

Is Panentheism Naturalistic?

How Panentheistic Conceptions of Divine Action Imply Dualism

Mikael Leidenhag

ABSTRACT This paper will argue that panentheism fails to avoid ontological dualism, and that the naturalistic assumption being employed in panentheism undermines the idea of God acting in physical reality. Moreover, given panentheism's lack of success with respect to avoiding dualism, it becomes unclear to what extent panentheism represents a naturalistic approach in the dialogue between science and religion.

KEYWORDS Clayton, Philip; divine action; emergence theory; Griffin, David Ray; panentheism

Several thinkers in the science-religion dialogue (SRD) maintain that classical theism is no longer tenable, and that science mediates a view of reality not compatible with the ontology expressed by a traditional or supernaturalistic theism. According to this view, the ontological gap between God and the universe is deeply problematic since God, in order to bring about a certain event, has to break the natural laws governing the universe. This not only undermines the practice of science, but it may also challenge the rationality of God. Thus, we must find ways of conceptualizing God that are compatible with the scientific view of reality as causally closed. In recent years a position commonly referred to as “panentheism” has become increasingly popular, and several scholars involved in the SRD argue that this form of theism may be a solution to the problem of divine action as stated above. Several panentheists also refer to their view as “naturalistic theism” or “theistic naturalism”: that is, a combination of theism and naturalism.

In this paper I will argue that panentheism is unable to avoid ontological dualism. More specifically, it will become obvious that a form of dualism is

still assumed with regard to how God reveals himself in the mental world of humans. Moreover, the naturalistic assumption underlying the panentheistic project risks making notions of divine influence ontologically superfluous. In this way, a panentheistic view of divine causality becomes vulnerable to the principle of Ockham's razor.

I propose that panentheists not only fail to uphold a naturalistic conception of divine action, but also that, in light of these problems, they would be wise to reject the metaphysics of naturalism.

GOING BEYOND REDUCTIONISM: FINDING A PLAUSIBLE NATURALISM

The panentheists discussed within this paper claim to subscribe to some form of naturalism: a naturalism that is perceived as being able to avoid the objections easily invited by reductionism, materialism or eliminativism. One problem, according to these thinkers, is that naturalism, by being materialistic in its ontology, has implied an atheistic worldview. Thus, many religious people have by default rejected the naturalistic project. Panentheists seek to overcome the dichotomy between theism and naturalism, and by doing so achieve progress in the dialogue between science and religion.

David Ray Griffin argues that in associating science with reductive materialism, scientific naturalism has been distorted. Thus "science will be regarded as antithetical to any significantly religious outlook."¹ Scientific naturalism, according to Griffin, can be understood in a maximal or a minimal sense. Maximally speaking, scientific naturalism is equated with reductionism, determinism, atheism and materialism. Science, on this view, rules out human freedom, divine influence in the world and any ultimate meaning in life.² Minimal naturalism, on the other hand, simply means that supernaturalism, or supernatural causation, is ruled out; that "the world's most fundamental causal principles are never interrupted."³ Naturalism in its minimal form is, according to Griffin, fully consistent with the "most fundamental assumption of the contemporary scientific worldview," and it does not in any way threaten a serious religious outlook on life.⁴

1. David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 24.

2. David Ray Griffin, *Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), 11.

3. *Ibid.*, 44.

4. *Ibid.*, 12.

In a similar vein, Philip Clayton argues that some kind of naturalistic presumption has to be made in theology and science. This presumption means that “for any event in the natural order . . . its cause is a natural one as opposed to a supernatural one.”⁵ There is, according to Griffin and Clayton, no room for supernatural causation, meaning that from a scientific perspective there is no dualism within the natural order. Arthur Peacocke concurs with Griffin’s distinction between maximal and minimal naturalism and writes: “The only dualism which such a [naturalistic] stance accepts is indeed that between God and all-that-is, the ‘world’; it rejects any dualisms within the natural order itself, including humanity.”⁶ The only processes we have in this world are natural. There are no spiritual or supernatural laws operating within the natural order.⁷

