

Gravitational waves

A new tool for observing the Universe through ripples in spacetime

Daniel Grumiller

Institute for Theoretical Physics
TU Wien

Public lecture

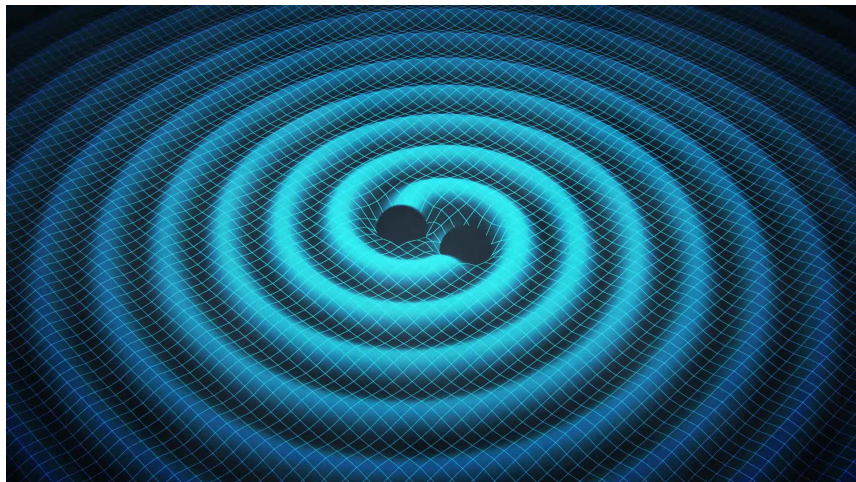
Monat der freien Bildung, TU Wien, Mai 2016



Executive summary

- ▶ 1915: Einstein's General Relativity predicts gravitational waves

$$R_{\mu\nu} = 0$$



Executive summary

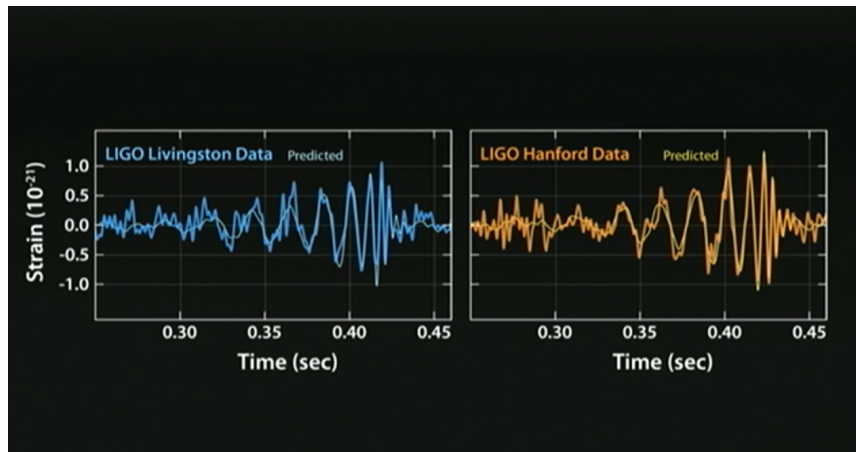
- ▶ 1915: Einstein's General Relativity predicts gravitational waves
- ▶ 1916: Schwarzschild constructs first black hole solution

$$ds^2 = -(1 - 2M/r) dt^2 + \frac{dr^2}{1 - 2M/r} + r^2 d^2\Omega_{S^2}$$



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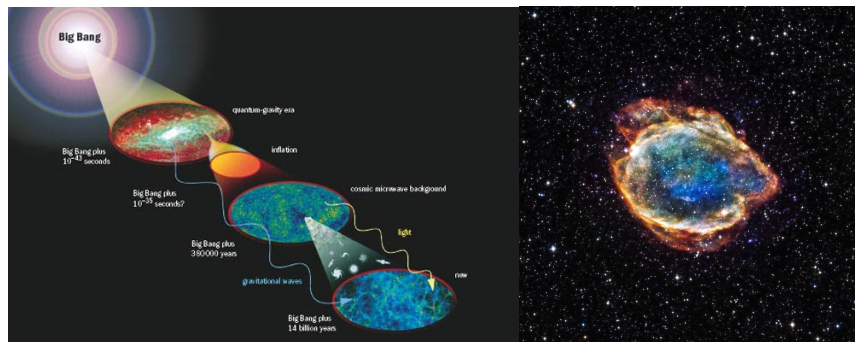
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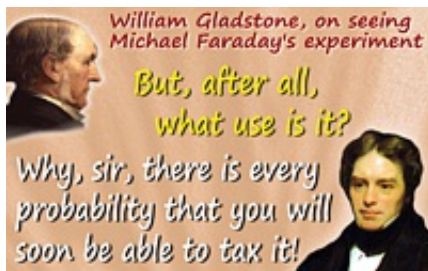
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- ▶ 2115: gravitational waves standard tool in astrophysics & cosmology



