

I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to build a sense of community within a group of people. Simply understanding the process of how humans develop a sense of belonging that can end in beauty strengthens the human and spiritual connection.

Overall, the book does an excellent job of identifying the true desires of the human soul. Thompson effectively connects the dots between science and faith through the lens of beauty and relationship. He incorporates the mind of a biblical scholar, the wisdom of a psychiatrist and researcher, and the heart of a pastor through biblical narratives, stories of the human experience and neuroscience. He encourages us; even in a broken world, God can work through authentic and vulnerable community to create beauty from places of trauma, and he can make all things new.

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Ψ PHILOSOPHY

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DIVINE ACTION AND EMERGENCE: An Alternative to Panentheism by Mariusz Tabaczek. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021. xviii + 346 pages. Hardcover; \$75.00. ISBN: 9780268108731.

In his classic *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell refers to the Greek atomists, with their view of reality as consisting of atoms in a void, as a “point of view ... remarkably like that of modern science ...” Russell’s reductionistic characterization of natural science was already showing its age when the book was published in 1946. And in the years since, those words have only become more dated with the rise of various models of emergence which offer endlessly novel ways to understand the ontological richness of nature.

While ontological emergence offers rich new ways of conceiving nature, it also brings novel challenges. Consider, for example, the problem of agent causation. Many Christian theologians throughout history have appealed to a substance dualist model of the self, but these models have generally fallen out of favor, not least because they appear to violate the principle of interdependence and the metaphysical inclusivity of ontological levels (p. 44). While ontological emergence proposes that mental states supervene on physical states, it becomes very difficult to conceive how, on this model, the mental can bring about changes in the physical. The dilemma, in short, appears to be between epiphenomenalism (i.e., mental events do not cause anything) and causal overdetermination (i.e., both prior brain states and mental intentions bring about subsequent brain states) (cf. pp. 36–37).

This strange new world of ontological emergence not only poses a challenge to, but also presents an opportunity in several fields. This includes theology where it has spurred the exploration of various novel models of divine action. Arguably, the most significant trend of note in this regard has been the rise of panentheistic models of the God/world relation. While panentheism goes back centuries, it has firmly entered the mainstream with the complex models proposed by scholars such as Arthur Peacocke and Philip Clayton.

While panentheistic models of the emergent world offer new avenues of theological exploration, they also offer a range of challenges. For example, by construing God as one agent among others, they face the problem of a causal joint at which divine action (e.g., as energy or pure information) providentially enters into and thereby guides natural processes. One way to avoid that problem is by construing ontological gaps and God’s action as occurring everywhere in space and time (p. 150). On the downside, this account threatens to lose the distinctiveness of particular instances of divine action. Other challenges to panentheism include the basic question of meaning: that is, what does it even mean to say God is in the world or that the world is God’s body?

Given the difficulties with panentheistic accounts of divine action in a creation rich with ontological emergence, could there be another way of conceiving of divine action? At this point, I am reminded of the famous G.K. Chesterton quote: “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.” Might it be that this is true of classical theism as well? Might classical theism in general, and Thomism in particular, offer rich resources to explore the complexity of divine action in a nature rich with ontological emergence?

Mariusz Tabaczek believes so, and in *Divine Action and Emergence* he develops a penetrating critique of the panentheistic turn while defending a return to the resources of classical theism, and specifically the work of Aquinas. Tabaczek develops his model, which seeks to re-pristiniate an Aristotelian and Thomistic account of causation, in dialogue with Terrence Deacon’s exploration of emergence, through the category of absence and creative potential. Tabaczek puts his own spin on that intriguing (if rather obscure) concept with an exploration of Aquinas’s Aristotelian four-fold model of causation.