Both Clayton and Peacocke subscribe to an emergentist ontology, according to which reality is hierarchically ordered into higher and lower levels. Emergence theory, according to Philip Clayton, suggests that “the nature of the world is such that it produces, and perhaps must produce, continually more complex realities in a process of ongoing creativity.”⁸ Peacocke writes that what emerges “involves relationships between the wholes and the parts which cannot be explicated by physics . . . or, indeed, by any of the sciences applicable to levels lower than the particular one under consideration.”⁹

This ontology, they believe, is able to avoid the problems associated with reductionism and eliminativism. Using emergence theory as a basis, Philip Clayton has proposed the *panentheistic analogy*:

[J]ust as human consciousness (mental properties and their causal effects) can lead to changes in the physical world, so also a divine agent could bring about changes in the physical world—if this agent were related to the world in a way analogous to the relationship of our “minds” to our bodies.

(*GaC*, 258–59)

5. Philip Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 171. Hereafter cited in text as *GaC*.

6. Arthur Peacocke, “Naturalism, Theism, and Religion,” in *All That Is: A Naturalistic Faith for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 9.

7. Arthur Peacocke, “Emergent Monism,” in *All That Is*, 16.

8. Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 42.

9. Peacocke, “Emergent Monism,” 13.

Clayton and Peacocke therefore suggest that panentheism, in virtue of incorporating an emergentistic ontology, is compatible with a naturalistic outlook on reality; a form of naturalism that does not imply reductionism.

A final view to consider is presented by Mark Johnston, who reflects on the distinction and relationship between methodological and ontological naturalism. Some, in order to construct and justify a naturalistic ontology, point to the success of science. However, Johnston points out that science exhibits both success *and* failure, and there is no easy way to derive ontological conclusions from science.¹⁰ Is Johnston content with methodological naturalism? He seems reluctant to embrace ontological naturalism even though he would like it to be true, given that it would help us to finally be insulated from any supernatural intervention.¹¹ However, later he writes that process panentheism reveals a view of God that “is in no way at odds with the form of the natural realm disclosed by science: that is, a causal realm closed under natural law.”¹² Thus, despite his earlier hesitation, science, in the end, seems to support at least a minimal naturalistic view of physical reality as causally closed.

As we can see, the naturalism employed by Griffin, Peacocke, Clayton and Johnston is causally defined and assumes some philosophical idea of causal closure. Of course, what it means for reality to be causally closed can be understood in different ways.¹³ A strong form of causal closure, as expressed by the physicalist David Papineau, would give ontological and epistemological priority to physics. The way that Papineau understands the causal closure of the physical brings it closer to a more reductive kind of physicalism. Causal closure in its weak form, as expressed by Jaegwon Kim, merely suggests that “if we trace the causal ancestry of a physical event we need never to go outside the physical domain.”¹⁴ That is, all causes are to be located within the natural domain, and there is no need to appeal to extra-natural categories when explaining physical phenomena.

This is to be expected, since panentheists, in trying to find an adequate definition of naturalism, are careful to avoid physicalist, reductionist and

10. Mark Johnston, *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 50–51.

11. *Ibid.*, 52.

12. *Ibid.*, 119–29.

13. For an excellent survey as regards understanding the term “causal closure,” see, for example, E. J. Lowe, “Causal Closure Principles and Emergentism,” *Philosophy* 75 (2000), doi:10.1017/S003181910000067X.

14. Jaegwon Kim, *Supervenience and Mind: Selected Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 280.

eliminativist notions of naturalism, which would either eliminate God completely from reality, or at least invite a deistic conception of divine action. However, they are also committed to finding a naturalism that can defend reality from supernaturalist interventions. A middle-path is needed, according to these thinkers.