Left: gravitational waves sensitive to early Universe, Right: Supernova

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- ▶ 2116: someone pays taxes for gravitational waves



Disclaimer: quote above is commonly cited, but probably not authentic

Outline

Theory

Technology

Observation

Applications

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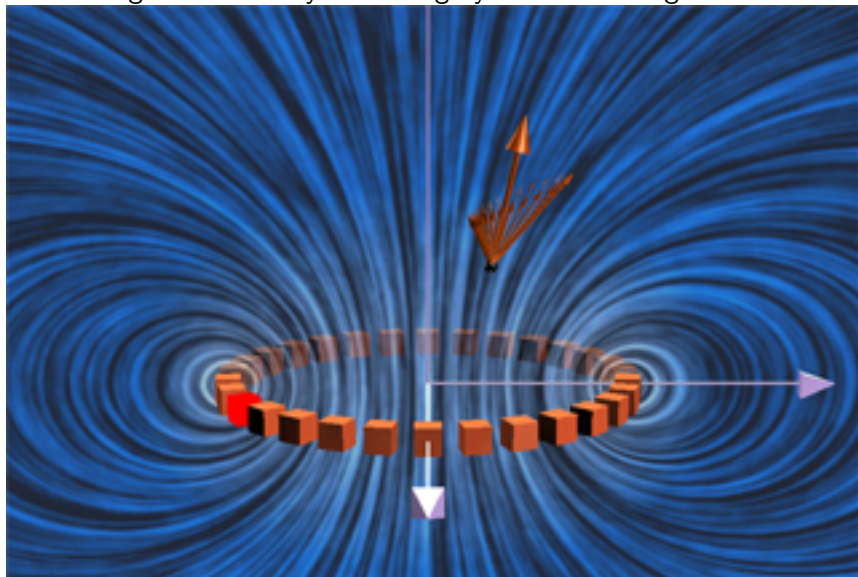
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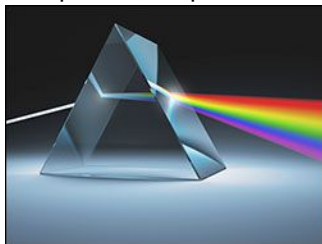
Warm-up: electromagnetism

- ▶ Electromagnetism: theory describing dynamics of charges

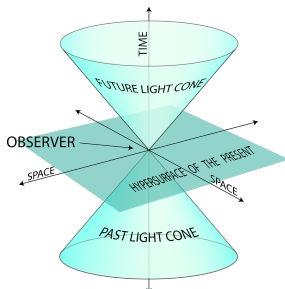


Warm-up: electromagnetism

- ▶ Electromagnetism: theory describing dynamics of charges
- ▶ Unifies electricity, magnetism, optics and special relativity



$$E = mc^2$$



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- ▶ Electromagnetism: theory describing dynamics of charges
- ▶ Unifies electricity, magnetism, optics and special relativity
- ▶ Quantum electrodynamics tested with amazing precision and accuracy

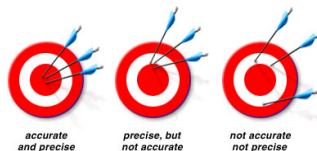
Example: gyromagnetic factor of electron

Experiment (2008):

$$\frac{g_e^{\text{exp}}}{2} = 1.00115965218073 \pm 0.000000000000028$$

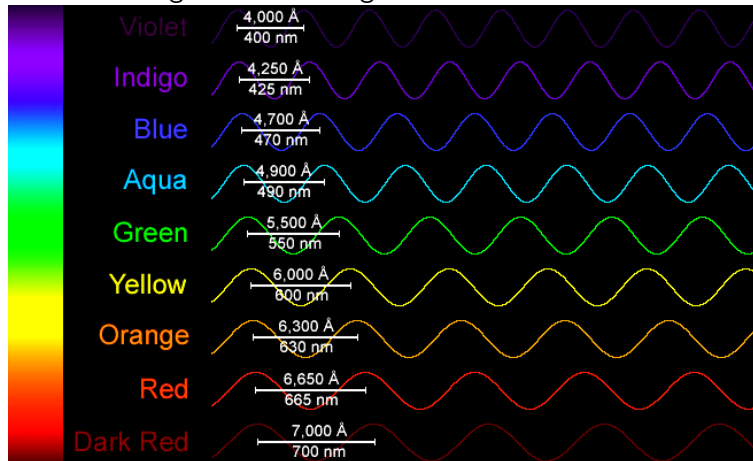
Theory (2012):

