and magic in which rebirth or renewal¹⁰ was not only the culminating point of spiritual transformation, but was also the requisite process for the attainment of an inner *magia divina*: the capacity to bring about wondrous effects in and upon nature through an act of the will alone.

The combined influence of the ideas of Arndt, Böhme and Thomasius on the *Unterricht* has not been considered in the relevant literature. Indeed, research on Johann Nikolaus Martius is in its infancy. There are currently two short publications on Martius, and one brief section in a third publication.¹¹ Two of these discussions treat Martius and his ideas only cursorily. Lynn Thorndike, in his magisterial work on magic and science in the early modern world, makes brief reference to Martius in the context of the close of the seventeenth century, outlining Martius's corpuscular ideas and magical remedies in the Latin edition of the *Unterricht*. Martius's text is thus taken as something of an end point, and its potential significance in relation to its early eighteenth-century German context is almost completely absent. Italo Michele Battafarano briefly examines Martius' text as part of an attempt to tease out the semantic variations of the term 'magia naturalis' between and within a variety of early modern texts, including della Porta's *Magia naturalis*. The significance of Battafarano's analysis is primarily that he articulates the link between Christian Knorr von Rosenroth and Martius, although this is undertaken in a very brief and somewhat perfunctory manner.

The third and most recent text, that by Oliver Hochadel, has focused mainly on a description of Martius' taxonomy of magic and on the 'sanitisation' of his text at the

⁹ I follow Martin Gierl in utilising terms like 'heterodox' and 'orthodox' in the clear understanding that these are, for the most part, modern constructions and should be used only formally rather than as constitutive of any essential historical meaning. MARTIN GIERL, "Befleckte Empfängnis. Pietistische Hermeneutik, Indifferentismus, Eklektik und die Konsolidierung pietistischer, orthodoxer und frühaufklärerischer Ansprüche und Ideen," in *Strukturen der deutschen Frühaufklärung, 1680-1720*, ed. HANS ERICH BÖDEKER (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 122, n.5.

¹⁰ I use the terms 'spiritual rebirth' and 'spiritual renewal' interchangeably here, although it is important to note that, for early modern Pietists, there was an important distinction to be made here between the two terms: 'renewal' was conceived of as a preparatory process which culminated in 'rebirth', the principal salvic act or moment (*Heilsgeschehen*). On the importance of this distinction for Philipp Jakob Spener, see: JOHANNES WALLMAN, *Pietismus und Orthodoxie: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 58-61.

¹¹ LYNN THORNDIKE, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, vol.8 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 625-27; ITALO MICHELE BATTAFARANO, "Magia naturalis: Zur Begriffsdefinition bei Johannes Prätorius, Christian Knorr von Rosenroth und Johann Nicolaus Martius (1668-171)," in *Morgen-Glantz: Zeitschrift der Christian Knorr von Rosenroth-Gesellschaft* 1 (1991), 71-77; OLIVER HOCHADEL, "Vom Wunderwerk zur Aufklärungsschrift. Die Wandlungen der Magia naturalis des Johann Nikolaus Martius im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Physica et historia: Festschrift für Andreas Kleinert zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Susan Splinter et al. (Stuttgart: Wiss. Verl.-Ges., 2005), 233-42.

hands of Johann Christian Wiegleb, a later editor of the text.¹² Ultimately, what interests Hochadel is to utilize the *Unterricht* as a means of considering epistemic shifts in the eighteenth century around what counted as knowledge, and what did not, although given the brevity of his analysis, this is not developed in significant detail. Of note in this contribution is the link between Martius' text and the *Zauberartzt* (1725) by one Valentin Kräutermann. In effect, the author/compiler of the *Zauberartzt* took a large section of Martius' work and reproduced it, unattributed. While many library catalogues continue to indicate that Kräutermann was a pseudonym for the writer and physician from Tennstedt, Christoph von Hellwig, Hochadel is astute in cautioning us against such inclinations, as recent work by Jürgen Strein further attests.¹³

The question of what was perceived to constitute legitimate knowledge in the eighteenth century is not only relevant when considering the relationship between earlier and later editions of Martius's text, but also urges us to consider the connections between earlier, pre- 'sanitised' versions of the *Unterricht* and its broader intellectual and religious context. The following discussion therefore begins by reconsidering how we might think about magic in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth century, and how an emic approach might equip us with the conceptual tools to address this question from a different perspective: how could 'magia' be marshalled to support or challenge particular world-views and epistemologies?

Magic in the Early German Enlightenment

For Johann Nikolaus Martius and his contemporaries, 'magic' – and ultimately, 'nature' – could and often did mean very different things. Deeply political and semantically protean, magic had an instrumental dimension and could be actively deployed to articulate divergent ways of knowing and being in the world. A particularly pronounced and conservative voice in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century orthodox Lutheran fight against 'enthusiasm' and all its intellectual cousins was that of Daniel Colberg, who damningly referred to 'magia' as 'the second principle of fanatical theology'.¹⁴ As Wouter Hanegraaff has aptly observed, anyone consulting

¹² Wiegleb, ostensibly at the behest of Martius's publisher, reworked the *Unterricht* so completely that practically nothing but the title of the original work remained. In this thoroughly 'sanitised state' the text continued to be published into the nineteenth century.

¹³ Strein provides a detailed analysis of the various pseudonyms attributed to von Hellwig. In his discussion of the attribution of the *Zauberartzt* to von Hellwig, Strein suggests that we consider the 'Valentin Kräutermann' designation as indicative of a publishing series – one to which von Hellwig only very loosely belonged to, if at all – rather than of individual authorship. JÜRGEN STREIN, *Wissenstransfer und Populärkultur in der Frühaufklärung: Leben und Werke des Arztschriftstellers Christoph von Hellwig (1663-1721)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 89ff.

¹⁴ EHREGOTT DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetische Christentum, Begreifend Die Historische Erzählung vom Ursprung und vielerley Secten der heutigen Fanatischen Theologie, unterm namen der Paracelsisten, Weigelianer, Rosenkreutzer, Quäcker, Böhmisten, Wiedertänffer, Bourgnisten, Labadisten, und Quietisten*, book 1 (Frankfurt: Wedimann, 1690), 149. The first principle, Colberg states, is Cabala or 'inner revelation', as he defines the term: DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christentum*, book 1, 136.

