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# Res novae



*Revija za celovito znanost*  
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*Bernard Goršak*

IMMANENT TRANSCENDENCE AND THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE  
EMERGENCE OF THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

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(1918–1941)

*Nik Trontelj*

KOMUNISTIČNI SODNI PROCES PROTI DR. JANEZU VEIDERJU

**Fakulteta za pravo in ekonomijo, Katoliški inštitut**  
**Faculty of Law and Economics, Catholic Institute**

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Bernard Goršak<sup>1</sup>

## **Immanent Transcendence and the Christian Understanding of the Emergence of the New Heaven and Earth**

**Abstract:** With this article I propose an answer to the question of the inherent nature of physical reality from a Christian perspective. In the Bible it is written that there will be a new heaven and earth, and that all those saved will eternally exist with their own glorified bodies. The question is what kind of matter the new heaven and earth and former earthly bodies will constitute. Subsequently more questions can be raised: Are the old matter and the new matter ontologically related or not? Is the new matter new in all its components, accidents and even the essence, or should it be recognized as an emergence originating from the old matter? I argue that the latter is true and that the potential to transcend its own timely and physical limitations is already immanently seeded into the pre-eschaton matter.

**Key words:** immanent transcendence, emergence, ontological eschatology, glorified matter

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**Izvleček:** S tem člankom predlagam odgovor na vprašanje inherentne narave fizične stvarnosti z vidika krščanstva. V Svetem pismu je zapisano, da bosta nekoč novo nebo in nova zemlja ter da bodo vsi zveličani večno obstajali s svojimi poveličanimi telesi. Vprašanje je, kakšna bo materija, iz katere bodo sestavljeni nova nebesa in nova zemlja ter nekdanja zemeljska telesa. Iz tega sledi še več vprašanj: Ali sta stara in nova materija ontološko povezani ali ne? Ali je nova materija nova v vseh svojih sestavinah, pojavnostih in celo bistvu ali pa je ustrežnejše novo materijo razumeti kot pojavitev postano iz stare materije? Trdim, da velja slednje in da je potencial za preseganje časovnih in fizičnih omejitev imanentno vsajen že v pred-eschatonsko materijo.

**Ključne besede:** imanentna transcendenca, pojavitev, ontološka eshatologija, poveličana materija

## Glorified bodies

Let us assume that the whole creation has existed continuously in complete accordance with the Creator's plan. While it is not my intention to elaborate on the question of theodicy, it should be taken into account that the Bible clearly depicts how the original sin, and the Fall of Man that followed, caused death to come to Earth and made every living being become subjugated to it (Wis 1:12–14; 11–24; Rom 5:12–21). What would happen with humans and Eden if there was no sin? Would there also be the new heaven and earth? If there was no death, does it mean that Adam and Eve could have lived eternally in the physical environment that was equally eternally unchangeable? The official teaching of the Catholic Church clearly affirms that in the state of the "original justice", man was not destined to die nor to suffer and that one should observe this state as a harmony between man and all creation (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2023, 185–186). It remains only to be speculated whether or not the first people, if remaining in the state of the original justice, would have ever lived to any kind of a bodily transformation or not. Eden was good yet neither glorious, nor finished nor perfect, rather a work in progress where physical labour was requested (Gen 2:15; Rev 21:27). With his free will a man was capable of choosing evil, which would not be possible in heaven; and there was also God's request for subduing the earth and to multiply – all of which would have ceased once in heaven. In heaven Adam and Eve would have nonetheless still have had to assume even more perfect bodies than those they had in Eden (Phil 3:20–21).



There is no definitive Church teaching on when and how this transition from Eden to heaven would have taken place. I claim that the example of the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven may serve as an appropriate analogy of how this transition could have occurred. An official apostolic constitution of Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption in which he cites Pope Adrian I, who describes Mary's death as being something only temporal; and St John Damascene, who speaks about Mary's body as being free from all corruption even after death (Pius XII 1950, 6). It is hence reasonable to suggest that something similar could have also occurred during the transition of Eden's people to heaven at some point in time if there had been no sin. Besides the assumption of Mary, which is a Catholic doctrine although not explicitly recorded in the Bible, there are two more biblical cases of bodily assumption to heaven, those by Elijah and Enoch, which may also serve as the a parallel for the physical transition from Eden into heaven (2 Kgs 2: 1; Macc 2:58; Gen 5:24; Sir 44:16; 49:14; Heb 11:5).

Yet, in both incidents (entering heaven directly without dying, or from the fallen Earth after experiencing physical death), the end result is quite the same: every single inhabitant of the heaven will eternally exist in his/her glorified body. The appearance of these bodies was unveiled even before the resurrection to the three disciples at the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor with Moses and Elijah, who were also present there with their bodies; and after the resurrection Jesus' risen body was extensively revealed to more than five hundred witnesses (Matt 17:1–8; 1 Cor 15:4–7). Bodily resurrection after death, as described in Paul's letter to the Romans (8:11), is actually the apex of the creed:

The Christian Creed – the profession of our faith in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in God’s creative, saving, and sanctifying action – culminates in the proclamation of the resurrection of the dead on the last day and in life everlasting. /... / The term “flesh” refers to man in his state of weakness and mortality. The “resurrection of the flesh” (the literal formulation of the Apostles’ Creed) means not only that the immortal soul will live on after death, but that even our “mortal body” will come to life again (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2023, 260).

The flesh, as understood in the Creed, is not merely organic tissue but is the wholeness of what defines man’s nature on this side of the grave, with all its vices, sins, weaknesses and corruption. However, even with this connotation every human body still holds its physical component. The nature of the resurrected flesh was manifested in the form of a glorified body as Jesus revealed at the transfiguration on Mount Tabor and even more perceptibly after his resurrection. After all, the apostles even ate and drank with resurrected Jesus after he had assured them that he was not a ghost, because a ghost would not have had flesh and bones (Luke 24:36–43; Acts 10:41; Damascus 2023, 189). Aquinas adopts a similar position when he affirms that “[a]ll the elemental bodies will have in themselves a certain clarity of glory” (Aquinas 2023, 9283).

