



DISCUSSANT RESPONSE

by

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to **Herbert Pietschmann's**

SCIENCE AT AN END? THREE LIMITS OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

The Eighteenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
Seoul, Korea August 23-26, 1991

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Comment on the Paper
"Science at an End?"
by Herbert Pietschman

The basic theme of Pietschman's stimulating article is perhaps best reviewed in the light of the concerns of the scholarly philosophers of the medieval Christian Church. Through the critical reading of Greek and Arabic manuscripts, these individuals eventually reintroduced the field of science to the European world. Initially their creative work lay almost entirely in the area Pietschman designates the domain of "autonomy". In the process, however, they intruded into the domain he designates as that of "heteronomy". One thinks of Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, John Buridan, Nicole Oresme, Nikolaus Copernicus - all good churchmen who had an influence on the rise of present-day science. At the end, however, the area of heteronomy became primarily the field of study for lay scholars such as Galileo, Stevin, Kepler, Huygens and Newton. The transition is beautifully described in the book, Mediaeval Philosophy, by the Reverend Armand A. Maurer (CSB) (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Canada 1982). A companion volume, Being and Knowing (Ibid, 1990) focuses on a portion of the domain of autonomy.

Somewhere in his writings, Immanuel Kant, who unquestionably had the temperament of a good scientist, reprimanded his fellow philosophers for not bringing order to the domain of autonomy, comparable to that the scientists achieve in their own area. This hope is probably in vain and may even be impossible.

Frederick Seitz - June 1991