Colberg's text must be 'prepared to enter a dogmatic battlefield in the company of an author who is shooting to kill'.¹⁵ The text is a volatile polemical brew directed against, as its full title suggests, the ideas (or purported ideas) of figures such as Paracelsus, Valentin Weigel and Jakob Böhme. *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum* is highly important for a variety of reasons, not least for bringing an array of concepts and movements under the historiographical umbrella of what is now known as Western esotericism.¹⁶ However, for our purposes, Colberg's text is significant for the connection that it forges between magic and heterodoxy – a nexus that it takes up with particular alacrity. Of note within this context is also the conceptual fluidity of the term 'magia': Colberg argues that there are most certainly various kinds of extraordinary, hidden power, including diabolic magic and a genuinely 'natural' magic, which he links to Giambattista della Porta's *Magia naturalis*.¹⁷ However, it is a purported third class of magical power that particularly concerns Colberg. He states that what the 'fantatics' have referred to as natural magic would be better conceived of as a 'divine, supernatural magic that can bring about supernatural effects'.¹⁸ Lambasting what he perceives as Julius Sperber's support for such a class of magic, Colberg argues that, in granting 'the power to know future things, to rise up to and become friends with God, to speak with the holy angels, to have visions, to receive revelations, and to perform signs and wonderworks... [would] make gods of men'.¹⁹

Colberg is not chiefly interested in arguing for or against the likelihood that hidden preter- or supernatural power could be channelled and directed toward human ends. For god-fearing Christians in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth centuries there was little doubt that the devil and his agents existed and interacted (or had the capacity to interact) with humans, no matter what intellectuals might have been saying about witchcraft in the opening decades of the Enlightenment.²⁰ Furthermore, for all

¹⁵ WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 107.

¹⁶ In this context Western esotericism refers to an analytical category that encompasses various intellectual and spiritual currents, such as, inter alia, *magia*, Christian kabbala, theosophy and early modern Naturphilosophie. These different currents tend to share various traits, such as a belief in 'universal concordances' and 'living nature'. ANTOINE FAIVRE and KAREN-CLAIRE ROSS, "Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions," in *Numen* 42, n.1 (1995): 48-77. It is important to recognise, as Wouter Hanegraaff does, that such a designation works principally for early modern Europe rather than in a more universal sense.

¹⁷ DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum*, book 1, 151-52. By way of context, a new and fully annotated edition of della Porta's *Magia naturalis* had been translated into German and published in 1680 by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth.

¹⁸ DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum*, book 1, 151.

¹⁹ DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum*, book 1, 150.

²⁰ A particularly well-known case of purported bewitching occurred in the Saxon town of Annaberg in the first half of the eighteenth century. FALK BRETSCHNEIDER, *Die unerträgliche Macht der Wahrheit: Magie und Frühaufklärung in Annaberg (1712-1720)* (Munich: Schwaben Verlag, [2001]). While luminaries such as Christian Thomasius were increasingly arguing against the powers of the devil to make a physical compact with humans, it is important to note that the existence of the devil was never called into doubt.

the debate about the ‘disenchantment of the world’, German Protestants living in the long shadow of the Reformation held no fundamental doubt concerning the existence of the genuinely numinous; nor was its incursion into the normal course of events precluded in principle.²¹ For Colberg, the issue at hand concerned no less than the abasement of ‘true’ Christianity at the hands of Hellenistic philosophy.²² At the heart of this was the perceived infiltration of Christian doctrine by Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas, such as emanationism. The orthodox theologian and contemporary of Colberg, Friedrich Christian Bücher, argued that such influences were particularly prominent within Pietism; indeed, that both Pietism and ‘fanaticism’ shared this common source.²³

If we think of magic in the early Enlightenment as a ‘floating concept’ - an idea that lacks a singular or stable meaning in itself but which facilitates engagement with

CHRISTIAN THOMASIVS, *Kurtze Lehr-Sätze von dem Laster der Zauberey* (s.l.: s.n., 1702), 8. Even the sceptical Enlightenment lexicographer Johann Georg Walch maintained a firm commitment to the idea that witches made physical, bodily pacts with the devil. JOHANN GEORG WALCH, *Einleitung In die Philosophie* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1730), 730-31.

²¹ Consensus has been forming for some time around the idea that one really cannot speak of a full-scale ‘disenchantment of the world’ nor was this the result of ascetic Protestantism: ROBERT W. SCRIBNER, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London: Hambledon Press, 1987), 15; ROBERT W. SCRIBNER, ‘Reformation and Desacralisation: From Sacramental World to Moralized Universe,’ in *Problems in the Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe*, ed. RONNIE PO-CHIA HSIA and ROBERT W. SCRIBNER (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), 75-92; OWEN DAVIES, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture, 1736-1951* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 283; ALEXANDRA WALSHAM, “The Reformation and the ‘Disenchantment of the World’ Reassessed,” *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 497-528. Indeed, a salient example of how the Reformation did not lead to the wholesale decline of sacral magic, if in this instance couched within a medical healing context rather than a soteriological one, is to be found in Philip Rieder’s study of Early Modern Geneva. PHILIP RIEDER, “Miracles and Heretics: Protestants and Catholic Healing Practices in and around Geneva 1530-1750,” in *Social History of Medicine* 23, no.2 (2010): 227-43. More broadly, there has been substantial work done illustrating the continuing importance of esotericism (including magic) into the eighteenth century, for example: ANNE-CHARLOTT TREPP and HARTMUT LEHMANN, eds., *Antike Weisheit und kulturelle Praxis: Hermetismus in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001); OWEN DAVIES and WILLEM DE BLECOURT, eds., *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment Europe* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2004); MONIKA NEUGEBAUER-WÖLK, RENKO GEFFARTH, MARKUS MEUMANN, eds., *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Wege in die Moderne* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013). Furthermore – and concerning the nexus between spirit substance and magical power – Annemarie Nooijen has shown how the power of spirits to influence physical phenomena was an ‘integral component’ of learned discourse throughout the eighteenth century. ANNEMARIE NOOIJEN, “Unserm grossen Bekker ein Dankmal”?: Balthasar Bekkers Betoverde Weereld in den deutschen Landen zwischen Orthodoxie und Aufklärung (Münster: Waxmann, 2009), 20-21. For a fascinating study investigating magical practices in the eighteenth century, see JACQUELINE VAN GENT, *Magic, Body and the Self in Eighteenth-Century Sweden* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2009).

²² Wouter Hanegraaff discusses how orthodox Lutherans pointed towards the uptake of emanationism among the ‘enthusiast’ group as evidence of this. WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 115.