It is helpful here to distinguish between two forms of naturalism: global and local naturalism. A global naturalist would exclude all supernatural beings, realities and categories. Global naturalism is a thesis about reality as a whole. A local naturalist, in contrast, would argue that we only need to adopt a naturalistic ontology with regard to a specific phenomenon within the world, in this case causal processes. The panentheists in this paper thus hold to local naturalism as opposed to global naturalism. Next we shall see if panentheists manage to uphold this middle-path between dualism and reductive naturalism, whilst saying that God actively engages with humanity and the universe.

THE DUALISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MIRACLES AND EMERGENCE THEORY

In rejecting supernaturalism panentheists do not want to rule out divine activity altogether. Instead, they want to find an adequate model for construing divine activity so as to make it compatible with a minimal or local naturalist view of the universe as governed by unbreakable natural laws.

As described above, Peacocke and Clayton argue that emergence theory shows how God might act in the natural world in a way that is consistent with the monistic commitment of naturalism. Emergence theory, according to Peacocke and Clayton, offers a view of divine causality that does not introduce the dualism associated with supernaturalism.

However, it seems that a form of dualism is still present in this emergentistic conception of divine action. Clayton, for example, does not rule out all forms of miraculous event, claiming that psychological miracles are still scientifically possible. He argues, given the emergentistic account of mind, that the sciences have “not been able to formulate and corroborate fundamental laws of human behavior” (*GaC*, 181). Thus, one cannot rule out the possibility of God performing psychological miracles and speaking to people directly. One could, however, object to Clayton’s idea of psychological miracles by saying that in the future we might discover a type-type relationship between mental and physical states; hence, there would no longer be any reason to talk about miracles in the mental realm. Clayton is aware of this objection, but states that this reductionist program, in light

of modern cognitive science, does not seem very promising. On the contrary, he states that we have positive reasons for rejecting reductionism or eliminativism and affirming the irreducibility of mental states (*GaC*, 182).

Here, I suggest, it becomes clear that Clayton does not stay true to his naturalistic and anti-dualistic commitment. His view undeniably entails a form of dualistic causation. On Clayton's understanding, there are causes within the mental realm that are not reducible to something physical and that transcend natural laws. We have no law like explanation for these events and thus it is possible, even today, to talk about divine mental influence. God, according to Clayton, performs psychological miracles, such that new mental content is inserted in the mind of the religious believer and this content cannot be reduced to mere neuro-physiological happenings in the brain. But this contradicts the presumption of naturalism, which claims that for every event (including mental events) there is a natural cause, as opposed to a supernatural or extra-natural one. Clayton seems to think that the mental realm is God's last stronghold, and that if we reject the notion of divine mental influence we will end up with deism. I think that his worry about deism is justified. If the reductionist program is successful, then, on Clayton's view, there would be no room left for God within the natural order, and so deism would be the only available option. But in his attempt to avoid deism, Clayton has adopted a dualistic causality, because there will be causes in the world that transcend the limits of natural science, these being ontologically irreducible. Mental divine revelation, or what he calls psychological miracles, invites dualism rather than naturalism, given that the causal origin of these miracles is not physical. The causal origin of divine revelation or psychological miracles is to be located in the mind of God.

Peacocke's perspective, it seems, faces the same dilemma. He suggests that on his emergentist model, whereby God acts in the world through whole-part and top-down causation, providential action is possible. He writes that

particular events or clusters of events, whether natural, individual, and personal, or social and historical . . . can be intentionally and specifically brought about by the interaction of God with the world.¹⁵

By making room for God's special action in the world, Peacocke seeks to

15. Arthur Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine, and Human*, enlarged edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 181. Peacocke's emphasis.

avoid a deistic conception of the God-world relationship. However, at this point a dualistic ontology seems to emerge.

If Peacocke maintains that God works purposefully in his interaction with the world then there seems to be a difference between the specific acts of God, and ordinary, non-specific / non-intentional happenings in the natural order. Some happenings have their causal origin in the intentionality of God, some do not. Here we can detect an ontological difference, which will be discussed further below. If Peacocke denies that there is any difference between God's providential acts and the ordinary happenings in the world, then there is no longer any reason to talk about *special* providence. They would become identical, and as Clayton puts it, there would no longer be any "reason to interpret it [an effect in the world] as an instance of divine action."¹⁶ For it to be meaningful to talk about "divine action," there needs to be some ontological difference between God's actions and natural events. Thus special providence, as formulated by Peacocke, seems to invite dualism and consequently undermines minimal or local naturalism and the philosophical principle of causal closure.