Aquinas also does not believe that animals, plants, minerals and mixed bodies will be part of this new earth because they all “are corruptible both in their whole and in their parts, both on the part of their matter which loses its form, and on the part of their form which does not remain actually” (Aquinas 2023, 9295). Nonetheless, he does not provide any

comment on the many biblical predictions of animals existing in heaven, such as the famous part about a wolf and a lamb living in peace side by side (Is 11:65). It is possible that the animals mentioned in these passages are not considered “dumb animals” – for which Aquinas does not find a place in heaven.

Subsequently, attention should also be directed to the missing explanation by Aquinas why then there will be no sea – if the elemental bodies are a part of the new creation (Rev 21:1) and if the fire purifies them. Aquinas speaks about this problem briefly when he mentions that the substance of the water will remain but not its dispositions such as movement and saltiness (Aquinas 2023, 9054). Nonetheless, water is not merely a sea, and there could still be a sea without the salt and the movement. It is not incomprehensible that water will remain being water even in the new creation, but why would the Revelation explicitly mention a sea if not to emphasize this particular “form” of water which will not exist any longer? I believe that the reason is in the ontological role of the sea as the foundation of the earth (Gen 1:6–9; Ps 24:1–2). This role will expire: “And now I make all things new!” (Rev 21:5).

There is also the question what would have happened to the animals that were in Eden. After Adam and Eve committed the first sin, God made them a cover out of animals’ skin; this proves the existence of at least some animals in Eden (Gen 3:21). If there had been no sin (and hence no death), would God not have preserved those animals but rather annihilated them while taking Adam and Eve into heaven?

In conclusion, in the Christian faith there are numerous sound references to the eternal existence of matter after

the end of times, although the state of this matter will not remain the same but will become glorified. Among some early Church fathers who have addressed the deep mystery of human existence in the afterlife were Origen, Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa. According to A. Louth (1993), Origen considered the body as something transitional, since contemplation (*enoptiké*) is the primary goal of the soul, and the body stands only in the way of the mind (*noûs*) to become fully free in its contemplation of the invisible reality (an attribute of dualistic Platonic tradition).<sup>2</sup> For Origen, even incarnated Logos is a phase, or, as Louth comments: "Incarnation becomes only a stage in development." (Louth 1993, 95, 101). For Athanasius there is, contrary to Origen, an ontological chasm between God and creation, and the human soul cannot be of the same nature as God's. A soul cannot ascend to God by contemplation but rather by descent to the material world that has been transformed by the Word; this is the real domain where the communion with the Incarnate Word is possible (Louth 1993, 117, 143). Gregory of Nyssa ascribed a considerably higher importance to bodily resurrection than Origen had. Resurrection means recovery/return to the perfect state of humankind in a corporeal and spiritual sense. The recovery of such a perfect original state does not correspond with the state of the first ancestors in earthly Eden but with the state of the perfect fullness of humanity envisioned by God since the beginning.<sup>3</sup> Gregory also claims that salva-

- 2 Origen speaks about the shining face of Moses when he has returned from Mount Sinai as the consequence of his unification with God's nature. This was understood as a bodily phenomenon (as kind of God's epiphany) and not as a literal transfiguration of the body.
- 3 Here I agree with Gregory as far as this restoration of the perfect original state is not associated with *apokatastasis*, the idea that at the end everyone will be saved.

tion encompasses not only humankind but the creation as a whole (Hryniewicz 2017, 217–218, 230–231).

The main purpose of the article is hence to draw the attention of modern Christian theologians and any other expert who is interested in researching eschatological aspects of physical matter and to stimulate discussions or further scientific research on this challenging and yet essential Christian topic. A relatively modest amount of scientific literature dedicated to these questions published thus far was probably the most important motif in my attempt to shed at least some light on the dim vastness of the landscape called “glorified matter”. In that sense collecting some of the available scientific literature was the first step that I have undertaken, followed by the selection and inductive and critical analysis of the most relevant texts, before finally appraising them from the official Christian teaching perspective.

What I depict henceforth is how this process of transcendental glorification of flesh and matter may be anticipated or even detected as something imminent already before it takes place.

### **What is emergence?**

The term emergence is a rather new concept in science, philosophy or theology: by definition, it means the appearance of a quality or a fact pertaining to the whole which cannot be explained based on the qualities pertaining to the parts of this whole (Stres 2018, 218). The two probably most referred examples of emergence are consciousness

and evolution. The forerunner to the emergence theory as known today can be detected in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the dynamic of the opposites between Being and Nothing, which is overcome with the emergence of Becoming. Further traces lead even farther back in history. According to Plotin's doctrine of emanation, the entirety of being emerges as a result of the One in the process of emanation. This doctrine was adopted by Neoplatonists, who taught that there is a two-way movement: downward and upward. The former is responsible for the differentiation and causality, and the latter for the increasing perfection leading each time closer to the One (or to the Source). All new species and all new structural forms manifest as a consequence of only top-down movement and never the opposite (Clayton 2006, 5–6).

While the notion that emergence is directed only from the top is very appealing, the major obstacle for Neoplatonism to be correlated with Christian thought is its dualistic understanding of matter as something without any good purpose, as something negative and even evil – an idea which is completely foreign to Christianity (Gen 1).

Philip Clayton was one of the first who, at the beginning of the 21st century, invited various scientists to contribute their research and findings to a common collection of essays on this topic. The collection gathers scientific contributions that discuss emergence in relation to the physical sciences, biological sciences, consciousness and religion. In the preface Paul C. W. Davies exposes George Henry Lewes as the first who used the term emergence as a philosophical concept already in 1875 in his work *Problems of Life and Mind* (Davies 2006, x).

