

# Regarding Philip Clayton

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Guest Editor

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*This brief opening for a special issue of Tradition and Discovery: The Polanyi Society Periodical on Philip Clayton's thought and its connection with that of Michael Polanyi introduces Clayton's essay and the responses by Martinez Hewlett, Gregory R. Peterson, Andy F. Sanders and Waler B. Gulick.*

This issue of *TAD* celebrates, discusses, and debates the work of Philip Clayton, who has already established himself as a leader in the field of theology and science as well as the field of philosophical theology. His work is broad-ranging and remarkably well-informed. It is hard to read anything of Clayton's without coming away with three things: a thorough treatment of the cutting edge issues; a good sense of who is doing what along the entire spectrum (Clayton seems to be able quickly to map and report on the entire range of interesting work); and finally, Clayton's own positive proposals and insights.

In Fall 2003, Clayton will take up his duties as professor of both theology and philosophy at the Claremont School of Theology. In 2001-2002, he was a guest professor at Harvard Divinity School, and has been professor and chair of philosophy at California State University, Sonoma from 1991 until the present. In the 2002-2003 academic year, he is the recipient of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation to support his research on the issue of emergence, an issue that his article in this volume also addresses. At Yale, he studied with Louis Dupré, and earlier, with Wolfhart Pannenberg in Munich. He has published or edited many books, with others on the way, and more articles, review articles, responses, and translations than you can shake a stick at (see the list of his major publications on page 7).

When first invited to be featured by the Polanyi Society, Phil Clayton responded that he was no expert on Polanyi but would be happy to launch an engagement of his work. In what is both an appreciation of Polanyi and a critique, Clayton's paper in this volume, "Emergence, Supervenience, and Personal Knowledge," does just that. Clayton first shows where Polanyi's work was helpful, almost prophetic, and then where he thinks that Polanyi took some wrong turns that have caused his work to be in some respects superseded by those working within the now dominant neo-Darwinist synthesis.

We are further honored to have several first rate respondents to Clayton's work. Martinez Hewlett, a University of Arizona professor emeritus of cellular and molecular biology, argues that Polanyi's work on hierarchy in some ways calls into question many of the current assumptions in biology. Taking a cue from Polanyi, he points out that the chemistry of molecules is *insensitive* to information; otherwise, we could not have DNA molecules that perform the work that they in fact perform. In his defense of Polanyi, which he calls "On Polanyi, Clayton, and Biology: Some Musing of a Recovering Reductionist," Hewlett argues that if emergence and supervenience are going to work among biologists, then Polanyi's theory needs to be applied at all levels.

Greg Peterson, professor of religion and philosophy at South Dakota State University, responds to Clayton's paper with a humorous summary of Clayton's positions followed by some critical questions about the issues of supervenience and emergence. Peterson suggests that rather than speaking of strong and weak emergence, it would be more helpful to speak of open and closed emergence or emergent systems. He opens and closes his essay by reference to the ancient dialogue on very similar issues between Chuang-tzu and Hui-Shih.

Andy Sanders, associate professor of philosophy of religion at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, responds to Clayton's *God and Contemporary Science* with "God, Contemporary Science and Metaphysics: A Response to Philip D. Clayton." Sanders offers some observations and questions about Clayton's metaphysics; examines his theological methodology, especially in regard to science; looks at Clayton's treatment of divine agency in the world, especially his panentheist analogy; considers Clayton's emergentist supervenience; and concludes with some pointed questions about knowledge, judgment, and the fact-value dichotomy.

Walter Gulick, professor of philosophy and religion at Montana State University-Billings, offers an in-depth response to Clayton's thoughts on Polanyi and emergence. Gulick both affirms some of Clayton's criticisms of Polanyi and challenges Clayton's own position for being overly yielding to a lingering determinism. Gulick's own proposal analyzes how causality does and does not work on different, highly interwoven levels.

Finally, we are grateful to Curtis L. Thompson, professor of religion at Thiel College in Pennsylvania, for his in-depth and very helpful review of one of Clayton's major works, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought*.

Earlier versions of the papers (excepting Gulick's) were presented at the Polanyi Society meeting in Denver, Colorado in November 2001. Two sessions were devoted to Clayton's work. The first included an address by Philip Clayton and responses to *God and Contemporary Science*. The second session consisted of Clayton's "Emergence, Supervenience, and Personal Knowledge" and three responses. The Polanyi Society expresses its gratitude to Philip Clayton for his contributions to the Polanyi Society, and we look forward to his future contributions to the Academy and the broader civilization.



## Philip Clayton--Biographical Sketch

Philip Clayton holds a Ph.D. in both Philosophy of Science and Religious Studies from Yale University. Having taught at Haverford College, Williams College, and the California State University, he is currently Ingraham Professor at the Claremont School of Theology and Professor of Philosophy at the Claremont Graduate University. Clayton has been guest professor at the Divinity School, Harvard University; Humboldt Professor at the University of Munich; and Senior Fulbright Fellow, also at the University of Munich. He is a past winner of the Templeton Book Prize for best monograph in the field of science and religion and a winner of the first annual Templeton Research Prize.

Clayton is the author or editor of 16 books, including *The Problem of God in Modern Thought*; *God and Contemporary Science*; *Explanation from Physics to Theology: An Essay in Rationality and Religion*; *Quantum Mechanics: The Problem of Divine Action*; *Evolutionary Ethics: Human Morality in Biological and Religious Perspective*; *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheism and Science*; and *Science and the Spiritual Quest*. He has published some 60 articles in the philosophy of science, metaphysics and theology. His current research interest lies in developing a theology of emergence, to be published next year as *The Emergence of Spirit*.

Since 1999, Dr. Clayton has been Principal Investigator of the Science and the Spiritual Quest program at the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley.