

The International Society for Science and Religion Presents

Emergence in Science and Religion: Critical Perspectives and New Proposals

1:00-4:30 on Friday, November 21, 2014

Gallery 2 in the Omni San Diego Hotel at the Convention

Free and Open to the Public • No Registration Required

Speaker 1: Pranab Das. Title: Emergence or Something Close Enough: Is the Ontological Question Really that Interesting? *Abstract: Much ink has been spilled inquiring after the ontological status of emergent properties. Most of this comes from philosophers who wonder if physicalism requires that emergents are, ultimately, 'nothing more' than the microphysics upon which they supervene. I question their premises and wonder if much of the discussion is predicated on an outdated notion of physicalism whose 'atoms' are a holdover from a simpler time. In this talk I will ask questions about the applicability of physical models, the qualities of objects of study within those models, and the adequacy of very non-physical models to account for the correspondence of emergent properties in apparently different sorts of systems. I will question the intuitive notion of hierarchy in complicated systems and present some aspects of dynamical systems thinking which have been largely overlooked or misunderstood in the literature. I will ask if 'causal powers' descriptions are productive and wonder if there might be a limited case in which 'causal efficacy' can be useful. Finally, I will turn to the important question of top-down causality in light of the problems of hierarchy discussed previously and seek alternative framings which might be more illuminating.*

Speaker 2: Anton Markoš. Title: Physics and Beyond: Reciprocal (Re)forming in Dynamic Complex Systems with History. *Abstract: 1. Dynamic complex systems (DCSs) emerge either repeatedly, de novo, from singularities (e.g., hurricanes, flames, or stars), or are born from similar systems (life, cultures, languages, religions, etc.); only the first group is subject to physics, whereas the second group (endowed with historical memory and experience of lineages) can be studied solely by teachings of history, semiotics, philosophy, or theology. 2. DCSs can be studied from many angles (perspectives, views); here I propose a model taking into account (for the sake of simplicity) two such perspectives at a time – the choice of a particular doublet is on the modeler. None of such doublets can be considered “lower”, “higher”, “basal”, one being a cause of the other, etc. They are always present simultaneously, by reciprocally influencing (in-forming and re-forming) each other in the course of time. 3. By developing on the concept of umwelt, I will attempt to demonstrate the usefulness of DCS models for understanding biological evolution. 4. For evolution of humanity, I will point out the evolution (emergence) of two virtual umwelten: those of narrativity, and of objective reality. This would be followed, – by some communities in course of their further evolution – by establishing (emerging) a transcendent umwelt enabling humans communicating with the deity. 5. Advantages and dangers of the model presented will be discussed.*

Speaker 3: Russell Manning. Title: "Some Uses and Abuses of Emergence in Theology."

Abstract: This paper considers some philosophical issues relevant to the recent revival of interest, across various disciplines, in the concept of emergence and clarifies some of the conceptual issues at stake in the attempts to formulate the philosophical position of emergentism and to apply it theologically. After highlighting some major problems arising from the main existing ways of formulating emergentism, the paper attempts to show that the philosophical problems can be circumvented by an appeal to the pragmatist tradition, which is a useful philosophical framework within which to develop an emergentist theory that is fit for theological application. The talk then considers a potential application of emergentism, pragmatically reconstrued, namely to the philosophical understanding of religious ritual practices. Finally, the paper considers the relevance of new conceptions of the laws of nature defended recently by Nancy Cartwright and argue for the theological significance of a combination of a pragmatist emergentism and a "dappled nomology".

Speaker 4: Philip Clayton. Respondent. "Emergence Evolving: Clarifications and New Insights into Emergent Complexity and Evolution." A summary analysis of the current discussion on emergent complexity with a focus on its use (and abuse) in the science-religion field, in part by responding to the first four papers.