²³ FRIEDRICH CHRISTIAN BÜCHER, *Plato Mysticus In Pietista Redivivus, Das ist: Pietistische Ubereinstimmung Mit der Heydnischen Philosophia Platonis Und seiner Nachfolger. Besonders in der Lehre von denen so genandten Himmlischen Entzuckungen ... Schriftmäßig erörtert, und dem Urtheil der Evangelischen Kirchen übergeben* (Danzig: Reiniger, 1699).

a variety of other issues²⁴ - then we begin to open our conceptual lens to the intersection of an array of interrelated yet distinct discourses beneath the rubric of ‘magic’, for instance: the relationship between Christianity and Hellenistic philosophy, mentioned above; the reach of preternatural power (Bücher even went so far as to argue, concretely, that Pietism was inherently diabolic);²⁵ the influence that numinous power could be expected to have over earthly events; substance interaction, and the raft of philosophical, demonological, legal and medical implications that dualist and monist interpretations of this entailed; the relationship between the healing arts and Pietist spirituality; and, not least, the political infighting between proponents of radical Pietism and orthodox Lutheranism, respectively. In short, and to no great surprise, discussions about magic were not always completely about magic, but could rather act as proxies for an engagement with other issues. At the same time, I do not mean to imply cynically that we should ‘read out’ magic from texts ostensibly concerned with it. In rejecting ‘magic’ as a modern analytical category, as Wouter Hanegraaff does, I likewise reject the notion that one can really speak of any concrete ‘magic’ distinct from the particular discursive contexts in which it is articulated.²⁶ From this emic perspective, definitions of magic can and sometimes do change from text to text, but the discursive ‘field of play’ (or ‘battlefield’, in the case of Colberg) is what helps to structure *how* the term is deployed.

For Martius, ‘natural magic’ (‘*magia naturalis*’) refers to the study, manipulation and utilisation of the hidden properties of nature to bring about extraordinary effects.²⁷ This class of magic he contrasts with diabolic magic, by which such effects are brought about through Satanic agency, and ‘artificial-mathematical’ magic, by which he refers to the operation of equally wondrous automata, such as Archimedes’ orb and the flying pigeons of Archytas.²⁸ These distinctions and definitions were commonplace in the intellectual lexicon of the early German Enlightenment.²⁹ Where the discussion becomes more nuanced concerns Martius’s definition of ‘cabala’ ‘a type of magic’ which ‘in its broadest sense... explains the powers of those created, natural and heavenly things, and clarifies the secrets of Holy Scripture with philosophical principles; for which reason it differs little or not at all from natural magic’.³⁰ Indeed, there is the sense from this interpretation of ‘cabala’ that Martius does not really

²⁴ I adopt this concept from: KOEN VERMEIR, “The ‘physical prophet’ and the powers of imagination. Part I: a case-study on prophecy, vapours and the imagination (1685-1710),” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* (2004): 569.

²⁵ FRIEDRICH CHRISTIAN BÜCHER, *Plato Mysticus*, 195-99.

²⁶ WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 168.

²⁷ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 29-30, note B.

²⁸ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 7ff.

²⁹ See, for instance: JOHANN GEORG WALCH, *Philosophisches Lexicon* (Leipzig: Gleditschen, 1726), 1697-1702; JOHANN HEINRICH ZEDLER, *Grosses vollständiges Universal Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, vol.19 (Leipzig and Halle: 1732-54), 287-304.

³⁰ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 22.

associate this term with Jewish kabbalah³¹ outright, indicating that the numerological ‘cabala mercava’ (in which, he states, he is also greatly interested) is more closely aligned with this. It is important to note at this juncture that the term ‘cabala’ was also very much a floating concept in some ways in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While it was and had been broadly associated with Jewish mysticism, what we might think of as a theosophical (and ultimately Christian) cabala appeared in the early modern world within spiritualist and otherwise heterodox discourses. In his *Kabalisticae Precationes*, Julius Sperber states that cabala does not come from nature but is rather an inspired gift of divine knowledge ‘poured by God into the hearts of holy people’; it is a ‘heavenly magic’ that allows one to ‘see future things’, to become unified with God and to be ‘illuminated by the Holy Spirit’.³² The Catholic Jan Baptista van Helmont echoes this idea, stating that cabala is to be thought of as a form of inner contemplation designed to reawaken one’s inner ‘spirit powers (magicam)’ lost as a consequence of the Fall.³³ At the same time, this notion was also perceived by orthodox Lutheran writers as one of the intellectual supports (the other being ‘magia’) of fanatical ideas. In arguing that cabala and magia were like ‘two weak legs’ propping-up belief in direct revelation, Johann Sensti, an arch-critic of the alchemist and radical Pietist Johann Konrad Dippel, argued that cabala was concerned with knowledge of the inner self and magic pertained to the illumination of nature.³⁴ Drawing directly and admittedly from Colberg, Sensti states:

According to the opinion of the fanatics, magic teaches one to know the Creator and Creation and how to venerate the name of the Lord. The Holy Spirit grants this, as well as the heavenly wisdom to understand the high secrets of God, to know future things, to rise-up to God and to become friends with Him, to discourse with the angels, to have visions, to perform wonders and to receive a taste of the eternal bliss to come.³⁵

For the ‘fanatics’, Colberg argues, cabala and magia are two ways of getting at the same thing. While cabala refers to the inspired knowledge of ‘divine and natural things’, a form of ‘inner revelation’, magia accesses this knowledge through the investigation of the ‘book of nature’.³⁶ The book of nature is nothing other ‘than the universal light that is hidden in all creatures, the ideal light-world that harbours the ideas of all things,

³¹ As a point of distinction, I use the term ‘cabala’ when referring to the ideas of Christian writers such as Sperber. I use ‘kabbalah’ to refer to the Jewish mystical tradition proper.

³² JULIUS SPERBER, *Kabalisticae Precationes. Das ist: Außerlesene schöne Gebet* (Amsterdam: Betkuis, 1675), preface [unpaginated].

³³ JAN BAPTISTA VAN HELMONT, *Aufgang der Artzney-Kunst, Das ist: Noch nie erhörte Grund-Lehren von der Natur, zu einer neuen Beförderung der Artzney-Sachen, so wol Die Kranckheiten zu vertreiben, als Ein langes Leben zu erlangen* (Nuremberg: Endter, 1683), 1031.

³⁴ JOHANN SENSTI, *Stokk-Blinder Weg-Weyser. An Christiani Democriti (also benahmten) Weg-Weyser zum verlohrenen Licht, und Recht; oder dessen Anführunge Wie der äussere Mensch endlich ... Zu ihrem Natur- und Wesens-Gott, natürlich nieder zu bringen seyn* (Hamburg: Heyl, 1708), 13.

³⁵ JOHANN SENSTI, *Stokk-Blinder Weg-Weyser*, 17.

³⁶ DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum*, book 1, 153.

such that when this light is known, so too are all things'.³⁷ The outward 'letters' of the book of nature – its signatures – are 'filled with the Word – that is, the inner light – and the Holy Spirit – that is, the universal world-spirit [*Welt-Geist*]' so constituting 'the inner light and ethereal spirit'.³⁸ In addressing the question of how one is to come to know this inner light, Colberg cites the English alchemist Robert Fludd when he states that one must be endowed with a the gift of the Holy Spirit to read the divine letters of the book of nature.³⁹ While cabala and magia are initially established as two paths to divine wisdom, what becomes apparent is that the performance of magic – reading the 'letters' of nature – first requires an inner spiritual transformation.

