

## Temptations of Theory, Strategies of Evidence: Investigating the Earth's Magnetism, 1947–1952

In late spring of 1947, Blackett succumbed to the temptations of theory. At this time, Blackett was fifty years old and resuming residence in Manchester and active direction of the Physics Department after his wartime service in operational research. Blackett's turn toward theory in 1947 involved some risk.<sup>1</sup> The May 3, 1947 issue of *Nature* carried an announcement of his upcoming lecture at the Royal Society:

Professor P. M. S. Blackett, Langworthy Professor of Physics in the University of Manchester, will deliver a lecture on "The Magnetic Field of Massive Rotating Bodies" at a meeting of the Royal Society on May 15, at 4:30 P.M.<sup>2</sup>

Blackett circulated a preliminary draft of his paper among colleagues in several different fields, including the geophysicist Sydney Chapman and the astrophysicist Harry Plaskett, both professors at Oxford.<sup>3</sup> Blackett negotiated with Royal Society officers that his paper would appear immediately in *Nature*, rather than following the slower timetable of the Royal Society's *Proceedings*.<sup>4</sup> He arranged for notices of his lecture to be sent to a list of specified individuals, including members of the Royal Astronomical Society.<sup>5</sup> "Sorry, Darling, I was so grumpy over the weekend," he wrote Costanza in early April. "It was the weather and the feeling that I had only two days holiday. Also I am always a little distracted when in the process of giving birth to a paper. It is going better than ever. Plaskett had tea with me today and produced one useful idea. He is most helpful and interested."<sup>6</sup>

The Thursday afternoon meeting of 15 May 1947 was not a joint ses-