

Physics Colloquia Series

Learning new physics from a medieval thinker: Big Bangs and Rainbows'

Prof. Tom McLeish FRS

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Friday, 24th February 2017 at 15:30



For the English polymath, Robert Grosseteste, light was the fundamental first form that gave dimensionality and stability to the material world. In a dozen scientific treatises written in the early 13th Century, he postulated a physics of light, colour and the rainbow.

In this talk, Prof. McLeish will introduce Robert Grossteste (ca 1170 -1253), the scientist, teacher, theologian and bishop and describe how a unique collaborative research approach has revealed new insights into his thought, particularly on light. An interdisciplinary team of historians, scientists, linguists and philosophers has developed techniques of joint reading of the medieval texts that have shown them to be logically consistent and founded on mathematically based models. We reflect on how a study of this extraordinary medieval science can help throw fresh light on the history of scientific thought, and bridge the current perception gap between the study of science and humanities.

Martin Wood Lecture Theatre, Clarendon Laboratory, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PU

Followed by tea/coffee in the Clarendon Laboratory Common room