This emphasis on inner revelation, spiritual transformation and rebirth, and the subsequent capacity to perform wonders situated magia and cabala within a markedly heterodox current. Indeed, as Colberg saw it, the central problem of 'platonichermetic Christianity' was that it proposed an alternate soteriology that attempted to diminish the redemptive power of Christ. That 'fake Christians' (*Schein-Christen*) could utilise Scripture as the 'mantel of their unbelief'⁴⁰ and that the whole sordid business of magic could then be deployed to make prophets of fanatics⁴¹ clearly deeply irritated and concerned Colberg. And it was precisely the conceptual nebulosity of the term 'magia naturalis' - for indeed 'magia' could be just as Janus-faced as 'nature' in the hands of radicals – that served to obfuscate crucial differences between safe, domesticated orders of knowledge and their heretical siblings. If magia were ever to be truly domesticated then one needed first to divest it utterly and entirely of any spark of the numinous, to resolutely snuff out the hidden light of nature and curtail the reach of the divine hand in quotidian affairs. In this context, natural magic could present a similar conundrum for orthodox Lutheranism as natural theology: both could offer an empirical buttress to established religion; but peer too closely into nature's warp and weft and one could quickly lose sight of important ontological distinctions. It was this potential for an almost monistic 'slippage' at the very core of natural magic that rendered, in part, the entire concept of 'magia' so problematic for Colberg and his ilk. In the decade following the publication of *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum* a young physician from Erfurt would go on to defend and then publish a dissertation that implicitly challenged a fundamental assumption of Colberg's text.

Martius and the *Unterricht von der Magia Naturali*

Magic should serve our wellbeing, according to Martius. More specifically, and within a medical context, the fundamental aim of employing natural magic is to remedy those

³⁷ DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum*, book 1, 154

³⁸ DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum*, book 1, 154

³⁹ DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum*, book 1, 156-57.

⁴⁰ DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum*, book 1, 168.

⁴¹ DANIEL COLBERG, *Das Platonisch-Hermetisch Christenthum*, book 1, 158.

ills that afflict our bodies.⁴² Martius ultimately based his cosmology on the notion that a hidden spirit essence pervaded and animated nature, and – following the genealogy of this concept in his principle source, Thomasius’s treatise on spirit – that this essence was a form of divine emanation. Further to this, nature was eminently readable – its ‘letters’ emblazoned in the form of signatures – and its hidden properties could be manipulated to create sympathetic cures. Although the possibility of personal spiritual renewal is always in the background of the *Unterricht*, situated as it is within the very sources Martius cites – Thomasius, Arndt and Böhme – Martius’s decision to foreground the practical dimensions of natural magic challenged a key assumption in Colberg’s text: that the end-goal of magia, in a theosophical context, was spiritual rebirth and the attainment of divine wisdom. I interpret Martius’s inclusion of a reference to Arndt not primarily as a veiled call for spiritual renewal and ascension but rather as a reaffirmation of the importance of providing succour for our imperfect, fallen bodies. Magia is, for Martius, an imperfect art in a likewise imperfect, post-Lapsarian world: the manipulation of outward signs and structures guided by a conviction that an inner light exists within nature. It is therefore not so much the search for divine wisdom that articulates a thoroughly Christian spirituality, but rather the application of whatever secrets that nature has, in the darkened and tarnished state of our fallen world, deigned to impart to us.

Martius sets out to explain how it is that sympathetic cures work. Such remedies invariably involve action at a distance, such as ‘transplantation’: in its broadest sense, the carrying-over or transplantation of an ailment to something else. As Martius is quick to point out, there are many varieties of transplantation, each with a somewhat different method. In principle, the idea is to transplant a part of the individual’s ‘life-spirit’ (*Lebens-Geist* or *Mumia*), in the form of a ‘magnet’ comprised of bodily fluids or excretions, into an inanimate object. At this point particular herbs or roots can be applied to the magnet (or it can be fed to an animal, such as a dog) and the ensuing healing transformation of the ‘Mumia-magnet’ is expected to, in turn, heal the individual by way of sympathy. Of great importance for this process is the capacity for spirit to operate by way of sympathetic attraction and antipathetic repulsion. This is the basis for Martius’s discussion of the properties of matter and spirit.⁴³

Martius devotes some time to explaining how one can explain sympathetic power by recourse to a corpuscular-mechanical framework involving light. According to this interpretation, when rays of light interact with objects, they take with them small particles or corpuscles of this matter. Carried on the rays of light, these particles interact with one another, bouncing around and linking up with those of a similar nature. Indeed, Martius claims that there is a natural affinity between similar particles

⁴² JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 33.

⁴³ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 77ff.

and that, upon meeting, they travel quickly together toward their ‘centre’. That is, when the particles of a particular illness are transplanted from a patient to another item they will attempt, initially, to connect with those of the object; they will then, if the treatment is successful, return to the patient. Of course, this all hinges upon the particles being of the same shape, as Martius states:

For otherwise not all roots and herbs will be beneficial in the transplanting of a particular illness because, for example, the pores of a root might be three-cornered, whereas the shape of the illness particles might be round or four-cornered. The pores of the skin are sometimes the cause why the illness particles cannot return to the body from those things into which they have been transplanted... For the sweat pores cannot be extended to accept illnesses if their nature is so constituted that they are not the same [shape] as the particles of this or that illness.⁴⁴

Martius’ corpuscular interpretation is in fact a thinly-veiled spirit model, which he freely confesses. Indeed, he states that he wishes to show that action at a distance could be explained by way of ‘mechanical laws’ ‘so the Cartesians would not be able to dismiss those magical operations and cures – which I have thoroughly grounded on this basis – as pure superstition.’⁴⁵ Moving beyond this intellectual exercise, he states that corpuscles are in fact a combination of spirit and matter and that light itself is a ‘fluid spiritual substance’, the medium by which and through which hidden operations occur.⁴⁶ Indeed, ‘matter can neither move nor exist without spirit’, and it is this spirit power that forms the basis of all natural magic.⁴⁷ This universal spirit power that connects and moves all things in nature is the world-spirit, also variously referred to as the world-soul. Martius describes the world-spirit as:

A heavenly entity, dispersed throughout all the universe, that nature brought forth at the beginning of the world. [The world-spirit] touches both the uppermost parts of the heavens and the deepest depths of the earth and is both a simple substance and invisible. Because it is freed of all corporeal burdens it fills and illuminates everything... this substance... delivers all heavenly influences to the lower [earthly] things... whose innermost spark it ignites and whose powers it imparts.⁴⁸

Since he realises that the topic of the *Weltgeist* is ‘abhorrent to many’, Martius does not go into detail on this, telling the reader to consult Christian Thomasius’ pneumatological work, *Versuch vom Wesen des Geistes* for further information.⁴⁹

What becomes apparent from even a cursory examination of the *Versuch* is that Martius largely adopts Thomasius’s theory of matter and spirit. Christian Thomasius,

⁴⁴ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 48, note Z.

