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# Recent Observations — A Lecture

by Richard N. Bentley

It is better to be wrong  
Than to be vague.  
What counts is coherence

From Newton and Galileo,  
Superstring theory proposes  
A new answer.

What are the smallest  
Indivisible constituents of matter?

I'm glad you asked. Why,  
Electrons and quarks, of course,  
Particles with no size or structure.

Particles which combine to produce  
protons  
neutrons  
atoms  
molecules  
All we've ever encountered in time or space.

Superstring theory tells  
A different story. Every particle  
Contains a tiny filament of energy

Like a string. Just as a violin string  
Can vibrate to produce sounds,  
Our strings vibrate to produce  
quarks, neutrinos, gravitons  
and other particles.

Are you following me so far?  
Good, this is fun.



String theory, then, explains  
The beginnings of the universe.  
Can it be tested as a theory of everything?

Only if we concede that  
A unified theory  
Need not have any physical meaning.

For the world of stars and planets  
For the world of atoms and electrons  
We might ask,

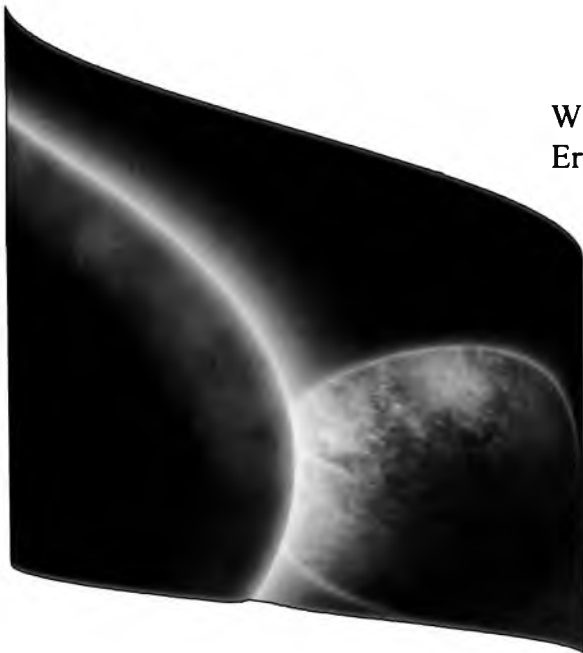
“If the results of the vibrating  
Strings cannot be observed in any  
Conceivable experiment

Do they have a physical reality?”  
Might you call them nonexistent even?  
Walk through a tunnel

Of time, and emerge in your own  
Past, but you’ll have to walk  
Longer than the age of the

Universe. Ah, I see you’re ready  
To leave.  
Good-bye.

What counts is coherence  
Error is acceptable.



*Photograph (detail) by Joel Kendall*