Strong reductionism (also known as ontological reductionism), where the whole is understood purely as the sum of the parts, is the leading approach adopted by many physicists. This claim is confronted with the strong emergence theorists, who assert that the principles on a micro level cannot justify the properties of a whole. Systems that are closed on the microscopic level are excluded as there can be no interaction with additional principles outside of such a system. Besides, in ontological reductionism there is no place for a moral dimension to the universe because laws of physics account for everything. For a religious emergentist, God may be (only) an emergent quality at the top of the hierarchy (Davies 2006, xi–xiii).

The reason why discussions of emergence have become increasingly important lies predominantly in failures of reductionism when trying to explain all phenomena in nature purely as the objects and laws of physics. Clayton follows el-Hani and Pereira in their definition (structurization) of four features associated with emergence: a) ontological physicalism; b) property emergence; c) the irreducibility of the emergence; and d) downward causation (Clayton 2006, 1–2). I agree with Clayton in his reasoning that emergentists should be monists for whom ontology is not necessarily dictated by physics but rather by causality.

Downward causation expresses its influence directly, and it is irreducible to that of the micro-properties on which it supervenes. Taking into account Aristotle's four types of causal influence, the third (final causality; with efficient, material and formal causality being the other three) depicts the way in which the final cause (*telos*) "pulls" all things toward itself. For many vitalists, dualists and supernaturalists, this is the model

according to which complex systems emerge. Aristotle introduces the term *entelechy* as an inherent principle of growth within living systems (organisms) that leads to new emerging forms or qualities, which are essentially the actualizations of the potentiality characteristic for an organism. The complete (perfect) form is already there in the organism from the beginning on – it is merely a question of the transformation from its potential to its actual state (Clayton 2006, 4–5).<sup>4</sup>

The claim that causal agents or processes come into existence over the course of evolutionary history is the firm position of strong emergence (called also ontological emergence), while weak emergence (called also epistemological emergence) adopts the position that every causality is a result of an existing underlying physical actuality (Clayton 2006, 7–8; Silberstein and McGreever 1999, 186; Jaegwon 1999).

Various authors, while refuting the personal God and Creator as the only reason and purpose for the existence of matter, prefer to use, especially when they are confronted with the emergence phenomena, such terms as the morphogenetic field, organismic forces, hidden reality, *elan vital*, finalistic causes, *nisus*, *entelechy* and even just plain and vague "stuff" (Clayton 2006, 2–12, 18, 23; Broad 1925, 56–58, 77, 86; Polanyi 1966, 24, 42–43).

Broad (1925) recognizes that this "stuff" is hard to explain, but there are emergent laws, which are not metaphysically necessary nor deducible. Although Broad believes in teleology in nature, he rejects the notion that this automatically

4 Here the linkage between the common and glorified body can already be anticipated.



accounts for a cosmic Designer. He also rejects the theory of entelechies and Substantial Vitalism (referring to the works of Hans Driesch, which to this day bear at least some heuristic value, nonetheless; Bolduc 2023) and defends the idea of Emergent Vitalism (the latter being only an implication of an emergence). Furthermore, he asserts that emergentism can be seen as consistent with theism, although it does not entail it (Broad 1925, 79–94; Clayton 2006, 9). What I believe to be true is just the opposite: God's existence entails emergentism. However, the number of authors who strive to exclude God from any attempt to explain emergentism is quite substantial.

Lloyd C. Morgan suggests the idea that emergence is basically the recognition that evolution is punctuated. Any God of the gaps that may be brought to the forefront as an extrapolation or reasoning based on the lack of the certainty about how the new stages or levels of the evolution would emerge must be refuted. Morgan, according to Clayton, defends the idea of evolutionary naturalism, a force inherent (i.e. immanent) to nature, where a new emergent is viewed as a new kind of a relation (he calls this relatedness). This is one of the reasons why Morgan does not support the idea of vital energy (*elan vital*), proposed by Bergson in his *Creative Evolution*, because this force originates outside of nature. Explaining emergence only on the level of the mind leads to dualism, but on the other hand, if explaining it only on the level of life, then one can end in vitalism. Only if the explanation of the whole-part relation rests on physical chemistry, claims Clayton, this two-fold risk can be omitted (Clayton 2006, 11–13).

According to my opinion, Morgan's claim implies that evolution is self-invented and self-made, the first and the fi-

nal cause. This way even a soul is only an emergent, and mental causation should be explained within the realm of mental properties and the components of the nervous system, discarding any idea such as mind and spirit (Clayton 2006, 14).

Polanyi makes abiogenesis (life coming into existence) “the prototype of all subsequent stages of evolution, by which rising forms of life, with their higher principles, emerge into existence” (Polanyi 1966, 49). This sounds more like magic and not as a science. How does something inanimate become alive? Until scientifically proven that this can actually happen due to chance and the laws that are inherent to evolution – even if this is seen as a passive constraint (Clayton 2006, 16) – one is justified to dismiss such a claim as worthless. Polanyi, according to Clayton, admits though the role of an active constraint: these are the intentions that actively shape the outcome (Clayton 2006, 16). Still, according to Polanyi’s line of thought, these intentions come only from humans and not from God. Polanyi was a proponent of the morphogenetic field that pulls evolving organisms toward itself; an idea that was influenced by the work of Hans Driesch and his notion of organismic forces and causes – described also as a “harmonious equipotential” system (Polanyi 1966, 42–43; Clayton 2006, 18).