⁴⁵ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 51-52.

⁴⁶ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 39; 53.

⁴⁷ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 52-55.

⁴⁸ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 37-38, note K.

⁴⁹ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 38.

Professor of Jurisprudence at Halle, also well-known for his later attack on the possibility of witchcraft, had penned a text in 1699 arguing, among other things, for the ontological superiority of spirit over matter.⁵⁰ Indeed, as Thomasius argues, it is spirit that brings matter into existence: ‘I maintain that in all corporeal stuff there is a spirit, and that consequently no corporeal thing can exist without a spirit; a spirit, however, can well exist without a corporeal form.’⁵¹ Thought of as an abstract principle, matter is purely passive, and as Thomasius states: ‘What is purely passive cannot exist in and of itself, rather it requires something active to bring it forth from nothing and make it into something.’⁵² Spirit is therefore not only the substance in which ‘all material things are moved’ but is also that which imparts movement to matter and which gives it shape.⁵³

Turning to the nature of spirit substance, Thomasius states that the all-pervasive, active spirit in the world is the ‘soul of the world’ or ‘universal spirit’. This substance is two-fold: a warming, illuminating spirit which Thomasius identifies as ‘male’; and a cooling spirit (female) that also communicates light and warmth that it receives from the warming spirit to matter. Both spirits combine and ‘penetrate’ and ‘encircle’ matter, which Thomasius conceives of as the ‘fruit’ of their union.⁵⁴ This discussion articulates well the idea that, in Thomasius’s metaphysics, matter and spirit in essence collapse in on one another. As abstractions, Thomasius notes that spirit and matter are ‘mutually opposed things’, and so therefore also possess opposing properties, ‘and what has opposing properties is not a [unified] thing’. The key to their union lies in a melding of their properties so that they relinquish those aspects that would otherwise set them apart.⁵⁵ Returning to the notion of the world-spirit, it becomes apparent that Thomasius sees matter as a thing brought forth from the ‘servile’ spirits – collectively

⁵⁰ It should be noted that Thomasius eventually recanted these ideas. Thomas Ahnert explains how they were associated with enthusiasm in the early Enlightenment, and that it was on account of internal pressure from the Halle Faculty of Theology and external pressure from detractors such as Johann Friedrich Mayer that he relinquished them. THOMAS AHNERT, “Enthusiasm and Enlightenment: Faith and Philosophy in the Thought of Christian Thomasius,” *Modern Intellectual History* 2, no. 2 (2005): 155-56; 164-68. Ian Hunter notes that it is indeed difficult to come to terms with Thomasius’s ideas on spirit given the scholar’s ‘exemplary Enlightenment disputations against heresy and witchcraft prosecutions’. IAN HUNTER, *The Secularisation of the Confessional State: The Political Thought of Christian Thomasius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 69. Although as Thomas Ahnert has rightly argued, one should not overlook this aspect when examining the total corpus of Thomasius’s work.

⁵¹ CHRISTIAN THOMASIVS, *Versuch vom Wesen des Geistes Oder Grund-Lehren, So wohl zur natürlichen Wissenschaft als der Sitten-Lehre: In welchen gezeigt wird, daß Licht und Luft ein geistiges Wesen sey, und alle Körper aus Materie und Geist bestehen, auch in der gantzen Natur eine anziehende Krafft, in dem Menschen aber ein zweyfacher guter und böser Geist sey...* (Halle: Salfelden, 1699), 35.

⁵² CHRISTIAN THOMASIVS, *Versuch*, 36.

⁵³ CHRISTIAN THOMASIVS, *Versuch*, 70.

⁵⁴ CHRISTIAN THOMASIVS, *Versuch*, 72-73.

⁵⁵ CHRISTIAN THOMASIVS, *Versuch*, 34-35.

the world-spirit – which in turn is brought forth from the essence of the ‘uppermost spirit’⁵⁶:

The uppermost spirit is a pure active being, a pure power, a power of all powers, that moves everything, that also penetrates the most subtle spirits, but which is itself immovable. It extends everything, including the other spirits, but is itself not extended. A light without darkness that illuminates everything. A warmth without cold that warms everything... a servile spirit is a power, that receives its being and essence from the uppermost spirit and is equipped to carry out [the uppermost spirit’s] will.⁵⁷

Sympathy and antipathy – two fundamental components of natural magic – are explained as the result of the interaction between spirits,⁵⁸ thought of in this context as ‘determinations’ of the universal world-spirit.⁵⁹

That nature is animated and illuminated by an inner spirit essence of divine provenance in Martius’s text is clear not only through his direct reference to Thomasius, but also to his inclusion of a reference to the Lusatian mystic Jakob Böhme. Indeed, this inner light is not only immanent within natural bodies but is also eminently readable. Martius states that while one might not readily perceive the causes of natural magical effects, nonetheless one can learn of the healing powers of these plants through their manifest properties or signatures.⁶⁰ Conventionally understood, the doctrine of signatures involved comparing the exterior shapes and properties of medicinal substances – plant, animal and mineral – with the organs of the body and the conditions brought on by particular illnesses. For instance, *portulaca oleracea*, perceived to possess leaves resembling kidneys were thought to be beneficial for ailments of that organ,⁶¹ and *acetosa* (presumably *rumex acetosa*) – on account of its reddish properties – was understood to help to treat dysentery (*rotbe Rubr*, ‘bloody flux’).⁶² As the outward, divinely-inscribed markers of an otherwise hidden network of correspondences, signatures represented a means of accessing primordial – since

⁵⁶ Thomasius later identifies the ‘uppermost spirit’ with God. Thomasius, *Versuch*, 96.

⁵⁷ CHRISTIAN THOMASIUS, *Versuch*, 72.

⁵⁸ CHRISTIAN THOMASIUS, *Versuch*, 151.

⁵⁹ I draw this term from a slightly later text. It is a helpful way to consider contemporary ideas about how the world-spirit acted within individual things: the astral spirit was indeed individuated at a microlevel but remained at the same time a constitutive component of the world-spirit. GEORG WILHELM WEGNER, *Schau-Platz vieler Ungereimten Meynungen und Erzählungen* (Berlin; Leipzig: Haude, 1735-1736), 382. Although Wegner was highly sceptical, on philosophical grounds, of the existence of the world-soul.

⁶⁰ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 65-67.

⁶¹ MARCUS ANTONIUS ZIMARA, *Marci Antonii Zimarae Magische Artzney-Kunst. Darinnen enthalten Ein gantz neuer überaus reicher Schatz verschiedener Magisch-Naturgemäßer Geheimnisse, insonderheit aber von Sigillen: allerhand verborgenen Signaturen und Bildnissen ... Krafft derer alle und jede Gebrechen des Menschlichen Leibs ... zu beilen seynd* (Frankfurt: Zieger, 1685), 167; JOHANN ANDREAS SCHLEGEL, *Tractatus Medicus, Von Natürlichen, unnatürlichen und wider die Natur lauffenden Dingen. In Vergleichung der grossen Welt mit dem Menschen, der kleinen Welt, durch die IV. Elementa, IV. Temperamenta, IV. Sanguinis Humores, IV. Complexiones, IV. Tempora Anni, IV. Trigonos, oder Triplicitates, der XII. Himmlischen Zeichen beschrieben* (Nuremberg: Hoffman, 1686), 317.

⁶² JOHANN ANDREAS SCHLEGEL, *Tractatus Medicus*, 403.

lost – knowledge imparted to Adam in his pre-Lapsarian state.⁶³ For Martius, they were the ‘best means’ of understanding the healing powers of plants, although he is quick to note that one should not rely chiefly on the extent to which a herb resembles a body part (as, he argues, della Porta and Oswald Croll do). Rather, one should carefully consider the ‘colour, smell, taste, thickness, difference of shape and whether the leaves are rough or smooth’ when contemplating the hidden virtues of the plant.⁶⁴

Significantly, Martius includes in his discussion of signatures a short reference to Jakob Böhme’s *De Signatura Rerum*. Martius states that the ‘Philosophus Teutonicus’ has taught the ‘correct basis of this mystery’ and that although the text is ‘indeed very difficult to understand, it is absolutely worth the effort. Whosoever is able to read it should do so.’⁶⁵ His testimonial continues on to say that others, such as Oswald Croll, have ‘only skirted around the shell [of the matter], but not touched its core’.⁶⁶ While Martius provides a small disclaimer that not all of Böhme’s ideas are correct, nonetheless he finishes by stating that ‘to the best of my memory, no one has taught the doctrine of signatures so completely as this man’.⁶⁷ The inclusion and praise of Böhme is telling inasmuch as it further suggests that Martius harbours heterodox views about the relationship between nature and divine power. Indeed, in *De Signatura Rerum* Böhme states that by contemplating the signatures of things in nature, one learns to know not only oneself, but also God; that it is through an observation of the ‘outer forms of all creatures’, such as their ‘resonance, voice and language’, that one can come to ‘know the hidden spirit’.⁶⁸ Within Pietism, the study of nature in this way could be seen as ‘*praxis pietatis*’, as Anne-Charlott Trepp has indicated, as could the study of medicine.⁶⁹ Indeed, for Johann Arndt medicine was a means of exploring the inner reaches of divine immanence in nature: the true ‘books’ of learning for medicine were God and nature, and the ‘indwelling healing powers’ within nature ultimately

⁶³ On the influence of the Lapsarian narrative on medicine, including discourses about longevity, see: PETER HARRISON, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 162ff.; and in an alchemical context: GEORGIANA D. HEDESAN, “Reproducing the Tree of Life: Radical Prolongation of Life and Biblical Interpretation in Seventeenth-Century Medical Alchemy”, *Ambix* 60, no. 4 (2013): 341-60.

⁶⁴ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 67, note T.

⁶⁵ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 69.

⁶⁶ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 69.

⁶⁷ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 69, note U.

⁶⁸ JAKOB BÖHME, *De Signatura Rerum* (s.l.: s.n., 1635), 15.

⁶⁹ ANNE-CHARLOTT TREPP, *Von der Glückseligkeit alles zu wissen. Die Erforschung der Natur als religiöse Praxis in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2009). On medicine as a component of practical piety, see: HANNS-PETER NEUMANN, *Natura sagax – Die geistige Natur. Zum Zusammenhang von Naturphilosophie und Mystik in der frühen Neuzeit am Beispiel Johann Arndts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2004), 34; VERA FABHAUER, “Selbsterkenntnis – Naturerfahrung – Gottesoffenbarung. Religiöses und ärztliches Virtuositentum bei Johann Christian Senckenberg und Johann Konrad Dippel”, in *Prediger, Charismatiker, Berufene: Rolle und Einfluss religiöse Virtuosen*, CHRISTINE AKA and DAGMAR HÄNEL, eds, (Münster: Waxman, 2018), 56-57.

‘constituted both medicine and the physician’.⁷⁰ In discovering, by way of signatures, the hidden virtues of things – in extracting them chemically from their ‘little shells or containers’ – the ‘goodness of the Creator’ could be ‘tasted in his work’.⁷¹

The foregoing references to both Thomasius and Böhme suggest an important and pronounced link to the idea of spiritual rebirth within Martius. While Martius does not marshal these writers overtly to address this topic, it is important to note the significance of spiritual rebirth for their respective cosmologies.⁷² Indeed, Thomasius’s theory of matter and his ideas about spirit coalesce around an explanation for biological life, human desires and the capacity to overcome these and be reunified with God: our very souls, comprised of the substance of the world-spirit, possess three components (‘the evil trinity’; *die böse Dreyheit*), each of which corresponds to an internal organ. The seat of our desires is the heart, which leads the stomach (associated with nourishment and procreation) and the brain (imagination); all three interact in various ways. In order to overcome our desires it is necessary, according to Thomasius, to nurture an indwelling divine essence or ‘spirit’, the third part of a tripartite anthropology alongside the body and the soul. When such a component is allowed to grow, the union between God and the self strengthens, overcoming and ‘rul[ing] the evil trinity’ and bringing about an inner spiritual rebirth.⁷³ Martius echoes this sentiment of overcoming natural limitations through spiritual renewal in the *Unterricht*, arguing that all but reborn Christians are prone to astral influence:

...all sublunary bodies and all humans are subject to the influence and control of celestial bodies, except for those Christians who possess a true and living faith, in whom the power of the Holy Spirit has broken and choked off celestial influence, such that they shall no longer be known as the children of Saturn, Mars, Venus etc., but rather as the children of God, as the blessed Arndt has shown from Scripture.⁷⁴

This reference to Arndt is particularly revealing. The passage that Martius cites originates in the second book of the *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christenthum*. At the very end of book two, in chapter fifty-eight, titled ‘That the natural heavens and the whole

⁷⁰ Johann Arndt, cited in CARLOS GILLY, “Hermes oder Luther. Der philosophische Hintergrund von Johann Arndts Frühschrift ‘De antiqua philosophia et divina veterum Magorum Sapientia recuperanda,’” in HANS OTTE and HANS SCHNEIDER, eds, *Frömmigkeit oder Theologie. Johann Arndt und die Vier Bücher vom wahren Christenthum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 179.

