

**2006 Faculty Research Grant  
Final Report**

**Investigation and Defense of Options for Theories of Emergence**

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**1. Description of Grant-Supported Activity.**

The IUSB Faculty Research Grant supported research that followed up on the work I began in my recently completed dissertation, “The Metaphysics of Ontological Emergence”. In my dissertation, I developed a taxonomy wherein I distinguished eight possible theories of ontological emergence. The theories were conceptually distinguished according to what each implied about certain fundamental metaphysical questions. The goal of the project I began under the auspices of this grant is twofold. My first goal is to investigate in detail the most recent literature (within the last five years) on emergence to see if there are any new insights or theories that would require amendment or elaboration of the taxonomy. Some of the most recent work was addressed in my dissertation, but much of it was not, at least not to the extent that it deserves. The ultimate purpose is to insure that I have reviewed and categorized every extant theory of emergence. My second goal is to advance my own positive argument in favor of one of these eight logically possible theories. I suspect at least two papers will come from this project—with at least one being a reworking of the chapter of my dissertation in which I develop the taxonomy, and the second being paper in which I defend my favored theory of ontological emergence.

To this end, I engaged in an extensive literature search over the summer to make sure I was up to date on the field, reading and studying upwards of ten articles that I had not studied before (some of which I had identified earlier, but simply had not studied yet). This research led to a reworking of the aforementioned chapter on taxonomy, enabling me to sharpen some of the distinctions I make in the chapter and give more examples of individuals who have advanced and defended each of the theories. I also decided, before writing a brand new paper that would defend a particular theory of emergence, to rework for publication a chapter of the dissertation that criticizes the work of a prominent author in the debate. The reworking of this chapter incorporated some new insights I had acquired from my summer reading, but mostly involved incorporating feedback I had received on the paper at a conference the previous year.

**2. Were you able to complete the project? Describe any difficulty you had.**

As is often the case in academics, new research does not immediately lead to brand new ideas, but simply to reconsideration and refinement of ideas one has previously had. My choice to focus on beefing up my critique of another author’s work prevented the completion of the second original goal of my project, i.e., writing my own defense of a particular theory. What my further research did accomplish, however, is to make me even less sure than I was previously as to which theory of ontological emergence I’d like to defend, and has made me question whether it would be wise to even proceed with defending a particular theory. There is much more work I could do in simply clarifying the concepts employed in the debate over emergence and making the different options clear to anyone working on the topic.

I did not encounter any particular difficulties, but I did have a couple of other items I had to work on over the summer that took more time than I had planned, and this perhaps slightly inhibited progress on my research project. I was charged by my department with developing an Introduction to Philosophy class that would meet the campus-wide critical thinking requirement, and I developed this course over the summer. Though I was not building a course from scratch but redesigning an existing one, it still took a considerable amount of time to precisely specify my objectives for the course, choose the texts, determine what material to leave out from my old course and what new material to incorporate, and decide what assignments what best promote my objectives

**3. Did, or will, the project result in a specific product—a manuscript, composition, syllabus, etc. If so, please describe and indicate state of development.**

As previously stated, the primary results of my work over are two revised chapters of my dissertation, both of which have been sent out for review as of the beginning of September. In addition, I hope to submit a shorter version of one of these chapters to an academic conference in the spring (either the American Philosophical Association or the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology, where I have previously presented papers related to these issues and received valuable feedback).