Polanyi was a keen proponent of Aristotle’s entelechy, but to Clayton he had made an even bigger mistake (should emergence be properly explained only within the empirical sciences) as he sympathized with Bergson’s *elan vital* and consequentially with the postulations of Teilhard de Chardin (Clayton 2006, 18–19; Polanyi 1966, 46).

In the end of his exposé, Clayton refrains from Polanyi's admittance of "finalistic causes" in biology, where a new organism "*is guided* by the potentialities that are open to it". Clayton himself, when insisting that the only right way is empiricism, uses very non-empirical and anthropomorphic terms when explaining biological progression: on the same page he first defends the notion that "the environment can select for or against" an organism, and shortly after that he claims "that the evolutionary process has given rise to individuals who can exercise rational and responsible choices" (Clayton 2006, 19). How can the environment select in favour or disfavour of an organism and how can a process by itself give rise to rationality and even morality? This implies expedience and intentionality and not a complete blindness of the natural selection processes.<sup>5</sup>

Clayton lists Roger Sperry as the next important strong emergentist of the second half of the 20th century. What I believe to be of the highest importance when discussing the theory of emergence (it applies not only to biology but also to more general contexts) is Sperry's clear emphasis of consciousness as being something else than just a by-product of the brain (Clayton 2006, 19; Sperry 1980, 195–206). With that there is at least one case where something immaterial (consciousness) is proved not to be a by- or end product of progressively more complex material structures development. Still, this relation between physicochemical reality and consciousness remains mutually interdependent – which led Sperry

5 The problem is that Clayton is aware that a purely blind natural selection would never give a long chain of ever more complex systems; it is in fact equally probable that after some time of progression, there could be an equally long or ever longer period of regression, which would bring everything back to square one.

to coin the phrase “emergent interactionism” (Clayton 2006, 20; Sperry 1969, 532–536).

Some weak emergentists, such as Samuel Alexander, have a different opinion: the mind is by necessity emergent from the physical – evolution can give new and more complex structures and organizational patterns, but the source of (all) causality is at the level of microphysics; we are just not able (yet) to recognize these fundamental processes. This is also the line of division between the weak and strong emergentists, especially when it comes to the question of mental causation. Alexander was the one who used the undefined terms such as *stuff* (which fills entire Space-Time) and *nisus* (a mental or physical effort to attain an end) that drive the whole process of development – even up to a Mind and a Deity as the final emergent (the moral properties of this Deity are also emergent). On Alexander’s behalf, Clayton structuralizes his views in eight steps. In the fifth step he asserts that matter, when it reaches an adequate level of complexity, produces the molecules that become life-bearing (Clayton 2006, 21–26).

Physical reductionism, where the totality of all causal relations that can be detected in nature on the micro- and macro-scale is claimed to be only at the level of microphysical causality among micro-particles, is the predominant line of thought among the adherents of weak emergence. I find some of Alexander’s claims simply absurd: *stuff* and *nisus* are abstract concepts taken out of thin air; abiogenesis is just a matter of increasingly complex organized matter; time itself is purposive (like a mind of a space); a Deity is only the highest stage of emergence; even the mind and morality are only emergent, where their constituents and the causes belong

solely to the physical world. This way, the doors of transhumanism, a man becoming a Deity through the process of emergence, are widely open. Alexander made these claims early on in the 20th century when scientific knowledge was not on the same level as today. This example shows (up to this day) that the hermeneutics of emergence has rarely been free of preconceived personal ideological preferences.

Although I disagree with Clayton on some of his claims (e.g. parsimony necessitates the exclusion of God; evolution is an empirical fact), I do agree when he says that “for theists who maintain that God as a spiritual being exercises some causal influence in the natural world, defending strong emergence may be a *sine qua non* for their position” (Clayton 2006, 27). A theist can only be a strong emergentist (top-down causality is a precondition), never a weak one. Our views separate again when Clayton calls for emergence to be anchored in the natural sciences “if it is to command serious attention” (Clayton 2006, 26–27). Does this mean that when the theory of emergence is deliberated within psychology, philosophy, theology, or any other non-natural science, it does not deserve to attract serious attention? I conclude my critique of Clayton’s work with another rhetorical question, which stems from his article: Should the idea of supervenience really accept only the causal closure of the world (even so far as to relate mental phenomena only to the states of the central nervous system), even on nomological grounds that relate supervenient and subvenient levels –thus making even consciousness a part of a natural science?

The next important author is Arthur Peacocke, who speaks about a mereological relation among parts when analysing emergent monism from a philosophical or empirical per-

spective. This dynamical and spatial interrelation of parts is believed to be the cause of all properties of the whole. The level of microphysical entities and their relations is thus where everything significant happens (Peacocke 2006, 257–261). Another approach to discuss emergence is from the whole-part influence, which can be called also “top-down” causation;<sup>6</sup> a term that was adopted by Donald Campbell in order to describe firstly the impact that the behaviour and environmental relations of an organism have on the actual DNA sequences, but later also for the relations in both synchronic and diachronic systems in general. Dissipative systems, which are open and not in equilibrium, can manifest large-scale patterns even though the units of such system have random motions – an effect known as “order out of chaos” (such examples can be found even in economic and social systems) (Peacocke 2006, 261–264; Øistein Schmidt Galaaen 2007; Campbell 1974; Prigogine and Stegners 1984).

The next important subject for Peacocke is the relation mind-brain-body. In this relation he cites a ground-breaking discovery in neuroscience, where isolated pacemaker neurons cannot be accounted for the generation of rhythmic patterns in neural circuits – these patterns are the property of the circuit (that is of the whole). This may be additional supporting evidence for the claim that higher-level predicates, concepts and laws, with their distinguishing properties, are irreducible and may be justifiably called an emergent that exerts influence on the behaviour of their constituent parts. As a consequence, many philosophers now view mental properties as something epistemologically non-reducible to

6 A synonym is also downward causation, although Peacocke suggests an even more adequate term “determinative influences”.

the purely physical world and its properties. The determinative effect (or determinative influence, as Peacocke calls it) of the higher order is real but different in kind when compared with the effect of the lower order. Thus, the events and actions on the lower level are the combination (joint operation) of both influences – of the lower and higher level (Peacocke 2006, 266–269).