Things get even trickier when we consider the metaphysical implications of emergence theory. Both Clayton and Peacocke construe panentheism, God's interaction with the world, against the background of emergence, and they understand emergence theory to be compatible with metaphysical monism. Emergence, Clayton explains, can be characterized in terms of eight theses. One of these theses is monism, which is the idea that "[t]here is one natural world made, if you will, out of stuff."¹⁷ In a similar vein, Peacocke writes that he prefers to call his position emergent monism, rather than non-reductive physicalism:

This is a "monistic" view that everything can be broken down into fundamental physical entities and that no extra entities are thought to be inserted at higher levels of complexity to account for their properties.¹⁸

In essence, their view states that there is only one natural world, although nature is layered. They also both subscribe to strong emergence, the defining feature being the concept of downward causation (DC). I have also explained above that the naturalism employed by Clayton, Peacocke and other panentheists is to be defined in terms of causal closure (CC). How-

16. Clayton, *Mind and Emergence*, 193.

17. *Ibid.*, 60.

18. Arthur Peacocke, *Paths from Science towards God: The End of all our Exploring* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2001), 49–50.

ever, DC, when more closely scrutinized, does not seem to be compatible with CC; it actually supports dualism.

The notion of DC, construed on the basis of monism, leads to a severe philosophical problem, if not metaphysical absurdity. The basic problem is this: how can the whole causally affect its parts when the whole also is ontologically dependent on its parts? There is no whole without its parts, yet the whole is supposedly capable of causally affecting, and even determining, its constituent parts. I agree with Jaegwon Kim that there is reason to worry about the coherence of this idea given that it leads to the metaphysical problem of self-causation.¹⁹ It is very hard to see how emergence theory, when coupled with monism, can support the idea that emergents are causally effective.

Some have come to reject DC because of this metaphysical problem. A monistic metaphysics (like ontological naturalism) cannot furnish the necessary causal powers for DC to take place. I suggest that what is needed to avoid the metaphysical problem of self-causation is the positing of an extra-natural reality from which emergents draw their causal powers. Of course, if emergents were to be dependent on an extra-natural realm, then it would look as if DC invited dualism rather than monism. DC would then also contradict CC, given that some effects might have their causal origin in an extra-natural or non-physical realm.²⁰

Emergence theory was meant to offer a way out of dualism and to provide a naturalistic conception of divine causality. However, if it is the case that the causal efficacy of emergents is dependent on a non-natural reality, then this view is not consistent with naturalism and the idea of causal closure. In this way, a theist aiming to explicate how God interacts with reality via emergence theory would be inviting us to embrace a dualistic conception of causal processes, not a naturalistic one. Of course, if my argument is correct, then it is DC that gets emergence theory into trouble. Therefore, one option would be to abandon DC, and merely hold to weak emergence (the idea that reality is dividable into higher and lower levels). However, the notion of downward/top-down causation, even though controversial, is very important to emergence theory, as it is easier to talk about the ontological reality of emergent X if X makes a causal difference. Peacocke writes: “For *to be real is to have causal power*. New causal powers and properties can then properly be said to have *emerged* when this

19. Jaegwon Kim, “Making Sense of Emergence,” *Philosophical Studies* 95 (1999): 28, doi: 10.1023/A:1004563122154.

20. For a dualist construal of emergence theory, see William Hasker, *The Emergent Self* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

is so.”²¹ By getting rid of strong emergence, a panentheist might be able to avoid the dualist implications of emergence theory, but, if Peacocke is correct, DC is an ontologically necessary feature for any talk of the reality of emergent properties / phenomena.

