



Philip Clayton's „Open Panentheism”: Reconstruction and Criticism

„Otwarty panenteizm” Philipa Claytona: rekonstrukcja i krytyka¹

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Abstract: Philip Clayton, an American theologian and philosopher, devotes a significant part of his research work to seeking bridges between theology and the natural sciences. The position he takes is the Christian version of panentheism. Within it, the world is a part of God, but God is more than the world; the world is embodied in the divine, even though God goes beyond the world. All beings exist only through participation in divinity. The version of panentheism advocated by Clayton further suggests that God is connected with the world in a sense analogous to the relationship of our minds to our bodies. Many contemporary authors critically assess panentheism, including the version proposed by Clayton, presenting both theological and philosophical arguments against this position. In light of these allegations, the position of panentheism is not based on the Bible, does not fit into the Christian doctrine, and goes beyond the traditional standards of Christian thinking. The arguments and explanations presented by traditional theism, open to science, seem to be more accurate, logical and consistent with the Christian vision of God's relationship with the world.

Keywords: God, panentheism, theism, emergence

Abstrakt: Philip Clayton, amerykański teolog i filozof, znaczącą część swojej pracy badawczej poświęca poszukiwaniu pomostów pomiędzy teologią a naukami przyrodniczymi. Stanowisko, które przyjmuje, to chrześcijańska wersja panenteizmu. W jego ramach świat jest częścią Boga, ale Bóg jest czymś więcej niż świat, świat zawiera się w tym, co boskie, choć Bóg wykracza poza świat. Wszystkie byty istnieją jedynie poprzez uczestnictwo w boskości. Wersja panenteizmu, za którą opowiada się Clayton, sugeruje dodatkowo, że Bóg związany jest ze światem w sensie analogicznym do relacji naszych umysłów do naszych ciał. Wielu współczesnych autorów krytycznie ocenia panenteizm, w tym w wersji proponowanej przez Claytona, przedstawiając zarówno teologiczne, jak i filozoficzne argumenty przeciwko temu stanowisku. W świetle tych zarzutów stanowisko panenteizmu nie ma oparcia w Biblii, nie mieści się w doktrynie chrześcijańskiej, wykracza też poza tradycyjne standardy chrześcijańskiego myślenia. Argumenty i wyjaśnienia, które przedstawia otwarty na nauki tradycyjny teizm, wydają się bardziej trafne, logiczne i spójne z chrześcijańską wizją relacji Boga do świata.

Słowa kluczowe: Bóg, panenteizm, teizm, emergencja

Introduction

For centuries, people have expressed their views about God and His relationship to the world. One of them is panentheism (from the Greek *pan en theos*, i.e. all in God), according to which the visible reality is a constituent of God, but at the same time, God goes beyond this reality. According to the pantheistic doctrine, God is both in the world and beyond, everything is in God and God is in everything, but God is more than the world. The key word in the context of the considered position is

the word “in”, understood in the first place in the metaphysical sense.

Panentheism is situated between traditional theism (God is a personal, eternal being, qualitatively different from the beings who are His creations and maintaining distinctiveness and independence in relation to them, although still present in the world) and pantheism, having its roots in the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza and in the Eastern traditions (God cannot be distinguished from the

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world, God = world). In literature, a distinction is made between the Christian and non-Christian versions of panentheism. The difference between these versions is that Christians emphasize the Holy Trinity and the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the core of God's salvific presence in the world, while non-Christians present a more general approach (Cooper, 2006, p. 321).

The concept of panentheism is not an invention of the Christian West. Its ideas can be found in Eastern religious traditions, such as Hinduism, Confucianism, Jainism or Buddhism. Some even search for a version of panentheism that could go beyond specific religious traditions, and thus be more open to dialogue between different environments and favour multiculturalism, currently so fashionable. However, the most in-depth and lively discussions on panentheism are conducted in the environment of Christian theology and philosophy.

Until the end of the 17th century, Western thinkers emphasized the almost complete transcendence of God to avoid an open conflict with the then-dominant mechanistic philosophy (referring to the mechanics of Newton) (Clayton, 2017, p. 1045). Although the term itself was coined by the German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause in 1829 (in the work *Vorlesungen über die Grundwahrheiten der Wissenschaft*), panentheism as a philosophical view explicitly appeared twenty years earlier, in 1809, in Friedrich Schelling's work on freedom: *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der Menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände* (Biernacki, 2014, p. 3; Bracken, 2014, p. 1). The philosopher Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) largely contributed to the revival of panentheistic thought in the 20th century (Clayton, 2010, p. 184). Numerous different versions of panentheism have been developed, containing substantial suggestions (from the most conservative to the most liberal ones) for the reconciliation of theological theses with scientific knowledge.

Particularly interesting contemporary discussions on panentheism take place among theologians and philosophers open to the natural sciences. One of the best-known participants of this debate is the American theologian and philosopher Philip Clayton

(1956–). This esteemed author of numerous books and scientific articles in the field of the relationship between science and religion forges the essential foundations of his version of panentheism using various historical and contemporary sources. Among the former, the philosophy of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel is of great importance to Clayton, and when it comes to contemporary inspirations, the American theologian and philosopher uses, among others, the theological achievements of Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann and Arthur Peacocke.