In the last chapter of his article, Peacocke lays down the foundation for the model of God's interaction with the world based on the whole-part influence: “/.../ God uniquely knows, over all frameworks of reference of time and space, everything that is possible to know about the state(s) of all-that-is, including the interconnectedness and interdependence of the world's entities, structures and processes” (Peacocke 2006, 274).

The laws which apply to any of the orders of organization and God's influence on the world are not mutually incompatible but coherent with one another. Peacocke is aware of the likelihood that this would lead us to panentheism, where all is in God – a view that was so eagerly adopted by Teilhard de Chardin and his Omega Point (Sargent Wood 2010). Peacocke admits that any theistic model must acknowledge the existence of an ontological chasm that separates God and world, and so it is necessary to see such rough explanations as the attempts to reason the effects of God from our ontological standpoint. This ontological chasm is absolute (it exists everywhere in space and time), which means that God affects the world at all stages, all orders of organization possible (physical, biological, human and social); and by that not annulling any natural regularities. It comes as no surprise that the reduction of divine action to only a personal level

(to humankind) still faces far fewer challenges by the mainstream science. Peacocke's claim that the Logos from the Gospel of John can be understood as the expression (emphasis) of God's creative and active designing of the world and His self-expression in the world is very close to mine (Peacocke 2006, 274–276; John 1:3).

The third author who divides weak and strong emergence by claiming the former to be the epistemological and the latter to be the ontological version of emergence is Niels H. Gregersen. He describes five possible models of religious reflection on emergence: 1. flat religious naturalism; 2. evolving theistic naturalism; 3. atemporal theism; 4. temporal theism; and 5. eschatological theism (Gregersen 2006, 288–300). My rejection of macroevolution (the abiogenesis theory and the creation of new genera only by natural selection and mutation) and naturalism immediately discards the first two models as irrelevant. The distinction between the third and the fourth seems to be only the question whether or not God directly acts in human history while He remains unchangeable. I believe that an action by God in time does not require Him to change: a change in the world by God is not a change in God. As Gregersen states, in the last one hundred years the idea of temporal theism has become the predominant position in philosophical and systematic theology. Assigning two natures (primordial and consequent) to God, even if written in quotation marks, in order to justify God's temporal action in the world (Gregersen 2006, 293; Whitehead 1978, 363–366),<sup>7</sup> does not resonate with me, because the change happened in time but was conceived outside of time. The

7 In the original version of Whitehead's work, the pages in question are 343–351.



“consequent nature” of God presupposes something that follows, that is subsequent; in short – time-dependant. God cannot be surprised by anything, least by some imaginary evolution; claims such as “God can know the phase space of future possibilities, but not the exact route of emergent evolution” and that God’s *kenosis* is only an expression of divine love making place for “setting nature free for a process of fertile self-exploration” sound even worse than the just superficially dubious discourse of an advocate of deism (Gregersen 2006, 294).

I find a validation for my proposition of immanent transcendence when Gregersen exposes the immanence of the transcendent God as quintessential for Peacocke’s thought (Gregersen 2006, 295). What is different is (only) the extrapolation of the transcendence that is, as I believe it to be, not just an attribute of God but an attribute (that could be attributed only by God) of the Creation; an eschatological seed that will lead to the new Creation and risen (glorified) bodies and matter (Is 65:17–25; 66:22–23; Hos 2:20–24; Acts 3:21; Rom 8:18–22; Rev 21:1–8). Based on what I have just stated, it follows that Gregersen’s fifth model, in particular deserves full attention: namely eschatological theism. New and yet unforeseen occurrences, be they in nature or history, are seen as God’s work (which is characteristic also of the Jewish religion).

I disagree though when Gregersen claims that according to this view laws of nature have no prescriptive but only descriptive power in relation to the natural world: they supposedly do not determine the events but only explain general tendencies in nature that are still guided by God’s providence (Gregersen 2006, 297–298). Why would any laws need to be

changed by God? It does not mean that He could not do it; it is only very unlikely that God was somehow “surprised” by how things worked out and He had to introduce the changes. There is no question, God can make an intervention through miracles (Exodus of the Israelites, Mary’s apparitions), and there are also supernatural (prophetic dreams, prophecies) and preternatural (angelic and demonic activities, levitation of some saints) occurrences in this world, and yet they do not discard any of the existing natural laws – in these cases they are just locally and temporarily put aside.

Gregersen has exposed a German theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg, as a distinguished proponent of eschatological theism. Pannenberg suggests reversing the sequence and putting emergents (contingent occurrences) before resultants (regularities, patterns): occurrences precede regularities. In other words: the instantiations of the emergence and creation of new structures are prior to definite conceptualization of nature’s laws. An emergence can neither be sufficiently or properly explained nor understood only by referring to the causality of nature. According to Gregersen, Pannenberg defends an eschatological ontology by which “the coming-into-being of novel possibilities” is what actually defines the true nature of the constituents. The complete spectrum of potentialities that are inherent to the constituents can be revealed only retroactively – after the new constellations (structures, patterns) that have been composed out of (or by) these constituents are manifested. This can be demonstrated on the human brain: the capacities of an individual neuron cannot come into being if isolated and not being a part (constituent) of the neurological brain network. The whole (the neuro-network) determinates what the parts (neuron cells) can actually make or do. What the whole and

their functions are going to be can be disclosed only with time, only in the future. All the inherent potential of the constituents can be revealed only with emergence of a higher-order structure in the future (Gregersen 2006, 298–300).