Even if we disregard the problem of the dualistic implications of DC, there are certain other philosophical issues facing emergence theory. According to emergentistic epistemology, emergent phenomena are unpredictable. This means that we cannot derive higher-level phenomenon X from its lower-level constituents. Therefore emergents are irreducible and ultimately unexplainable. However, the epistemology of emergence creates a problem for ontological emergence, given that this kind of epistemology ultimately leads to a kind of mysterianism: that is, we have no idea how to construe the ontological relationship between higher and lower levels of reality, given the mysterious nature and unexplainable origin of emergent phenomena. Consequently, a positive account of emergence cannot be provided, only a negative one.

Emergence theorists may have provided good arguments against reductionism. However, given the problematic task of providing a positive account of emergent phenomena, it seems unwise to use this theory when trying to positively explicate the relationship between divine causality and the natural order.

PROCESS PANENTHEISM AND THE DUALISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF DIVINE MENTAL REVELATION

The process panentheism proposed by Griffin and Johnston seems to run into the same problem. However, contrary to emergent panentheism Griffin denies the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Thus, he takes a step further in the direction of anti-dualism. Perhaps process panentheism is, for that reason, more successful when it comes to avoiding both global and local dualism. The reason why process panentheists deny creation *ex nihilo* is that it inevitably invites supernaturalism and divine interventions. The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, according to which God created the world out of absolutely nothing, implies “that the world has no inherent power, no power of its own, with which it could resist the divine will.”²² Given creation *ex*

21. Arthur Peacocke, “Emergent Realities with Causal Efficacy: Some Philosophical and Theological Applications,” in *God’s Action in Nature’s World: Essays in Honour of Robert John Russell*, eds. Ted Peters and Nathan Hallanger (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 192.

22. Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism*, 137.

nihilo there are no autonomous natural laws. Process-panentheists believe that what classical theists refer to as natural laws is just God's usual way of treating the natural order, and there is nothing stopping God from suspending these "laws."

Has Griffin managed, then, to eradicate the last traces of dualism? It seems that he has not. Griffin is very clear about one thing: his form of naturalistic theism is not to be confused with naturalistic theism as construed by Paul Tillich, John Dewey and Gordon Kaufman. What they did, according to Griffin, was to completely collapse the distinction between God and world. That is, they proposed pantheism. There is a sense, says Griffin, in "which process theism could intelligibly be considered a type of supernaturalism."²³ It is supernaturalistic in the sense that (contrary to a pantheistic position) there is an ontological difference between God and physical reality, although physical reality is contained within the divine life. Thus, Griffin, in order to avoid pantheism (what he considers to be a form of atheism), upholds a dualistic distinction between God and the universe.

What about Griffin's and Johnston's idea that process panentheism is committed to a non-dualistic view of divine influence, then? Johnston claims that "God reveals himself in the natural realm by disclosing in religious experience an ultimate form of the world, one that is in no way at odds with the form of the natural realm disclosed by science."²⁴

Griffin argues that we must perceive God's influence in the natural order in terms of persuasion rather than coercion, since the latter notion of divine-causation ultimately leads to God interrupting the basic causal-effect relations. Whatever God is doing in the natural order is done purely through natural causes. For example, Jesus' incarnation was fulfilled solely through persuasion, meaning that God was present in him "in such a way as to reveal God's character, purpose and mode of operation."²⁵ Thus, God was incarnated in Jesus in a special way and we can therefore rightly affirm that Jesus is God's decisive revelation, without invoking supernatural causation. Jesus was not inherently the incarnate Son of God, in a supernatural sense, but became God's revelation through God's persuasion of the man Jesus.

However, the same problem of dualism returns again. If God, as Johnston and Griffin claim, revealed himself through religious experience, then

23. *Ibid.*, 136.

24. Johnston, *Saving God*, 119.

25. David Ray Griffin, *Two Great Truths: A New Synthesis of Scientific Naturalism and Christian Faith* (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 110.

