



## ***Why Middle-Sized Matters for Science, Theology and Metaphysics***

*1st-3rd May 2024, Oxford*

A Collegiate Colloquium organised by William M. R. Simpson & Robert C. Koons in collaboration with the Centre for Theology, Law and Culture at Pusey House, Oxford, and the Civitas Institute of The University of Texas at Austin, with the support of Prof Boudewijn Sirks of All Souls College.<sup>1</sup>

### **PUBLIC LECTURES**

**WEDNESDAY 1st May 2024**

3:00pm - 5:20pm.

**Professors George Ellis and Robert Koons.**

*In the Chapel of Pusey House  
St Giles, Oxford*

### ***How the Science of the Middle-Sized Restores Purpose***

Professor George F. R. Ellis, FRS, University of Cape Town.

I will discuss how the universe can seem a purposeless and amoral place if one looks at it exclusively on very large or small scales. Indeed, many scientific specialists of the very large or very small have claimed that there is no purpose in the universe. Paradoxically, however, they are ignoring the nature of their own lives on the middle-sized scale at which they exist; more specifically, how their existence within the physical world as 'open systems' enables purpose, meaning,

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and ethics to be effective in causing physical outcomes. The middle-sized scale is particularly important for biology where meaning and function are often denied due to focussing on the molecular scale alone.

### ***Is Aristotle's Philosophy of Nature Scientifically Obsolete?***

Professor Robert C. Koons, University of Texas at Austin.

Aristotle's philosophy of nature dominated much of the world's science from late antiquity until the 17th century and beyond. In this Aristotelian world, human beings and the middle-sized objects that we perceive and manipulate were among the first-class citizens of nature, imbued with real causal powers and potentialities. The period of "classical" physics (from Galileo to Rutherford) seemed to eliminate the need for key elements of Aristotle's scheme, including substantial forms for composite objects, natural powers and potentialities, and teleology. I argue that the Quantum Revolution has altered the epistemic landscape in ways that re-open questions of natural philosophy that have long been taken to be settled, laying the foundation for a neo-Aristotelian or "hylomorphic" interpretation of quantum theory. This interpretation successfully bridges the gap between the domain of quantum entities and the world of actual experiments and observations, and, as a further bonus, reconciles what Wilfred Sellars called the manifest image of ordinary human life with our best scientific image of nature.

There will be tea and coffee served in a break between the lectures and an extended Q&A. We will finish at 5:20pm, and the lectures will be followed – if you wish to stay – by a special service of Choral Evensong in the Chapel of Pusey House.

For more information on the Colloquium, see [here](#).