

Preface

What a magnificent title, “Europe’s quest for the Universe”, for the opening of this new book by Professor Woltjer, which presents and expands on two grand themes.

Since the days of Copernicus, Galileo, Tycho Brahe and Kepler, as a research community Europe has been at the cutting edge of science, in its incessant quest to understand the universe we live in.

In this book we trace the history and development of more recent institutions such as the ESA and ESO. This is thanks to the great skill and experience of the author who, by writing this work, passes on the fruits of a unique and exceptional career.

Great pride and optimism for European science comes across on reading these pages, all beautifully illustrated. Written to a high scientific level, this book provides the reader with a top quality reference on the subjects covered, and gives us ample reason to believe in a European research environment directed firmly to the future.

The second theme is that knowledge and exploration of the universe are fundamental elements of the human psyche, a drive inherent in all of us to understand and discover our destiny.

The Universe is a magnificent question which inspires scientific and technological development. At the same time it remains that star studded sky which acts as a source of wonderment and inspiration for our thoughts and dreams.

Thank you Professor Woltjer for returning us, through this book, to the very roots of our humanity, and revealing to us such marvellous advances in understanding.

Philippe BUSQUIN, July 2005

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