$$\frac{g_e^{\text{the}}}{2} = 1.00115965218178 \pm 0.000000000000077$$



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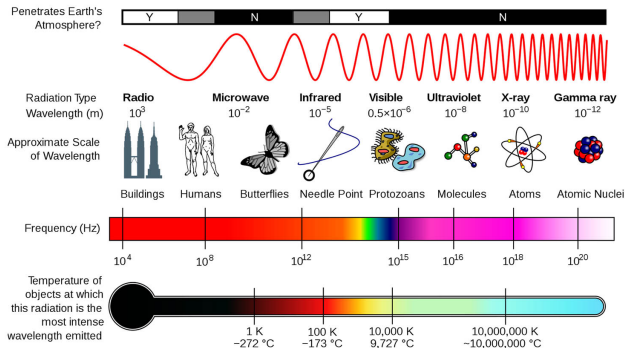
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$$dF = 0 = d*F \quad \Rightarrow \quad \square A_\mu = 0$$

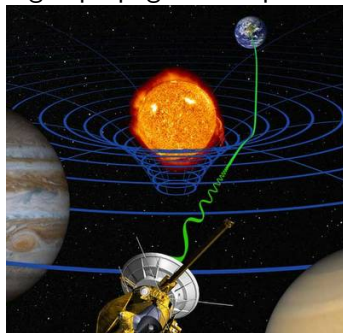


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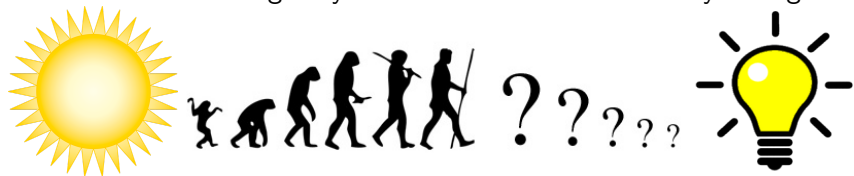


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- ▶ First observation of light by humankind: about 2 million years ago



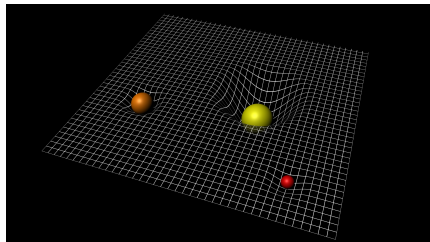
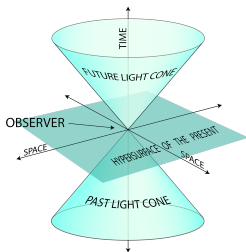
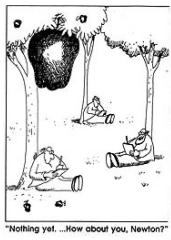
General Relativity

- ▶ General Relativity: theory describing dynamics of masses



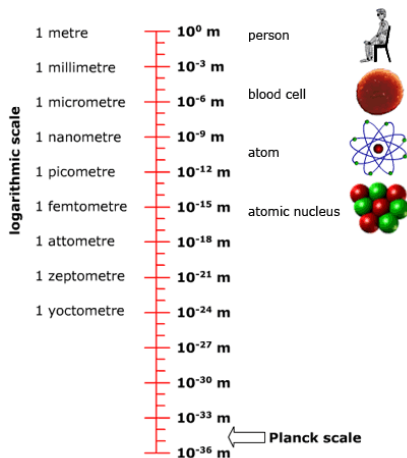
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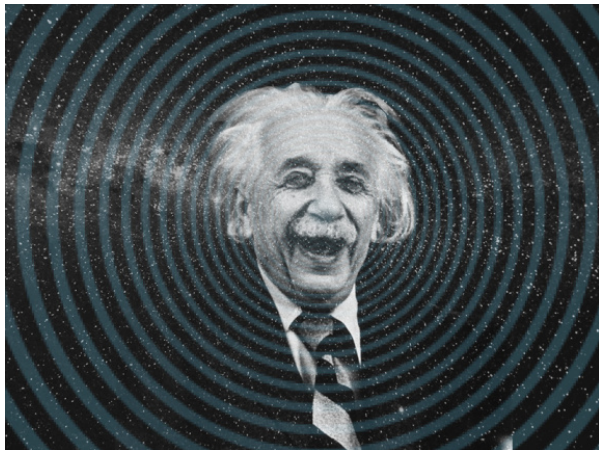
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www.phys.unsw.edu.au/einsteinlight