God introduced new content into the minds of religious believers, and so obviously made a causal difference in reality. Moreover, the reason why someone has a religious experience, why God has inserted new mental content in reality, cannot ultimately be explained in terms of the physical structure of the brain or by reference to natural laws. The causal origin of God's revelation (the new mental content disclosed by God) is to be traced back to divine intentionality, not to some physical happening in the brain. God may, on Griffin's and Johnston's view, use the physical structure of the brain to produce these religious experiences giving rise to new mental content, but they cannot be reduced to neurochemical events. This is because God directly affected (and thus intervened in the physical reality pertaining to) the brain structure in order to bring about new mental content. Causal closure has been broken, and so local naturalism violated.

PANENTHEISTIC DIVINE ACTION AND THE THREAT OF OCKHAM'S RAZOR

We should be absolutely frank here about the implications: either God makes a causal difference, or He does not. If you maintain that God does make a causal difference, then extra-natural influences operate within the natural order. But if you deny the causal relevance of God, such that there is no ontological difference between God's actions or divine influence and ordinary causes, then there will no longer be any reason to talk about divine action or divine influence. Consequently, God is expelled from the natural order and you end up with deism as a consequence. The middle-path between classical theism and deism that panentheists strive to defend is, one should say, philosophically unstable.

A panentheist would presumably respond by saying that there is a difference, but that there is no *qualitative* difference—i.e. no ontological otherness—between God's influence and the regularity of natural law. Clayton himself holds to this view (*GaC*, 101). However, Clayton also writes that

when someone claims that God accomplished a particular action, she is saying that the event cannot be explained in the way in which we normally have knowledge of natural events. (*GaC*, 183)

How should we interpret this? Given that Clayton denies that there is any ontological difference between God's influence and natural regularities, what remains is that God's influence might be explained either (a) semantically or (b) epistemologically. The former would mean that higher-level

vocabulary about supposed divine occurrences cannot be explicated in terms of physical language and the language we use when explaining natural laws, while the latter would imply that instances of supposed divine action cannot be explained by science.

If we want to be able to say that God makes a difference in reality then it seems that (a) and (b) are too weak. The former amounts to a semantic thesis that is fully compatible with ontological reductionism—roughly, the idea that the only real processes in the world are those taking place on a microphysical level. That is, there is no conflict between saying that higher-level language cannot be reduced to the language of physics, and saying that the only real processes are microphysical processes. The latter, on the other hand, can be interpreted in two different ways, one weaker and one stronger. The weaker version would suggest that *currently* we cannot explain supposed divine occurrences from a scientific perspective. One could also maintain something stronger, and claim that scientists will *never* be able to explain these supposed divine occurrences. If true, (b), expressed in either a weak or a strong form, will only establish epistemological irreducibility. However, epistemological irreducibility is not inconsistent with ontological reducibility. It might be the case that we will never arrive at a successful and purely physical account of supposed divine occurrences, even if we assume that the only real processes in the natural order are mindless, non-teleological physical/material processes. An epistemological limiting of science is not sufficient to safeguard divine influence from ontological reductionism.

It is the commitment to local naturalism, and the philosophical thesis of causal closure, that prohibits panentheists from saying that there is an ontological difference between divine influence and natural causes. This philosophical commitment, however, runs the risk of making the notion of divine influence ontologically superfluous. If there is no ontological difference between God's action and the regularity of nature, why introduce God-talk in the first place? God-talk, according to panentheists, does not in any way help to explain the structure of reality: it is an unnecessary metaphysical add-on. Thus, a panentheistic notion of divine influence becomes vulnerable to the principle of Ockham's razor. This principle states that we should adopt from competing hypotheses the one which contains the fewest assumptions. That is, a hypothesis that posits unnecessary entities, or that needlessly introduces ontological categories, should be rejected in favor of a simpler one. A panentheistic notion of divine influence, by denying any ontological difference between God's action and natural causes, becomes ontologically superfluous and, in virtue of Ockham's ra-

zor, should be rejected. Panentheists must choose: either they will affirm that there is an ontological difference between God's actions and naturalism (thus introducing a form of causal dualism), or they must collapse the distinction between the two, which means that divine action, as conceived by panentheists, becomes vulnerable to Ockham's razor.