⁷¹ JOHANN ARNDT, *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christenthum*, book 4 (Magdeburg: Francke, 1620), 27.

⁷² As Martius’s cosmology connects most closely with that of Thomasius, I will focus on this connection. It is, however, important to note the central role that spiritual rebirth plays in Böhme when considering his inclusion in Martius’s text. For more on spiritual rebirth in Böhme, see: JAKOB BÖHME, *Der Weeg zu Christo. Verfasset in neun Büchlein. Das 1. Von wahrer Busse. 2. Vom heiligen Gebeth. 3. Ein Schlüssel Göttlicher Geheimnisse. 4. Von wahrer Gelassenheit. 5. Von der Wiedergeburt. 6. Vom übersinnlichen Leben. 7. Von Göttlicher Beschauligkeit. 8. Von der erleuchteten un[d] unerleuchteten Seele. 9. Von den vier Complexionen* (Amsterdam: s.n., 1682).

⁷³ CHRISTIAN THOMASIUS, *Versuch*, 188-90.

⁷⁴ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 61-63.

world with all [its] natural powers are subordinated to the faith and prayer of a Christian', Arndt discusses the matter of divine wisdom. He begins this chapter with a discussion of astrology, and how the biblical prophets maligned and punished Jewish astrologers. This was, according to Arndt, because the prophets maintained that they alone could speak with the voice of God, and that prognostication was impossible without this gift of divine grace.⁷⁵ The question of whether it is possible to foretell the future delves into the related matter of whether celestial bodies may have any influence over human wellbeing. It is here that Arndt states that those who have been spiritually reborn are no longer subordinate to astrological influences but instead hold sway over *them*:

For the firmament and the whole of nature cannot harm those who are born from God and who live in the new birth (*in der neuen geburt leben*)... the divinely wise person rules over the stars. For those who are reborn are above the heavens and their vicissitudes, and are no longer children of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars... the Sun, Mercury, the Moon, but are rather the children of God and live in their faith, through which they elude the powers and influences of the stars. Those, however, who do not live in the new birth, but rather according to the flesh should be afraid, because they live in a heathen way and so must suffer the punishments [lit. 'blows'; *Streiche*] of the natural heavens.⁷⁶

This reference is highly significant, as it taps into a particularly radical, and as yet under-examined discourse concerning whether spiritual rebirth could result in a renewed, perfect and immortal body replete with the innate knowledge of Adam and (by extension) the capacity to perform magic not through the 'manual' manipulation of outer things, but through an act of will (newly reunified with God).⁷⁷ If this seems far-fetched, consider for a moment Arndt's letter to Erasmus Wolfahrt in which he argued that spiritual rebirth entailed a return to something like the purportedly iliastic body

⁷⁵ JOHANN ARNDT, *Vier Bücher*, book 2, 431-32.

⁷⁶ JOHANN ARNDT, *Vier Bücher*, book 2, 433-34.

⁷⁷ To the best of my knowledge, there are no texts devoted solely to this topic in the German context, only scattered references throughout various texts. On the importance of spiritual rebirth for a return to the pre-Lapsarian condition see, for example: HANNS-PETER NEUMANN, *Natura sagax*, 116; also 230 for a discussion of this in relation to Johann Arndt. On similar connections in Jakob Böhme, especially emphasising the physical as well as spiritual dimensions of rebirth, see: WOUTER HANEGRAAFF, 'Human Potential before Esalen: An Experiment in Anachronism?', in JEFFREY J. KRIPAL and GLENN W. SHUCK, eds, *On the Edge of the Future: Esalen and the Evolution of American Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2005), 28-30. For an excellent discussion of physical transfiguration as part of rebirth in radical Pietist discourses see: BURKHARD DOHM, "'Ich werde ihr wesen durchdringend tingiren.' Leib und Natur im radikalen Pietismus um 1700," in BARBARA MAHLMANN-BAUER, ed., *Scientiae et artes: Die Vermittlung alten und neuen Wissens in Literatur, Kunst und Musik* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 2: 733-48. Kristine Hannak notes the importance of 'Vergottung' in Hermetic discourse: KRISTINE HANNAK, *Geist-Reiche Kritik. Hermetik, Mystik und das Werden der Aufklärung in Spiritualistischer Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 49. Her study returns to this at various points in discussing the influence of Hermetic thought on scholars such as Sebastian Franck, Valentin Weigel, Jakob Böhme and Johann Konrad Dippel, although the connection between rebirth and a return to the pre-Lapsarian condition is not the main theme of her analysis. Hannak's and Neumann's texts also remind us that, via Böhme and Arndt, respectively, Martius' ideas indirectly tapped into the Hermetic tradition.

of Adam.⁷⁸ Through this one sees a pronounced connection between spiritual rebirth and the acquisition of divine wisdom in the early Arndt.⁷⁹ Martius indicates that he finds the Arndt passage to be highly significant when he frames his inclusion of it by saying that ‘because the matter is of the utmost importance, such that it cannot be covered with a mere two or three words, I want to pass over it in silence, except to say that all sublunary bodies and people are subject to the influence and power of the stars, save those Christians who are endowed with a true and living faith...’⁸⁰

While positioning Martius firmly within these heterodox currents, it is important to evaluate the extent to which he ultimately proposes spiritual transformation as the key to both understanding and performing magic. In order to illuminate this somewhat, I return briefly to his discussion of signatures. Having stated in no uncertain terms that he finds these to be the ‘best means’ of understanding the hidden powers of plants, Martius continues on to say that ‘whoever understands these well, it would appear, has attained the first degree of Solomonian wisdom.’⁸¹ Although Martius does not stop to explain what he means by this statement, he follows on immediately with an exhortation to pray for divine inspiration in the matter. Indeed, diligence and prayer are essential components – the ‘key’ – for the attainment of the knowledge of signatures, and this ‘closed book of nature’, once opened, ‘will teach the true powers of physic and the most certain methods of healing’. Prerequisite for the attainment of this knowledge – the foundation upon which diligent study rests – is a ‘humble heart that is aware of its own ignorance and that calls fervently to God, that out of His grace he might channel and let flow the brook of his highest and most essential wisdom to it – a heart encircled by the thickest darkness of the mind.’⁸²

⁷⁸ Indeed, there was a shift in Arndt’s conception of the corporeal manifestations of rebirth between his letter to Erasmus Wolfart (1599) and the first edition of his *Vier Bücher vom Wahren Christentum* (1605). In his letter to Wolfart, Arndt argued that inner spiritual rebirth resulted in the restoration of a new, outer ‘flesh of Christ’. By 1605, he had shifted away from this idea, arguing instead that rebirth resulted only in an inner spiritual transformation. THOMAS ILLG, *Ein anderer Mensch werden: Johann Arndts Verständnis der Imitatio Christi als Anleitung zu einem wahren Christentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 117; 124-26.