To begin with, Tabaczek argues that God should be viewed as the efficient cause of all creaturely being. However, God does not act on the same ontological plane as creatures but rather as a principal cause that empowers creatures to act as instrumental causes in accord with their created dispositions. This double

Book Reviews

causation framework allows us to understand God's action as meticulous concurrence while also avoiding the danger of occasionalism by preserving the distinctiveness of created causal powers or dispositions. God also acts as formal cause through the granting of *esse* in accord with the exemplars of being in the divine mind. As God actualizes creatures they participate in the divine ideas. Finally, God creates and sustains creaturely being as final cause in accord with the *telos* of every being. Collectively, these spheres of divine action provide a framework to understand God acting meticulously at all levels of nature while maintaining the distinctiveness of created being, respecting levels of ontological emergence, and avoiding the challenges posed by localized discrete action at a specific causal joint.

Divine Action and Emergence is packed with insights and rewarding features, including a fascinating and detailed overview of the many recent models of emergence (chap. 1) and a clear and concise history of major panentheistic theologies down to the present. Time and again, I appreciated Tabaczek's ability to make multiple subtly nuanced distinctions as with his many possible interpretations of the seemingly innocuous preposition "en" in panentheism.

Not surprisingly, Tabaczek's model invites its own questions. While he addresses the problem of evil by appealing to an Augustinian concept of privation, I am not persuaded that this abstract notion is a very effective theodicy. It seems to me the problem of evil is not so much about an abstract absence of being so much as the undeniably real and all-too-concrete suffering of individual sentient beings, and that problem very much remains even if overlaid with an Augustinian ontology of evil.

Among the other challenges faced by this kind of Thomistic model of the God/world relation is the implication that God has no real relation with the world (p. 163), such that all changes in the world merely constitute Cambridge changes in God (i.e., changes not involving God's intrinsic nature). Tabaczek responds by citing Michael Dodds who claims that, in virtue of lacking a real relation with creation, God is "infinitely closer" (p. 165) to created being. This reminds me of the defender of impassibility who says God is not unloving but rather is already fully actualized in his being. Nevertheless, I suspect many critics will find this an unsatisfactory rejoinder and thus will still look for a "two-way relation" between God and the world. It is also worth noting that panentheism is certainly not the only way to establish this two-way relation.

Divine Action and Emergence provides a very detailed summary of the contemporary debate on emergence

and panentheism while offering a bold new proposal that promises to reinvigorate Aristotelian causation for our day. The book has many virtues including the aforementioned overview of the field of emergence theory and concise history of panentheistic theological models. By reconciling classical theism to contemporary work in emergence (most notably, that of Deacon), Tabaczek lands a serious blow against the popular notion that panentheism offers superior resources for conceiving divine action within an emergent framework. Along the way, he also retains the virtues of classical theism, including a robust commitment to divine aseity and transcendence, *creatio ex nihilo*, and meticulous providence alongside created autonomy and human free will.

This is a rich and dense book and is a must-have for scholars in the field as well as university libraries. While Tabaczek expresses the hope that the book will also find a readership among the clergy, I suspect the high level of technical discussion will limit its broader appeal.

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GOD, HUMAN, ANIMAL, MACHINE: Technology, Metaphor, and the Search for Meaning by Meghan O'Gieblyn. New York: Doubleday, 2021. 304 pages. Hardcover; \$28.00. ISBN: 9780385543828.

Meghan O'Gieblyn's *God, Human, Animal, Machine* is the most honest, insightful, and therefore challenging book of its kind I have ever read. Part intellectual memoir and part philosophy, it walks us through O'Gieblyn's journey away from the Christian faith of her youth toward seeing herself "more or less as a machine" (p. 7). God, she has become convinced, is a projection of the human imagination, a product of our solipsism. "For centuries we said we were made in God's image, when in truth we made him in ours" (p. 12).

This is such a common late modern narrative of disenchantment that the reader expects the usual suspects to follow. Namely, vitriol against the ignorance of theologians, and a solid articulation of the merits of scientific naturalism. But that is not what we get here. What we get is the kind of intellectual honesty that is willing to admit that if humans are inherently meaning-making creatures, then all of us could be getting it wrong.

O'Gieblyn maps her own disenchantment narrative onto that of the modern western world. Descartes couldn't be sure of anything but his being a thinking thing; Kant couldn't be sure that those thoughts had anything to do with the world as it actually is. Once you go through this door, the only honest position is that every human belief about ultimate reality is based on faith in something. She makes this point brilliantly through David