The Rationality of Science and God

Panentheists might grant these objections, and concede that the local naturalist principle of causal closure proves problematic when constructing theological theories of divine action. However, they would still then reject the notion of miracles and divine intervention, offering two reasons for doing so: firstly that, as Clayton argues, miracles undermine the practice of science, and secondly that, as Peacocke asserts, miracles undermine the rationality of God.

The problem, according to the first of these objections, is that we, in virtue of having introduced non-physical and non-predictable causes, make the practice of science impossible. Scientists, in their work, assume that reality is predictable, at least to a very large extent. Hence, if we let God "interfere" in reality at certain points, it would become irregular, and perhaps even chaotic, and science would no longer be possible. I suggest that this argument should be understood as a pragmatic argument for local naturalism. That is, it is not metaphysically impossible for God to intervene in physical reality, but we should avoid such metaphysical scenarios given that science, as one of the most important human practices ever produced, would be undermined. We should therefore hold to local naturalism in order to avoid certain pragmatic consequences. However, I am not sure why we should think that the rationality of science would be undermined if God were to intervene. They seem to suggest that God's involvement in the world, bringing about changes in the causal order, somehow makes reality unpredictable. I cannot see why that would be the case. Just because *some* happenings within the natural order are causally inexplicable does not mean that reality is wholly unpredictable. For example, people have not given up practicing science because of the indeterministic ontology associated with quantum mechanics.

Moreover, this objection to divine intervention seems rather strange, given the emergentistic ontology that Clayton and Peacocke seek to develop and defend. One of the aims of the panentheistic project is to protect human agency / causality from physicalist reductionism and epiphenomenalism, and thus to show how human agency can be a real ontological phenomenon. That is, our actions, according to emergence theory, cannot

be reduced to, or explained in terms of, natural laws. This is good news for the social sciences, Clayton argues, since the social sciences primarily deal with agent-based or teleological explanations.²⁶ A non-reducible account of free will is also defended by David Ray Griffin, who argues that the primary task of (Whiteheadian) philosophy is to make sense of common-sense ontology, where this includes explaining and/or accommodating free will. Obviously there are several panentheists who would maintain that human causality is irreducible with respect to natural laws.

Nevertheless, on their account, human agency would be a form of interventionism. Comparable to divine interventions, these would be happenings within the natural order that are not explicable in terms of natural laws, meaning that they cannot be expressed in purely physical language. Moreover, we cannot predict human agency, but the fact that humans make a causal difference in reality does not put an end to science. So why should we say that divine causality makes science impossible when human causality seems to be scientifically acceptable?

According to the second objection, the problem is that God, by intervening in reality and bringing about certain outcomes, is treating creation in an inconsistent manner by treating it in two different ways. Panentheists think that this is a problem, and Peacocke, in particular, suggests that this renders God irrational. But why would God be irrational in treating the laws of nature differently? Panentheists seem to assume that if God were to do so, it would be an arbitrary decision on God's part, making God irrational. However, might not God have a revelatory purpose in mind when treating creation differently? Perhaps what panentheists perceive to be an arbitrary event is in fact a part of a revelatory, providential and salvific plan for humanity. If, to use an example provided by David Hume, God had resurrected Queen Elizabeth, who died on 1st January 1600, it would certainly seem to be an arbitrary event. Indeed, we would be inclined to agree with Hume that we should not believe in it. However, the probability or the purposefulness of an alleged miraculous event seems to be contingent on the contextual/historical circumstances surrounding it. The reason why someone would be immediately skeptical upon hearing of Queen Elizabeth's having been resurrected is that the alleged event lacks probability-increasing background information. The event in question does not make sense. Consider, instead, the resurrection of Jesus. If, as Richard Swinburne argues, we have reason to suppose that Jesus was God incarnate, in that Jesus implied his divinity through his actions, then

26. Clayton, *Mind and Emergence*, 144–48.

it would make sense, and even be probable, for Jesus to be resurrected.²⁷ That is, the background information increases or decreases the probability of an event; hence a miracle need not be an arbitrary event, as panentheists seem to assume.