⁷⁹ That this taps into a broader and longer-lived discourse about the relationship between spiritual rebirth and the restoration of lost, pre-Lapsarian knowledge and *magia divina* is suggested by a careful examination of, *inter alia*, the following sources: JULIUS SPERBER, *Kabalisticae Precationes*, preface; CHRISTOPH GLASER, *Novum Laboratorium Medico-Chymicum. Das ist: Neu-eröffnete Chymische Artzney- und Werck-Schul* (Nuremberg: Endter, 1677), 606-607; CHRISTIAN HOBURG, *Theologia Mystica; Oder Geheime Krafft-Theologia der Alten* (Amsterdam: Betkuis, 1700), 272-73; BALTHASAR KÖPKE, *Sapientia Dei In Mysterio Crucis Christi Abscondita. Die wahre Theologia Mystica Oder Ascetica Aller Gläubigen A. und N. Test. Aus I. Corinth II. v. 6.7 Entgegen gesetzt Der falschen aus der Heydnischen Philosophia Platonis und seiner Nachfolger* (Halle: Waysen-Haus, 1700), 103ff.; CHRISTIANUS DEMOCRITUS [JOHANN KONRAD DIPPEL], *Weg-Weiser Zum Liecht und Recht in Der äussern Natur. Oder Entdecktes Geheimniß, Des Segens, und des Fluchs in denen natürlichen Körpern* (Berlin: s.n., 1704), 54-55.

⁸⁰ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 61-63.

⁸¹ JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 68.

⁸² JOHANN NIKOLAUS MARTIUS, *Unterricht*, 68.

While the idea of healing – that is, the action of the physician – as a form of divine inspiration (akin to the ‘fiery tongues of the apostles’ under the control of the Holy Spirit) appears in one prominent source in the *Unterricht*,⁸³ Martius primarily treats the healing arts in a very down-to-earth manner. This should also come as no surprise given his role as *medicus practicus* and the number of direct interactions with his patients that this would have entailed. I interpret this practical, applied approach in Martius, alongside his emphasis on the importance of divine inspiration, as well as his support for Thomasius, Böhme and Arndt, as indicative of a nuanced approach toward magic: divine wisdom and the performance of *magia divina* is an ideal that one might arrive at through contemplation, inspiration and ultimately inner spiritual transformation; however, *magia naturalis* is concerned with the post-Lapsarian condition – an awareness that, without ‘spiritual eyes’,⁸⁴ we glimpse the inner light only imperfectly and must do our best in this fallen state to decode, however crudely, the ciphers of nature for the benefit of our fellow men and women.

Conclusion

An examination of the small cache of documents in the Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv Wolfenbüttel mentioned at the outset of this analysis begins to shed light on the identity and professional life of the elusive author of a particularly prominent eighteenth-century text on natural magic. While the *Unterricht* and its author, Martius, have received scant scholarly attention in the past fifty years, the presence of casual references to this work in other texts in the eighteenth-century⁸⁵ – not to mention the fact that the *Unterricht* remained, albeit in modified form, in print until the early nineteenth century – suggest that Martius and his text were well-known in learned circles in the early German Enlightenment. The illumination of Martius’s patronage networks further suggest that he was not merely a ‘Braunschweig physician’⁸⁶ but that he also circulated within – and was an important functionary of – the ducal court. Indeed, in his position as one of the *Leibmedici* at court, Martius would have likely been in a position of personal proximity to Duke August Wilhelm and his successors; not to mention his initial benefactor, Duke Anton Ulrich, who himself showed a keen interest in the heavily esoteric *magnum opus* of J.B. van Helmont, translated into German as *Aufgang der Artzney-Kunst* – a work concerning, in part, the relationship between

⁸³ OSWALD CROLL, *Tractat Von den innerlichen Signatur, oder Zeichen aller Dinge. Oder Von der wahren und lebendigen Anatomia der grossen und kleinen Welt* (Frankfurt: Tampach, 1629), 10-11.

⁸⁴ This term refers to the idea that a reborn Christian has a ‘spiritual sight’ by which they can, *inter alia*, see or otherwise sense divine presence in nature. See, for example: Arndt, *Vier Bücher*, book 4, 2.

⁸⁵ See for instance: JOHANN GEORG WALCH, *Philosophisches Lexicon*, 108; WILHELM WEGNER, *Schau-Platz*, vol. 2, 658; CHRISTIAN FRIEDRICH DANIEL, *Beyträge zur medicinischen Gelehrsamkeit, in welchen theils allerhand auserlesene und nützliche Materien aus der Artzney-Wissenschaft abgehandelt...werden* (halle: Renger, 1749), 4-5; HEINRICH ZEDLER, *Lexicon*, vol. 19, 1862.

⁸⁶ This is essentially the designation given in the title of Martius’s text: ‘Jo. Nicol. Martii Med. Doct. und Practici zu Braunschweig’.

medicine, natural magic and spirit power.⁸⁷ And while there is no evidence at present to suggest that Martius himself was actively involved in the collecting practices or administration of the library, it is perhaps salient to note that his initial ‘sponsor’ in Braunschweig was none other than the secretary of the court library, Georg Sievers.

While under-developed at this juncture, such a connection might nonetheless remind us of the politically symbolic importance of libraries, such as the Herzog August Bibliothek, in the early Enlightenment: as not only repositories of knowledge, but as institutions of power embodying (at times, uncoordinated and messy) ‘regimes’ of organisation and legitimation, epistemic as much as political and social. Situated within this ambit – ensconced within a complex matrix of immediately personal, political and confessional networks at a major centre of intellectual life in the duchy – Martius clearly felt secure enough in his position to not only reproduce the Latin version of his text, but to publish it in numerous German editions also. It is through an investigation of the ideas presented in the *Unterricht*, and their particularly heterodox implications, that the present discussion thus contributes to the exploration of the largely unexamined intersections of Pietist spirituality, esotericism and the healing arts at the court of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel.

⁸⁷ MECHTHILDE RAABE, ed, *Leser und Lektüre vom 17. zum 19. Jahrhundert: Die Ausleihbücher der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel* (Munich: Saur, 1989-1998). This text, in three parts and eight volumes, is invaluable for cross-checking library use records not only by title of the work but also chronologically.