This is indeed what Pannenberg claims to be the truth even on the grand scale of reality: the dogmatic theologian thinks about the unity of the world, its history and its future consummation as an expression of the unity of God, as the reproduction and anticipatory project of the coherence itself of the divine truth. His assumptions are based on anticipations that reproduce the *prolepsis* of the eschaton that occurred in the history of Jesus Christ (Pannenberg 1992, 55). The core issue of the theological theism is, according to Gregersen, “that potentialities do not simply reside in the past configuration of matter; they result from an interplay between creaturely potencies and the coming into being of the divine possibilities offered to the world” (Gregersen 2006, 299). This is exactly what I believe to be true. Yesterday and today are fully comprehensible only through the lens of tomorrow.

The underlying problem is that we try to understand and explain earthly matters based on the chain of causality that is submitted to the linear flow of time: a result always follows the cause in due course of time. This comes as self-evident and only logical in our dimensions, but there is no reason to say that this must apply also in a heavenly realm: “But do not forget one thing, my dear friends! There is no difference in the Lord’s sight between one day and a thousand years; to him the two are the same” (2 Pt 3:8). The Bible warns us explicitly not to forget this fact about the time that seems irrational and paradoxical to us but is a state of affairs in a

heavenly realm where God's downward causality was conceived. This confirms also Damascene: "For the creation, even though it originated later, is nevertheless not derived from the essence of God, but is brought into existence out of nothing by His will and power, and change does not touch God's nature." (Damascene 2006, 28).

### **The evolution theory: an obsolete idea**

The theory of evolution is extremely important to any emergentist; this idea, if taken as a law and not as a theory, necessarily influences any philosophical, empirical, systemic and epistemological thinking. Therefore, if the theory of abiogenesis and macroevolution are proven false (I am not referring to micro-evolution here), then the majority of existing emergence concepts has to be altered, if not completely abandoned.

A large proportion of the modern non-theological (empirical) emergence theories derive their conclusions and postulates based on the neo-Darwinian understanding of evolution. The question of evolution, in general, is an extremely important one in any serious discussion about emergence. The only problem is that the underlying foundations which so-called empirical biology was constituted from are not empirical (they have not been scientifically proven). Abiogenesis, the core of the evolution theory, has not been proven nor it is likely to be in the nearest future – according to organic chemist James Tour (2019).

John Lennox, a world-renowned scholar, argues that there are even two separate issues with the evolution theory: the

abiogenesis is the first one, and the origin of species only the second one. There is no single proof for the existence of the mechanisms (let alone of these mechanisms being repeatable under controlled conditions) that have caused inanimate matter to become alive (Hoover Institute 2023). According to the same modern scholars, it is even obvious from the plenitude of proofs in biochemistry that such a thing (for inanimate matter to become alive) is not even possible within the known laws of nature (Tour 2023). Development of new species as the result of environmental factors (mutations) is possible only within the genus (kin), as proven by numerous examples of new breeds in animals (wolf – dog; horse – zebra) and new varieties in plants. J. Lennox, M. J. Behe, S. C. Meyer, D. Berlinski, D. Gelerntner, J. Tour and D. Klinghoffer are just some of the many distinguished scientists who, in the last decade or so, have scientifically proven that macroevolution (and especially abiogenesis) as a science, and as a still accepted and predominant theory in the scientific mainstream community, should be – in the name of scientific prudence – entirely rejected.

There is also no proof whatsoever that mutations can produce new species and that in history there were numerous intermediate links between two animal or plant genera; the famous *Archeopteryx* is its own bird genus (Haynes 2023). Besides, if the evolution theory was correct, then there should be large amounts of transitional fossils with intermediate features scattered all over the world and to be found easily. In their works and statements, Michael Behe, John Lennox and Steven Meyer clearly speak in favour of irreducible complexity, which can be explained neither solely by evolutionary principles nor by bottom-up causality. Many rationalists, materialists and empiricists claim that even a piece of infor-

mation must be explained materialistically, which is, according to Meyer, wrong because a piece of information should always be explained as a code originating from the mind, which is the only real cause (Hoover Institute 2023).

### **Immanent transcendence**

This article focuses more on the theory of emergence than on immanent transcendence even though the latter may be a less-known concept, which is evident by the modest extent of the related peer-reviewed literature. The reason is that if we can show that downward causation becomes an increasingly accepted concept within the “hard-core” scientific community and that proofs of its existence mount with each year, then even the causation of a highest possible level (God – humankind) simply cannot be ignored. Once we have established the solid theoretical foundation for this active relation between God and humankind (and the whole creation after all), then we only have to step out of the empirical sciences and to transpose it into the realm of theology and rename it by calling it immanent transcendence. In retrospect what follows is that immanent transcendence can be compatible only with strong emergence because both imply downwards causation and reject the notion of possible development toward complexity without any intrinsic or external purpose or reason.

When deliberating the concept of immanent transcendence, an analogy may help in understanding the core issue of this concept (that is the relation between an earthly and a heavenly body): As there is a material DNA, one could assume that there is also a “spiritual DNA”. The expression of the ma-

terial genes depends largely on internal (inside-of-a-body) as well as on external (outside-of-a-body) stimuli. Some of this knowledge is quite new, and the modern science that describes these interactions and mechanisms is called epigenetics. In line with the analogy, expression of the “spiritual genes” that were inscribed by God in one’s soul already at the conception requires external stimuli (God’s grace) in order to be activated and to consequently transform<sup>8</sup> the physical earth-soul-body into the glorified heaven-spirit-body (Phl 3:21; 1 Co 15:51). For the transformation to take place, the entirety of the “spiritual gene pool” is in question. Part of these “genes” is also subject to personal free will. The deeds, decisions, thoughts, passions and other constituents of a human spirit may be seen (contrary to God’s external stimuli) as the internal stimuli that make the final stage (the transformation from an earthly to a heavenly body) of this process possible. The intertwined cooperation between God’s grace and one’s mind and will is a prerequisite for the actualization of this potentiality. If a person with his/her decisions, deeds, passions etc. does not enable these spiritual genes but instead represses them by living in sin and by ignoring God’s commandments, then it remains only up to God whether the final stage of glorification of such a person’s body will happen or not.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, we have to take into closer consideration the wording of Aquinas in a passage where he delineates how the active principle of the heavenly bodies is a spiritual substance:

8 Greek: *metaschēmatizō* (μετασχηματίζω), also *allassō* (ἀλλάσσω).

9 This is not in line with *Sola Fide* in Protestantism, where one’s deeds and decisions do not contribute in any way to one’s salvation.

The movement of the heaven is said to be natural, not as though it were part of nature in the same way as we speak of natural principles; but because it has its principle in the nature of a body, not indeed its active but its receptive principle. Its active principle is a spiritual substance, as the Commentator says on *De Coelo et Mundo*; and consequently, it is not unreasonable for this movement to be done away by the renewal of glory, since the nature of the heavenly body will not alter through the cessation of that movement (Aquinas 2023, 9284).

Can this spiritual substance that is the active principle (of the heavenly bodies) be seen as some aspect of immanent transcendence? Yes, I concur: the end of the movement will be induced by the renewal of glory, but the nature of the heavenly bodies will not alter, because this passing to the ultimate transcendent state has been always immanently there.

The next possible germ of immanent transcendence may be hidden in the acknowledgment by Aquinas that whole and part can have the same disposition:

Further, man's body is composed of the elements. Therefore, the elemental particles that are in man's body will be glorified by the addition of brightness when man is glorified. Now it is fitting that whole and part should have the same disposition. Therefore, it is fitting that the elements themselves should be endowed with brightness (Aquinas 2023, 9292).

The ever-present incorruptibility of the heavenly bodies in their whole and in their parts is obvious to Aquinas, while



the elements are incorruptible as a whole but not as to their parts; yet, humans are corruptible in both ways (on the part of their matter), although incorruptible in their form. Matter can retain (in man) or loses (in animals) its form, and form can remain actual (in man) or not (in animals), which means that animals have nothing in them to be incorruptible and consequently will not be part of the renewal, where renewal implies former incorruption (Aquinas 2023, 9295–9296).

Lastly, immanent transcendence may also be traced back to the next passage of the *Summa*: “Moreover it preceded in the obediencial potentiality which was then bestowed on the creature to the effect of its receiving this same renewal by the Divine agency.” (Aquinas 2023, 9278). In the Bible we find support for such a statement: “When buried, it is a physical body; when raised, it will be a spiritual body. There is, of course, a physical body, so there has to be a spiritual body.” (1 Co 15:44).

## Conclusion

The question of the true nature of physical matter, its origin and purpose and its destiny after the eschaton has troubled the Christians and Christian thinkers since the early stages of Christianity. In order to realize how in the ancient times it was difficult to understand and to accept the notion that a mortal and corruptible human body was worthy of being the very form of Logos incarnated, one does not need to search very deep – one only needs to call to mind the so-called Docetism, a widespread heretical belief that Christ was not fully a man but a mere semblance of a man.

It is however one thing to say that Jesus was a true man from His birth to His death, but entirely different to say He has not risen only as a spirit but as a man who still had a body – though a glorified one. With this body He could enter a room even when the doors were locked (Jn 20:19) and immediately disappear (Lk 24:32), and yet eat a fish (Lk 24:40–43). Can these biblical events be seen as the prefigurement of the same process that will follow the death of every saved man and woman? One may ask even more succinctly: With the occurrence of the eschaton, when the general resurrection of glorified bodies follows Christ's Second Coming and His final judgment, will these glorified heavenly bodies still have any ontological resemblance with the long decayed earthly bodies? Two disciples on their way to Emmaus did not recognize risen Jesus, while the apostles in the upper room did.

What about the new heaven and the new earth? If man's earthly body was indeed made from soil (Gen 3:19), then it is valid to draw parallels between the future destiny of the Earth and future destiny of human bodies regarding the ways of the transition/transfiguration into an eternal state of being. If the new heaven and the new earth exist after the Second Coming, will they be again created *ex nihilo*, or should their everlasting existence be seen as some sort of a continuation (i.e. an emergence) that extends from the old heaven and earth – as I claim to be analogous in case of human bodies? God can make all things new out of nothing: The only question is whether or not the same principle will be applied again when the new heaven, new earth and new bodies emerge. In my opinion, there will be no repetition of God's first creation act, as now intricate relations exist that intertwine now-existing physical phenomena with yet-

to-exist physical phenomena. There are some biblical examples to affirm this claim: in the Revelation John sees the new Jerusalem and the high mountain (Rev 21:2–10); there is also Christ's resurrected body and there are the three transformed bodies of Jesus, Moses and Elijah on Mount Tabor – all these corporal/physical appearances were not a consequence of *creatio ex nihilo*. Especially the latter example shows how the transformation of a human body of Jesus was a continuous transition where the old matter and the new glorified matter were intrinsically connected and related – a relation which I call immanent transcendence.

I acknowledge that the phrase “immanent transcendence” (as a description for the post-eschaton emergence of a new physical existence from the old one) may sound illogical and paradoxical; and thus inappropriate to be applied in any theory. The key words here are “may sound” as I believe that the concept of immanent transcendence can find a legitimate place and be understood within Christian theology.

In the context of this article, the Theology of the Body by Pope John Paul II would certainly deserve closer attention; however, at this point I must satisfy myself with stressing only a short but nonetheless important passage where he sees the resurrection as the restoration of the true life of human corporeity. The human body is subject to death while it exists under the rule of time, but after death it becomes incorruptible (immortal) through the process of spiritualization (John Paul II 2024, 171, 186).

Contrary to the Christian understanding of the historical development of the Universe, the Earth and physical phenomena, the evolution theory is the most important stronghold

of any naturalist and empiricist who searches for the theoretical explanations, concepts and models to understand how the ever-increasing complexity of life could come into being. Any scientist who accepts only empirical epistemology will never concur that the evolution theory presupposes radical metaphysical statements, such as life coming into existence from unliving matter purely by accident. Each year this stronghold undergoes heavy attacks as the scientific proofs against the evolution theory multiply. Organic chemist James Tour tenaciously asserts: There are no scientific proofs and there will not be any soon to support abiogenesis, a cornerstone of the evolution stronghold.

I believe that the right answer to all the questions raised above lies in the emergence of a new quality and of a new "structure" which has its origin in the former stages and which has been influenced by the top-down causation. This "new physicality" (new bodies, new heavens, new earth), due to its everlasting incorruptibility, obviously transcends the transient and corruptible "old physicality" (old bodies, old heaven, old earth); even so, the origin of all the newness, which will emerge with time and after God's impetus, has been immanently present in the oldness ever since it was created at the beginning of time. The transfigured new heaven and new earth and our glorified bodies are thus "only" the final consequence, an emerged transcendent actualization of a metaphysical potential that has been immanently seeded there from the very beginning of the existence.

The interpretation of the nature of physical phenomena as proposed with this article has a significant impact on the ontology of the material world, human bodies and all being as such. There are several (although not many) authors

who have heretofore addressed the issue of newly emerged phenomena from various possible angles. Among them the views of Wolfhart Pannenberg are closest to mine. I do not claim to have found a definite answer to the initial questions; nevertheless, I have opened the door for further research on this provocative topic, which seems to be an outstanding and unique property of Christian thought.

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## **Imanentna transcendenca in krščansko razumevanje pojavitve novega neba in nove zemlje**

### *Povzetek*

Vsaj z razsvetljenstvom se dokončno začne obdobje, ko v pretežnem delu t. i. zahodnega sveta skrivnostno, neizrekljivo, numinozno in presežno zamenja analitični um, ki meje epistemološke gotovosti postavi zgolj na to, kar je moč izpeljati na podlagi induktivnih in deduktivnih znanstvenih metod. »Izmeri, kar je merljivo, in naredi merljivo, kar ni«, je znameniti izrek Galilea Galileja, ki je na ta način skoraj istočasno z Renéjem Descartesom ter očetom znanstvene metode Francisom Baconom naznanil zaton metafizike ter prihajajočo prevlado empirizma, pozitivizma, racionalizma, materializma, scientizma. Vendar, če naj najvišji smoter eksistence postane tostranstvo in uresničenje intelektualnih ter psihičnih potencialov človeka, je za dosego tega potrebno najprej iz človekove zavesti »izbiti« metafiziko. A ta je vsajena v samo srčiko njegovega čutenja sebe kot bitja, ki mu izmed vsega ostalega stvarstva ni enakega. Nova revolucionarna ideja, ki bi »dokazala«, da je človek produkt naključnosti, da ni v ničemer poseben in je celo zavest zgolj naključna pojavitve (emergenca) slepih mehanizmov razvoja, bi lahko izpolnila to nalogo. Zato ne preseneča, da so bili z Georges-Louisom Leclercom ter Charlesom Darwinom temelji evolucionizma postavljeni zgolj 130 let po smrti zgoraj imenovanih. Tu pa že pridemo do vprašanja, kaj ostane od empirizma, vodilne ideje sodobnega zahodnega sveta, če mu odvzamemo abiogenezo in evolucijski determinizem? Izgine kot svetovni nazor, ostane pa kot empirična metoda, kot ena izmed legitimnih metod odkrivanja resnice.

Članek omogoča uvid v ponovno odkrivanje pojavitve, kot

še vedno ne dovolj poznanega niti razloženega fenomena, ko višje organizacijske stopnje izkazujejo attribute oziroma lastnosti, ki jih njihovi gradniki nimajo ali pa jih ne moremo zaznati. Članek ponuja pregled različnih možnih razlag tega fenomena, kot so jih ponudili nekateri sodobni misleci in znanstveniki. Pojavitev je moč prepoznati skorajda na vsakem področju znanstvenega delovanja, nazadnje še posebej očitno s pojavom računalnikov in umetne inteligence. Philip Clayton je v posebnem zborniku zbral prispevke avtorjev različnih znanstvenih disciplin, s čimer je pomembno prispeval k ponovnemu aktualiziranju tega vprašanja. Proti koncu pregleda obravnavam ideje Wolfharta Pannenberg, nemškega teologa, s katerim se glede njegove razlage pojavitve skorajda v celoti strinjam.

Poveličano telo ter novo nebo in novo zemljo iz *Razodetja* razumem kot pojavitev, katere gradnik je zemeljska snovnost. V bistvu se torej opiram na tomistično razlikovanje med potencialom in aktualizacijo: zemeljsko telo je v stanju potenciala, ki se posmrtno aktualizira s poveličanim telesom – kot je to trem apostolom pokazal Jezus s svojim spremenjenjem na gori. Gre za spremenjenje obstoječega, ne za novo stvaritev iz nič. S poveličanjem materialno telo doseže svojo polno aktualizacijo. Potencial, ki je hkrati tudi njegov smoter (telos), pa je lahko bil vanj vstavljen že v stanju prahu samo od nekoga, ki sam ni nikoli potencial, ampak čista aktualizacija – kar je edino Bog. To pa je tudi že bistvo poimenovanja prehoda bivajočega iz minljivega tostranstva v večno onostranstvo z izrazom imanentna transcendenca.