Some would respond that the possibility of an intervening God only creates more problems. If God were able to intervene whenever He wanted, why not intervene and stop horrible events from occurring?²⁸ Griffin maintains that traditional free-will theism inevitably invites the problem of evil. Process-panentheism, according to which God's action is limited due to the intrinsic qualities of nature, is able to bypass this problem. However, that is a huge topic, and there is not enough space to explore it in this article. Also, this is a theological problem, but the question pursued right now is whether *science* makes divine interventionism impossible. My conclusion is that it does not, and that an important motivation behind the panentheist project can therefore be called into question.

Does Panentheism Have a Future within the Science-Religion Dialogue?

The main argument of this paper has been that panentheists like Clayton, Peacocke, Griffin, and Johnston should reject the idea that the universe is causally closed. Indeed, if my argument that the ontology of strong emergence (i.e. downward causation) implies dualism is correct, then emergent panentheists in particular should reject local naturalism.

In order to avoid making notions of divine influence ontologically superfluous, panentheists need to leave local naturalism behind. God must be allowed to make a causal difference in reality, and for this to be possible there needs to be some qualitative / ontological difference between Gods' influence and natural laws. Of course, this would imply that from a theistic perspective, scientific causal explanations will always be incomplete. As Keith Ward writes:

If God's intentions plus the physical laws do give a sufficient explanation of what happens in the world, whereas the physical laws alone do not, it is clear that the existence of God contributes substantially to an explanation of what happens in the world.²⁹

27. See Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), doi:10.1093/0199257469.001.0001.

28. David Ray Griffin, *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsideration* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 14–21.

29. Keith Ward, *Divine Action: Examining God's Role in an Open and Emergent Universe* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2007), 79.

Thus far I have argued that panentheists are not consistent in that they still assume a dualistic ontology with respect to causal processes, even while claiming to adopt local naturalism. That is, I say that they *cannot* hold to local naturalism while claiming that God actively influences the natural order. However, given the discussion above regarding the issue of Ockham's razor, I would also wish to emphasize that panentheists *should not* adopt local naturalism, as this commitment undermines the ontological relevance of talking about divine action. If panentheism is going to have a future, it needs to finally abandon the naturalistic assumption of causal closure.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- GaC Clayton, Philip. *God and Contemporary Science*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997.
- . *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Griffin, David Ray. *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsideration*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991.
- . *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion*. Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- . *Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000.
- . *Two Great Truths: A New Synthesis of Scientific Naturalism and Christian Faith*. Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004.
- Hasker, William. *The Emergent Self*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Johnston, Mark. *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Kim, Jaegwon. "Making Sense of Emergence." *Philosophical Studies* 95 (1999): 3–36. doi:10.1023/A:1004563122154.
- . *Supervenience and Mind: Selected Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Lowe, E. J. "Causal Closure Principles and Emergentism." *Philosophy* 75 (2000): 571–85. doi:10.1017/S003181910000067X.
- Peacocke, Arthur. *All That Is: A Naturalistic Faith for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Philip Clayton. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.
- . "Emergent Monism," in *All That Is*, 12–16.
- . "Emergent Realities with Causal Efficacy: Some Philosophical and Theological Applications," in *God's Action in Nature's World: Essays in Honour of Robert John Russell*, edited by Ted Peters and Nathan Hallanger, 189–204. Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006.
- . "Naturalism, Theism, and Religion," in *All That Is*, 5–11.
- . *Paths from Science towards God: The End of all our Exploring*. Oxford: One World Publications, 2001.

———. *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming—Natural, Divine, and Human*. Enlarged edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Swinburne, Richard. *The Resurrection of God Incarnate*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003. doi:10.1093/0199257469.001.0001.

Ward, Keith. *Divine Action: Examining God's Role in an Open and Emergent Universe*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2007.