Hegel in his work *Wissenschaft der Logik* states that "infinity in itself contains finiteness" (Hegel, 2011, p. 197). Elsewhere, he writes: "So, infinity is not found as something ready over finiteness, so that finiteness would still exist and last beyond or below infinity" (Hegel, 2011, p. 171). Infinity must include finiteness as, otherwise, something would stand outside it and it would not be de facto infinite, as - by definition - nothing can be added to it (Kowalczyk, 1991, p. 136). From Pannenberg – his academic teacher – Clayton, as he confesses, learned the basics of theology. He also used his instructions when writing *God and Contemporary Science* (Clayton, 1997, p. xii). The book by this theologian, which Clayton uses in his defence of panentheism, is entitled *Theology for a Scientific Age*. In support of his concept of the relationship between God and the world, Clayton also refers to the reflections on the relationship between God and space contained in Jürgen Moltmann's book *Gott in der Schöpfung. Ökologische Schöpfungslehre*. According to Moltmann, the created world exists in the "space of God", specially convened for this purpose during the creative act. The German theologian summarizes his concept in the following way: "The world does not exist in itself. It exists in the granted world space - the presence of God. [...] The world space corresponds to the Divine world presence that initiates this space, limits and permeates" (Moltmann, 1995, p. 279). Finally, Clayton repeatedly refers to Arthur Peacocke's views, especially in his work *Theology for a Scientific Age*, in which he defends God's panentheistic relationship with the world.

It is worth mentioning at the very beginning that Clayton, in his analyses of the relationship between God and the world, uses the theory of emergencies,

which draws inspiration from philosophy, natural sciences and neuroscience. According to the idea of emergence, the whole emerges from its components, but it is not a simple sum of its parts (the whole has its ontological status, separate from the parts' status). Matter tends to self-organise – due to its inherent properties, it forms into increasingly complex systems (Clayton, 2001, p. 208-209). As their complexity increases, the systems begin to exhibit new features which were not present at earlier stages.

This article attempts to reconstruct Philip Clayton's views on God's relationship with the world. To accomplish this task, using selected source materials, it is helpful to outline the broader context of the relationship between theology and natural sciences according to the American theologian and philosopher. The framework of this study was devoted to the version of panentheism preferred by the discussed author. The final part attempts to respond to this proposal and sketch an alternative concept.

So far, in the Polish scientific community, issues related to panentheism have been relatively rarely addressed, especially from the philosophical perspective. Clayton's philosophical and theological achievements did not reverberate our native philosophical and theological environment either. A valuable exception is Tomasz Maziarka's book from 2020, presenting the concept of the emergence of an American thinker discussed in the context of the human mind. This study is a modest attempt to reflect on another substantial issue, strongly embedded in the rich legacy of the American thinker, the relationship between God and the world.

1. Clayton's understanding of the relationship between theology and the natural sciences

For centuries, there has been a belief in public space that theology and natural sciences remain in conflict. Many scientists opt for extreme naturalism, i.e. the view that the universe and material objects contained in it are everything that exists, and the knowledge about these objects comes only from scientific research (Clayton, 2012, p. 2-3; Clayton, 2001,

p. 208). The need, or even the possibility, of divine interventions in the world, is questioned. Related terms are materialism and physicalism. According to the former one, everything that exists consists of matter and energy and the laws governing them, while the latter assumes the reducibility of everything that exists to elementary particles and forms of energy, as well as the laws governing them. For Clayton, the fundamental issue is how much one can approach the postulates of naturalism, materialism and physicalism, yet remain in harmony with faith in God and Christian theology (Clayton, 2006c, p. 547).

On the other extreme of his views, Clayton places traditional theism, which assumes the existence of God as the creative source of everything that exists, the ultimate principle that gives rise to the world and that goes beyond the world (Clayton, 2012, p. 2-3; Clayton, 2001, p. 208; Clayton, 2006d, p. 630-631). God is described here as a personal being, possessing all qualities in the superexcellent degree (omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent). Traditional theists advocate for specific ways of cognition (different from science), such as intuition or enlightenment, thanks to which man can learn more about God and His nature, and believe that God created the world, divinely directs it and reveals himself in it. The divine interactions in nature are either in harmony with the natural law or constitute a deviation from them (miracles).

Clayton sees the fundamental difficulties of traditional theism. As its advocates understand God as a completely discarnate, spiritual being, they have difficulties in precisely determining His relationship to the world (Clayton, 2006d, p. 631-632). Such a position encounters difficulties in perceiving a clear analogy between the action of God as an “unembodied causative factor” and the causative action of man as an “embodied causative factor”. Since His activity in no way resembles the activity undertaken by man, then, according to the American thinker, theists have a problem with demonstrating that God acts in the world at all.

Nowadays, both the demands made by representatives of the theory of intelligent design (“ID”) and the claims of supporters of new atheism have contributed to the exacerbation of the conflict between theology and natural sciences. Both represent two extreme

poles as far as the relationship between religion and science is concerned. This circumstance could not escape the attention of such an insightful researcher as Clayton (Clayton, 2012, p. 3, 11-12, 17-18, 32-34, 41). At first glance, the theory of intelligent design seems to support a primary claim (shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims) that there is God whose creative intention lies behind the universe. However, in "ID", this elementary religious belief is combined with the feeling that modern science, especially evolutionary biology, has become the key opponent of faith in God. First of all, the leaders of this movement argue that the standard Darwinian image of the evolution of life is inconsistent with any belief in God and even directly hostile to it. However, as Clayton observes, the 'ID' supporters are inconsistent in this belief; on the one hand, they maintain the anti-scientific (anti-evolutionary) attitude, and on the other, offer their own, alternative position, emphasizing that it constitutes a scientific proposal (they treat God's action as a scientific hypothesis). All this makes the theory of intelligent design unacceptable to an American researcher. New atheists, in turn, claim that science (biology) definitively excludes the idea of God, because religious faith is incompatible with the scientific way of thinking. Clayton notes that they reject all significant concepts of God, leaving at the same time rudimentary ideas fragmentarily selected from the theological message. In "ID" and new atheism, however, he notes a common feature: both positions rely on scientific evidence to justify religious claims on the one hand or arguments against religion on the other.

By distancing himself from both positions, Clayton proposes his own, which is to avoid the above difficulties and remove some of the crucial tensions between theology and science (Clayton, 2017, p. 1044; Clayton, 2006d, p. 632-633). In his opinion, assuming that the world is in God, it is easier to understand the influence of God in nature. From such a perspective, all physical phenomena occurring in the world can be perceived as an expression of the action of God himself. In contrast to traditional theism, which is extremely dualistic due to its understanding of the relationship between God and the world, panentheism leans towards specifi-

cally understood monism. This position reduces the ontological gap between God and natural processes occurring in nature and thus indicates the existence of a deeper level of connections between theology and science (Clayton, 2001, p. 209). Although every position identifying itself with Christianity is obliged to maintain an ontological distinction between the world and God as two different orders of existence (we cannot identify God with processes occurring in nature as God remains their source), this distinction should be understood appropriately.

The American thinker points to the need for readiness to subject theological thought to critical expert opinions of representatives of other sciences (Clayton, 1997, p. 7). He argues that basing theology on the Greek category of "substance" closes it definitively to the actual description of the relationship between God and the world. The concept proposed by him, which he calls "open panentheism", stands in the middle between the static, substantive approach of traditional theology and the contemporary process theology, referring to Alfred North Whitehead's (1861–1947) process philosophy (one of the leading contemporary representatives of the process theology is David Ray Griffin (1939–) (Sokołowski, 2015, p. 221-242). Such panentheism - as intended by its author - is to be an attempt at a creative revision of traditional Christian doctrines in the light of modern science. Thanks to such reconstruction, theology has the opportunity to return to its roots, remaining at the same time in line with the decisions of modern sciences.

In particular, modern theology is to be compatible with neurosciences. The guiding question in the dialogue between them and theology is: how far can we go towards the basic assumptions of physicalism, which are the basis of empirical brain research, without denying simultaneously (or simply rejecting) the foundations of Christian theology? The position Clayton advocates for is, therefore, a form of compatibility: although neurobiology data do not directly confirm (or deny) theology, they are consistent with it (they coincide with each other) (Clayton, 2006c, p. 550-553). According to this view, the results of specific sciences (including neurobiology) and theological theses should coincide with each other so that an internally coherent theory can be created on their basis.

Clayton does not acknowledge the thesis of some contemporary researchers that neurobiology (now or in the future) is capable of explaining all issues related to a human person (Clayton, 2006c, p. 554-555). He continues to insist that some aspects of the human person will forever remain inaccessible to scientific methods (including neurobiology) and open only to philosophical speculation. In this way, he undermines the ultimate self-sufficiency of the specific sciences (including neurobiology) regarding the possibility of a final explanation of a human being.

In various fragments of his works, Clayton argues that the productive discussion between theology and the natural sciences requires finding a “third field”, within which similarities and differences between their two sets of conclusions can be clearly expressed (Clayton, 1997, p. 82-83). In his opinion, a close-up between theology and science is possible as part of the philosophical theory of emergencies. Using this theory, he tries to open theology more to the sciences, suggesting specific ways in which traditional Christian doctrines can be creatively reformulated in this context.

2. God versus the world according to Clayton

According to Clayton, two of the most difficult questions faced by contemporary theologians are: how to imagine God's relationship with the world? and how to imagine God's influence in nature? (Clayton, 1997, p. 9). He argues that to be able to answer these questions, it is necessary to refer to the results of modern detailed sciences. He writes: “[...] if contemporary theology is to exist at all, it cannot be developed without taking into account the results of natural sciences, even the most advanced ones” (Clayton, 2006d, p. 599). In his opinion, theology closed to these sciences deserves even stricter criticism than the other extreme – physicotheology (theology combining physics with God). Theology, which will not attempt to confront the results of detailed sciences, might be threatened with extreme subjectivity. The ambition of this researcher is, therefore, to formulate such a concept of the relationship between

God and the world, which would be, on the one hand, the result of theological reflection, and on the other, would remain consistent with the results of modern sciences. “If we do not work side by side with those – writes Clayton – who rigorously study nature in all its manifestations, listening to these specialists at least as much as we ask to be listened to, then we have no chance of creating an adequate theology of nature” (Clayton, 1997, p. 16). The attempt to create a theology of nature in the light of modern science requires, on the one hand, openness to the results of scientific research, and on the other, openness to the revision of some existing theological conclusions (Clayton, 1997, p. 7-8).

According to Clayton, traditional dualistic theism is inadequate for the full description of this relationship. In contrast, panentheism, i.e. thinking about the world as belonging to God and at the same time different from God, is to be more compatible with the results in physics and biology and the emergent structures characterizing them (Clayton, 2004c, p. 73).

2.1. Clayton's version of panentheism

In the narratives of creation found in the Bible, the American thinker recognises an unequivocal message that Christians should neither identify God with creation nor separate Him completely from it. From the Old Testament, the absolute transcendence of God towards the world comes to the fore (Clayton, 1997, p. 17, 21, 23-24; Clayton, 2005, p. 251). Nothing in the world can limit God's action, everything that He does (including the creation of the universe) has its basis in His free decision. God is the source of everything that exists in the world (inanimate and animate beings, laws governing them, and even time and space). However, the creative act of God cannot be limited to the initial action as we deal with continuous creation (*creatio continua*), consisting in intermediary God's guidance of natural processes taking place in the created world, through natural laws.

In turn, when moving to the New Testament, Clayton points to several passages that indirectly lead to panentheism. Saint Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” more than 90 times, the Gospel of John suggests that believers exist in the Spirit and participate in it, St. Paul,

speaking at the Areopagus in Athens, quoted a Greek poet to confirm that God is the One in whom “we live, move and are” (Clayton, 2010, p. 186). Referring to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the American theologian and philosopher claims that God is not an isolated, infinite perfection, but a community, and His nature is love (Clayton, 1997, p. 62-65). He understands the omnipotence of God as the omnipotence of love, which cannot conflict with the freedom of creation. Likewise, God’s omnipresence encompasses both the creation by Him of a space in which creatures can exist and meet Him and His unceasing loving presence throughout creation. Finally, omniscience manifests itself in the fact that God fully knows and fully cares for all creatures at all times.

The above analyses shall lead to an unequivocal conclusion that the biblical descriptions of the relationship between God and the world, crucial to all Christians, fully correspond only to the panentheistic model. Theology, which places God “outside” the creation, significantly deviates from this ideal. The biblical texts demand to go beyond the highly dualistic approach of God’s relationship to the world.

In Clayton’s opinion, the metaphysics of substance, which dominated at the time when the Christian doctrine was shaping, does not favour the correct approach to this relationship (Clayton, 2010, p. 186-187). Such ontology focuses on individual things as substances, perceiving them as existing “in themselves and by themselves”. Contrary to this perspective, the discussed author defends the view that what appears to be a separate individual is, in fact, a part of or manifestation of one divine reality. Although “substance thinking” has dominated Christian theology, “panentheistic thinking” is gradually beginning to revive. Clayton puts even forward the bold thesis that, in twentieth-century theology, practically every significant new system had such a colouration. Today, the traditional image of God existing outside the created physical order and interfering with it only when necessary to achieve God’s own natural or salvific goals is not accepted (Clayton, 2001, p. 208-209). As the gaps in human knowledge about the natural world shrink, the prospect of possible action for such an understanding of God becomes narrower.

According to Clayton’s concept, before the creation of the world, there was an absolute, empty space, which God, by virtue of his free decision, began to “fill” with creatures (Clayton, 1997, p. 89). The finite space of the world is contained in absolute space. If space is the space of God, the world is not “outside” Him but in Him. Clayton argues that all beings are located in God’s presence, and God is present in all points of space.

The world is contained in God, although it is not identical to Him (Clayton, 1997, p. 90). God has ontological precedence over the world. At some point, it was created *ex nihilo* and then sustained in existence by God. “We are not God,” writes Clayton, “because in our fundamental nature we are different from God. Therefore, it does not matter where we are - within the superior divine presence, or even (in a sense) within the divine essence itself, we remain the created product of God, the work of His hands” (Clayton, 1997, p. 90). The Absolute is present throughout the material world and in every single thing contained therein. Space may even turn out to be infinitely large, and within it, there may be an uncountable number of objects (e.g. atoms), but even it could be contained in God, not being identical with Him (God embraces an infinite (created) space, being itself an absolute space) (Clayton, 1997, p. 90). In Clayton’s view, creation is a “kenotic act”: God freely limits His infinite power to allow all other beings to exist (Clayton, 2005, p. 250-254; Clayton, 2015, p. 184-192).

In Clayton’s concept, panentheism is more than just philosophy (Clayton, 2010, p. 191). Similarly to traditional theism, associated with characteristic forms of spiritual practices, also panentheism has its own spirituality, which contributes to the store of spiritual practices of the world. Moreover, the author claims that panentheism also has a practical application. In his opinion, in the present world, there is no stronger motivation to protect the environment than the affirmation that each organism has its separate agency, and there is, at the same time, an infinite value of the supreme and all-encompassing Divine Being in each of them.

The researcher is aware that panentheism is not a “magic pill” for all problems of philosophy or theology and encounters numerous difficulties that

require further in-depth reflection (Clayton, 2010, p. 191). However, it is, he claims, an extremely reliable model for contemporary attempts to understand the relationship between God and the world.

2.2. The impact of God on nature according to Clayton

According to Clayton, the panentheistic perception of the world, located inside God, provides the right framework for reflections on the divine acts (Clayton, 2004c, p. 73-74). The researcher points out, however, that it is arduous to give a satisfactory answer to the question about the divine influence on nature due to the “presumption of naturalism”, which is deeply rooted in the scientists’ consciousness (Clayton, 1997, p. 171-174). To explain specific events and regularities in the natural world, their causes are first assumed to be natural. It is only through this assumption that progress in science becomes possible. Calling every event we do not understand from the point of view of science a miracle would mean defining every gap in our knowledge about the world as a place of God’s interference (*God of the Gaps* concept) (Clayton, 1997, p. 177-181). As a consequence, it would lead to the elimination of all claims about divine activity in the world, as any progress in scientific knowledge would further limit the scope of what God can do. On the contrary, believers can express their conviction, based on their personal experience from the relationship with God, that it was God, who contributed to the occurrence of a specific event. The presumption for scientific explanations in the natural sphere and the subjective element for each specific miracle prevent Clayton from using the word “knowledge” in relation to miracles.

In order to present his concept of God’s activity in the world, Clayton refers in particular to the philosophy of the mind. The basic thesis articulated by this researcher is as follows: the question about the relationship of God to the world, and thus the question about how to interpret divine action, should be considered in the context of the theories we have about the relationship of our minds to our bodies (brains) (Clayton, 1997, p. 233). The key to the argumentation of the American thinker is the assumption about the irreducibility of mental phenomena to physical phe-

nomena. In his opinion, in contemporary debates in the field of philosophy of mind, Christian theology, clearly distancing itself from reductionism, which postulates the reduction of the mind to the brain and mental events to neuronal ones, must stand on the side of anti-reductionism (Clayton, 2009a, p. 243). He gives an important reason for such a preference: if minds were reduced to physical processes, God would have to be reduced similarly.

The American thinker tries to understand the relationship between God and the world as highly analogous to the relationship between mind and body (brain) in humans (“panentheistic analogy”) (Clayton, 1997, p. 234). It reaches to the analogy of the influence of the human mind on the body (brain) to explain the causal relationship of God to the world. Although God does not have a body, His relationship to the world can be understood by analogy to the relationship of mind to body. The “mind” is not simply a part of the body, but it is also not completely separated from the body (Clayton, 2008, p. 107). Similarly, God should not be understood as separate from the world. According to the position defended by Clayton, God can act on every part of the world in a way similar to the action of our minds on our bodies, simultaneously, he goes beyond the world and will exist long after the universe ceases to exist (Clayton, 1997, p. 264). In other words, just as mental properties can be a direct cause of changes in the physical world (in the brain), God influences the world in a similar way (without supernatural intervention) (Clayton, 1997, p. 258). On the other hand, God cannot fail to respond to what random beings (which He loves) do. Creatures influence God as He “is present in every physical interaction and every point of space, every interaction is a part of His being in the broadest sense [...]” (Clayton, 1997, p. 101). Therefore, God remains in a certain dependence on the world.

The strength of this analogy is to consist in the fact that mental causality becomes something more than physical causality, and yet it is still a part of the natural world (Clayton, 2004c, p. 83-84). No law of nature is broken here. Therefore, this analogy offers the possibility of imagining divine influence without violating the laws of nature. Clayton is aware, how-

ever, that many attributes of God cannot be deduced from the above analogy. God is not dependent on the world because He preceded and created it (Clayton, 1997, p. 260). The attributes of God that other beings lack are eternity, omnipotence, and moral perfection.

“Panentheistic analogy” refers to the principle of emergence, taking for the highest level of complexity known to us – emerging from the most complex biological structure, which is the human brain – the level of mental properties (Clayton, 2004c, p. 83-84). It is impossible to reduce mental phenomena to their physical basis and their causal rights (reduction monism), and at the same time, the existence of a separate and unnatural form, devoid of connection with the physical sphere (substantive duality), should be excluded (Clayton, 2004a, p. v; Clayton, 2006c, p. 546-547). The ontological view he advocates, Clayton calls “emergent monism”: what emerges gradually, through the continuous interaction of the parts, from some primal reality, are not only new properties of existing elements that are not reducible to what was before, although they are continuous with it but also newly constituted objects (Clayton, 2006c, p. 589). According to the researcher, thoughts and feelings cannot be detached from the physical substrate because of a deep bilateral relationship between them, regarding the deepest areas of brain functioning (Clayton, 2006c, p. 546). This relationship is confirmed by the modern achievements of neurobiology.

The American thinker distinguishes the “weak” and “strong” versions of emergencies, opting for the latter. Supporters of “weak” emergencies maintain that seemingly qualitative differences regarding some level of complexity are possible to explain under lower-order structures (Clayton, 2006a, p. 4, 7; Clayton, 2006b, p. 312; Clayton, 2006e, p. 294-295; Clayton, 2009b, p. 57-58). Although new patterns appear, the underlying causal processes are ultimately physical in nature. The differences between the levels are epistemological, not ontological. In turn, “strong” emergentists claim that in the course of evolutionary history, entirely new factors or causal processes emerge. At higher levels of the organization, the world of nature manifests new forms of causal agency that cannot be viewed only in terms of the aggregation of physical causes. The “strong” version of emergence

assumes the occurrence of downward causality at many different levels in nature (the behaviour of parts is determined by the behaviour of the whole – the opposite of the principle of reductionism), bringing not only a quantitative but also a qualitative increase in complexity. For example, human minds may be perceived as influencing brain chemistry and body behaviour, and not just as resulting from brain and body components. This causal impact of the emergent structure on the constituent parts contradicts the claim that all causality issues should be analysed in their entirety in relation to physical causes.

In research on the mind, according to Clayton, one should not focus on individual phenomena, but on higher-order individuals (Clayton, 2006c, p. 563). These higher units (ending with a person) should be treated as truly existing, and not as wholes formed from their components. “In particular,” Clayton writes, “one must think of people as separate units of action, as entities capable of having intentions, making references and having subjective experiences in the sense described above” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 563). Neurobiology alone is not sufficient either for a holistic description of individual stages of a person’s emergence or for explaining the effects of the interaction of the mind with the environment (Clayton, 2006c, p. 563-565). He characterizes his position in the following words: “The causal thread leads “upwards”: from physical stimuli and the environment to the mental level, then along the thread of mental causality – the influence of one thought on another – and then “downwards”, affecting other physical activities, causing new memories and synaptic connections in the brain, leading to new verbal behaviours, and so on” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 567). The entire described system does not refer to any external spiritual substances; it is entirely physical (monism).

Clayton uses the concept of supervenience to describe a person, which prevents the reduction of mental phenomena to physical ones while ensuring the independence of the former, based on the physical basis (Clayton, 2006c, p. 571). It gives the following definition: “B-properties supervene upon A-properties just in case no two situations can be identical concerning A-properties and different with respect to B-properties” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 572).

Supervenience does not concern the relationship between substances, but the properties or complexes of phenomena (Clayton, 2006c, p. 571-572). “Extreme” supervenience, which Clayton does not support, assumes the relationship between mental states and physical factors: mental states at the stage of formation and subsequent behaviour are directly and fully determined by physical factors. Such a position is in conflict with theology. In turn, the “weak” supervenience, which Clayton approves, although it allows the relationship of mental states’ dependence on physical factors, limits it only to the stage of the initial emergence of the former (Clayton, 2006c, p. 574). Physical causes do not fully determine the content of mental life. Mental properties (as a type of property rather than a new form of substance) are not fully reducible to physical phenomena, although there is an obvious relationship between them. There are mental reasons, fundamentally different from physical ones. “The causal history of the mind – Clayton writes – cannot be told only on the basis of physical concepts, and the result of mental events is not determined solely and exclusively by phenomena on the physical level” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 574). In this way, supervenience is the basis for Clayton to formulate an emergent theory of personality. According to this theory, in the case of a comprehensive description of an emergent set of phenomena, it is not enough to refer to the physical states determining it (Clayton, 2006c, p. 576). Emergent features are in part explainable by themselves. This happens in the case of the mental properties of a human person: although the mental and physical levels remain in a relationship of dependence, mental properties do not boil down to physical ones, being able to act causally on their own within new, emergent levels (Clayton, 2006c, p. 579). There are many levels of explanation of the human person (epistemological pluralism) relating to particular aspects of it: physical, biological, psychological, spiritual (ontological pluralism), irreducible to each other, although dependent on each other (Clayton, 2006c, p. 591).

Clayton understands the history of the universe as a process of continuous development (Clayton, 2006c, p. 591-595). At each stage, within one and the same order, new properties emerge, which cannot

be reduced to those previously existing. Nevertheless, developmental continuity is maintained. In the case of man, emerging mental states, together with physical ones, form a psychosomatic unity. “Mental functions supervene upon their psychological base, and these two sets of properties are interrelated, showing causal interactions running in both directions” (Clayton, 2006c, p. 592). Only a position based on psychological explanations (assuming the existence and causality of consciousness or mind) will be able to provide a full description of the human person. Clayton assures that both physicalism, treating all mental states as a manifestation of neural processes, and dualism cannot offer such a description.

The American theologian and philosopher considers mental or spiritual states as a new type of phenomena existing within the natural world around us (Clayton, 2006c, p. 580-581). There is not one type of objects in the world, although there is only one natural order. Although mental causality does not boil down to physical causality, it is itself natural and not supernatural (it does not add new energy to physical systems). Clayton describes the world not as divided into two types of properties, but filled with a wide spectrum of properties (plurality of properties), conditioned by their position in the hierarchy (Clayton, 2006c, p. 594). The entire ontology he assumes is, therefore, monistic.

3. Discussion around Clayton’s concept of panentheism

John W. Cooper formulates a number of theological and philosophical arguments against panentheism in general, including the version proposed by Clayton, expressly declaring his attachment to Christian theism (Cooper, 2006, p. 319). Therefore, it is worth analysing first the theological and then philosophical reservations, formulated by this author against the panentheistic approach to the relationship between God and the world.

Cooper does not find any biblical text that directly suggests that the world is a part of God (Cooper, 2006, p. 323-324). Although the Scriptures (mainly the Old Testament) sometimes refer to God in

carnal terms (His mouth, eyes, face, heart, breath, hand, and arm), no passage represents the world as the body of God or any creature as part of the body of God. In the opinion of the discussed author, all such anthropomorphisms emphasize the otherness of God in relation to the world, presenting Him as a separate being referring to other beings, and not to a part of Himself. Pantheistic models: part-whole and soul-mind-body (which Clayton in particular advocates) do not express this otherness – as the quoted author argues – in the way the Scriptures do. The New Testament, speaking of Christ as the “head” of the Church, which is His “body,” means “the ruler,” not the head of the cosmic divine body. So this is not the kind of ontological “being-in-the-world” that Pantheism refers to. The exegesis of the biblical language, therefore, does not provide Cooper with the basis for pantheism.

The discussed thinker does not approve of the pantheistic concept of God’s freedom (Cooper, 2006, p. 325-326, 337). On the one hand, the pantheists emphasize that His creative activity is full of love and free, but in reality (consciously or unconsciously) they adopt a compatible view of God’s will, according to which the act can be both free and determined (freedom and determinism are compatible). God’s love for creation is, according to this position, to some extent satisfying His needs. Cooper argues that such a concept of freedom does not entail the possibility of a real choice among alternative solutions. Cooper concludes that the pantheists seem lost and incoherent in their views on God’s freedom.

Modern pantheism tends too strongly towards immanence, even though – according to this concept – it is supposed to “balance” transcendence and immanence. This is another allegation made against this position by Cooper (Cooper, 2006, p. 328-329). The concept so strongly links the existence of God with the world that his transcendent being becomes a mere abstraction. The real balance between transcendence and immanence of God in pantheism gets shaken.

Since the pantheists claim that God ontologically encompasses the world, they cannot confirm His perfect holiness (Cooper, 2006, p. 332). Although

pantheism proclaims that God never wants or does evil (the nature and will of God are holy), the acceptance of this position inevitably leads to the conclusion that sin and the evil of the world are somehow present ontologically in God either as an undesirable part of a larger divine whole or as the result of interaction between God and the world. In the author’s opinion, no variation of pantheism (including Clayton’s) can recognize the perfect holiness of God.

Cooper notes that most contemporary pantheists take a sceptical stance towards supernatural miracles (Cooper, 2006, p. 334). In the spirit of fidelity to current scientific standards, they do not allow any possibility of such events in the world. By presenting the immanence of God in the world as completely consistent with the order of nature, they even deny the very legitimacy of thinking about miracles.

Cooper is particularly critical of Clayton’s “pantheistic analogy,” which is to provide the right framework to understand how God relates to the world (Cooper, 2006, p. 337-339). The model of mind-body for God’s relationship with the world is, in the opinion of the discussed thinker, a weak analogy. He admits that it should only be used as a (very limited) metaphor. He supports his critical assessment with two arguments. First, there are far more differences than similarities between how the mind relates to the body (brain) and how the God of the pantheists relates to the world. Man can control the processes taking place in the body in a very limited way, which is in clear contrast to the ability of God’s influence in nature, referred to by Clayton. Secondly, people refer to the world that is external to them, while a pantheistic God does not have an external world. Cooper concludes that the mind-body relationship is not a good philosophical model of God’s relationship with the world.

In support of his position, Clayton (like other pantheists) refers to the argument from infinity – since God is absolutely infinite, nothing can be completely different from Him or be outside Him, otherwise, God would be limited by it, i.e. non-infinite (everything must be inside Him) (Cooper, 2006, p. 339). Cooper admits that the argument of infinity is correct in a formal meaning: in a sense,

there can be nothing “beyond” God, but it does not prove panentheism as theism also confirms this conclusion but interprets it differently. In panentheism, infinity is understood in terms of ontological “being-in-the-world”, and theists explain it in terms of voluntary immanence of God: all forms of finite existence are contained in the knowledge and power of God as possibilities that He can decide to implement. This alternative shows that not only panentheism is implied by the argument of infinity.

According to William Lane, Craig Clayton erroneously concludes that if something is infinite, there can be no finite existence “beyond” that something (Craig, 1999, p. 494-495). His argument is based on the questionable equation of “infinity” with “everything that exists”. According to Craig, Clayton misinterprets the closeness of God in terms of spatial closeness, not personal community.

Joseph A. Bracken claims that the price that Clayton pays for his concept of the God-world relationship is dualism – although it is not the mind-body dualism of early-modern philosophers, but ontological duality between infinite God and finite world (Bracken, 2015, p. 221). However, Clayton's goal was to eliminate all kinds of dualism. Similarly, Carl Gillett expresses the opinion that Clayton's position, accepting the existence of non-physical properties, adopts a form of dualism – although less radical than traditional substantive dualism, but still contrary to scientific findings (Gillett, 2003, p. 14). As a consequence, the Claytonian approach to divine action is not entirely consistent with science and this is what he aimed for.

William Lane Craig, who accuses Clayton of an inconsistent approach to the mind-body problem, expressed a similar opinion. (Craig, 1999, p. 497). On the one hand, he rejects material dualism, while on the other hand, advocates property dualism, equipping intellectual properties with the specific capabilities of an intangible substance. Such an approach has no basis in scientific facts. Moreover, Clayton denies, for one thing, the material dualism about the soul and body but considers God to be ontologically separate from the world and the Creator of the world, and he is additionally forced to recognize the material dualism in relation to

God and the world. Such a move completely destroys the explanatory power of the “panentheistic analogy”. In this way, it confirms the substantive dualism Clayton tries to distance himself from in his declarations.

According to Willem B. Drees, Clayton's use of the analogy of God-world/mind-body gives rise to a theological problem: whether God is the analogue of the brain or mind (Drees, 1999, p. 521). Clayton adheres to a view that distinguishes panentheism from pantheism. According to him, God has ontological precedence over the world. This panentheistic primacy of God over the world – according to Drees – makes God more analogous to the brain than to the mind. If, however, God – as Clayton claims – is an analogy of the mind, it leads us to accept God as ontologically secondary to the world.

In the author's opinion, Clayton's arguments for “mental causality” are insufficient (Drees, 1999, p. 521). He asks: “But why would a defender of panentheism separate what is mental from what is material?” (Drees, 1999, p. 515). Drees believes that Clayton's position is more naturalistic than he would have liked (Drees, 1999, p. 524-525). In his opinion, the analogy drawn from the philosophy of the mind did not provide the expected theological fruits, because in the philosophical discussion the mind remains a natural, emergent phenomenon, while Clayton tries to present arguments for God as a non-emergent and non-natural being. Clayton's conclusions do not convince Drees. “Even if Clayton opposes naturalism and panentheism,” he writes, “he is ultimately a panentheist who is a naturalist in the understanding of physical processes in the world; to be consistent, it seems to me that he should also be a naturalist (though not a reductionist) in the understanding of mental processes” (Drees, 1999, 525).

William Lane Craig expresses his critical view that Clayton makes no argument for traditional theism to be inconsistent. Instead, he offers a controversial statement that the historical “trajectory” from polytheism to monotheism should be extended to include panentheism (Craig, 1999, p. 494). Craig notes that the panentheistic doctrines were well-known and unequivocally rejected already by medieval theologians.

Edward T. Oakes expresses surprise at Clayton's rare reference to Darwinism (and biology in general) (Oakes, 2000, p. 142-143). This seems particularly incomprehensible to this author in the context of Clayton's particular interest in naturalism. According to Oakes, the focus should be on biological rather than physical naturalism. Modern arguments in favour of a naturalistic "credo" come almost entirely from the Darwinists.

Clayton's position is criticised by Antje Jackelén (Jackelén, 2006, p. 626). His approach to emergence and transcendence is perceived by this theologian as a reworked version of the five ways of Thomas Aquinas to prove the existence of God. The only difference, he claims, is that where Thomas emphasized God as the beginning and source of everything (top-down), Clayton's discourse prefers the opposite direction (bottom-up). Regardless of the direction, we remain with God residing at the top of the ladder, and this clearly contradicts the relativity, which is the core of emergence theory. If God is imagined in terms of continuum from physics, through chemistry, biochemistry, biology, and consciousness to divinity, there is not enough room for a radical difference between God and the world, according to Jackelén.

William Desmond has no doubt that Clayton's entire undertaking is based on rejecting the dualism of more traditional approaches and accepting the idea of the whole as setting the right framework for theology (Desmond, 2003, p. 362). According to Desmond, the stronger sense of divine transcendence that we find in the biblical tradition, has been completely abandoned here. Desmond asks, "But what kind of God are we to worship? And if God is not the subject of adoration, is He really God?" (Desmond, 2003, p. 362).

Conclusion

In our time, stunning advances have been made in many areas of life. Contemporary man, using various achievements of science and technology, often finds it difficult to see God, His greatness, majesty and power. Pantheism is to help a man of the 21st century to imagine God, immersed up to his ears

in matter and temporality. However, despite the hard efforts of the promoters of this view, the idea that all things are in God, and God is in all things, although he goes beyond them, still remains completely unknown to the average person (especially the European). A slightly different situation exists in the environment of theologians and philosophers, although even here – contrary to the hopes of its spokespersons – pantheism still remains a silenced, marginalised concept.

Clayton's proposal is one of the more interesting ideas for how to integrate religion and theology with other sciences so that they can be noticed and accepted by modern people. In the opinion of the author of this study, however, this thinker did not go too far in developing the Christian doctrine, and at some points, one can even get the impression that, theologically, he has moved away from it. In the philosophical sphere, he did not resolve beyond any doubt whether God's relationship with the world is sufficiently analogous to our relationship of mind to the body (brain). Regardless, Clayton's efforts to develop a modern model of God's relationship with the world should be appreciated. It is necessary to notice his openness in the conducted philosophical and theological speculations to the achievements of modern sciences. This is undoubtedly a great advantage of the analyses made by this insightful researcher.

This position (compared to other versions of pantheism) remains relatively balanced. Clayton does not cut himself off from Christian roots, attempting to derive his ideas from the pages of Scripture or accepting the image of God as an interactive personal Trinity, closely involved in his creation act. He places his concept (declaratively) in the Christian trend, and, at the same time, adapts it to the contemporary scientific context. In this way, he is convinced that he is developing and defending the model of God's relationship to the world and the model of God's activity in the world, which he considers to be the most reasonable way of combining modern science with the Christian faith. As he emphasized numerous times, the success of modern science in the naturalistic explanation of physical phenomena has made the development of such a model an urgent issue. In his opinion, the view that the world is in

God but God is also something more than the world, can be formulated in such a way as to respond to the challenge posed by modern science while remaining faithful to Christianity. His concept is to show that one can be faithful to the Christian tradition and at the same time open to the settlements of contemporary detailed sciences. Clayton shows how science can contribute to the development of theology, as well as how scientific conclusions need a theological framework of interpretation.

For the author of this study, despite the undoubted advantages of the discussed concept, the argument that panentheism corresponds one hundred per cent with Christianity, is not entirely convincing. The panentheistic concept of God's freedom, emphasizing very strongly and binding God the Creator with the world-creation, is of particular concern. Mentioning universal spirituality (going beyond traditional religions), which is to be implied by panentheism, only reinforces this anxiety. In addition, Clayton's thesis about the obsolescence of the traditional (theistic) view of God's relationship to the world seems to be greatly exaggerated. In contrast, thinking in terms of theism, strongly embedded in Revelation and Tradition, is still firmly rooted in the consciousness of the vast majority of followers of monotheistic religions. Cutting off these traditional roots and trying to replace them with a new vision of religion threatens to undermine the stable foundations of the entire morality that grows from this source. Undoubtedly, theism offers a philosophical-theological approach to the relationship between God and the world that is more faithful to Christian doctrine (consistent with the Bible).

On essential points, the author of this article agrees with the concept of (open) theism outlined by Cooper (Cooper, 2006, p. 321-329). Theism in

such a version remains open to the detailed science and is consistent with their settlements, and at the same time clearly distinguishes the Creator and the created world (this cannot be subject to discussion for any theologian and philosopher identifying with Christianity). Such a version of theism, recognizing that God has a full life above and beyond creation, reflects a much more solid view of the true divine transcendence than panentheism. Every aspect of the world is de facto completely different from God. The actual existence of God infinitely surpasses His immanence in the world, and there is no ontological "balance" between transcendence and immanence (contrary to what the pantheists claim). The Christian believes that all things are eternally present and subject to God in the sense that He eternally knows all that He has created. God does not need or depend on anything other than Himself. The creation of the world by God is a truly free choice, which also includes whether and how to maintain the world that he created. Our world (and all possible worlds) is "in God," but is not a part of Him. An important implication of God's ontological independence is that He remains totally loving and gracious in granting existence to creatures. Humans are free entities that engage in personal relationships and initiate personal activity in the world, not just "parts" of a larger (divine) whole.

All of that makes it necessary to be very careful in accepting all theological and philosophical novelties, regardless of the doctrine with which they identify themselves as a fundamental option in their declarations. Theism, proven for centuries, listening to the voice of representatives of modern sciences, especially natural sciences, seems to be the safest way for a Christian.

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