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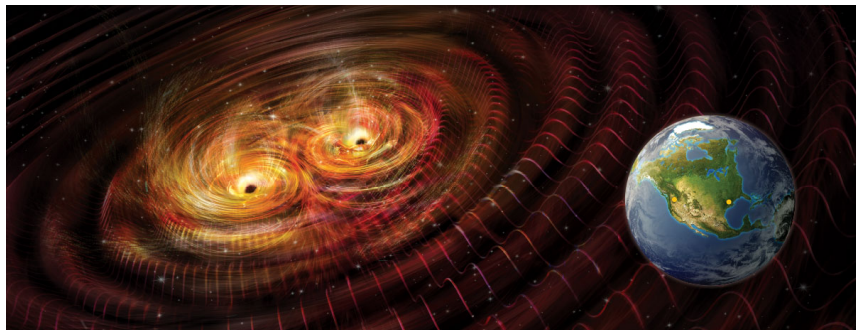
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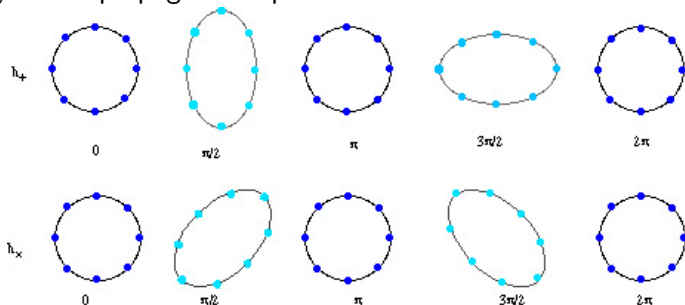


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- ▶ First observation of gravitational waves by humankind: about 200 days ago



Gravitational wave sources

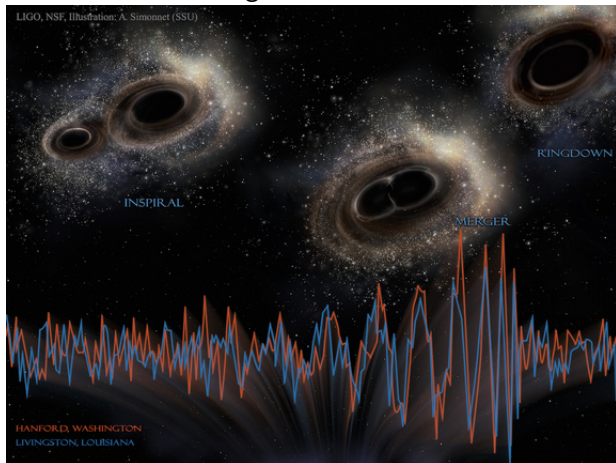
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- ▶ Simple calculation to estimate gravitational wave energy

Take two Schwarzschild black holes of equal mass m

Call final black hole mass M and gravitational wave energy E

Energy conservation:

$$M + E = m + m \Rightarrow E = 2m - M$$

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Get upper bound on gravitational wave energy

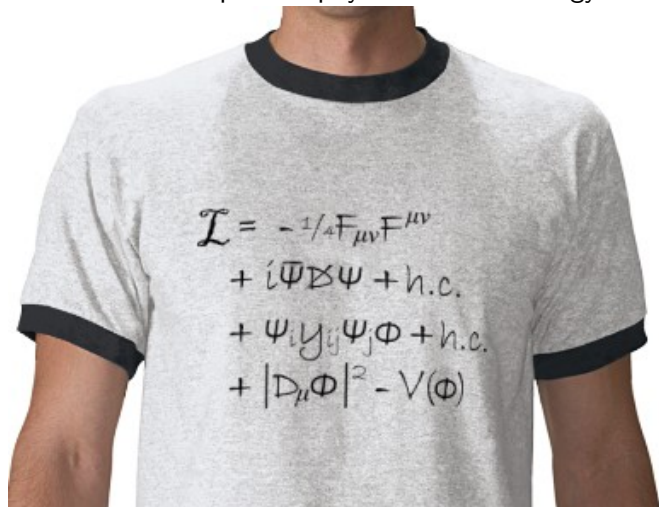
$$E \leq (2 - \sqrt{2})m \approx 29\% \text{ of initial energy}$$

Energy released by $10^{34} - 10^{36}$ Nagasaki bombs!

Gravitational waves as the last known puzzle piece

Big questions: what is the Universe made of? what are the fundamental forces?

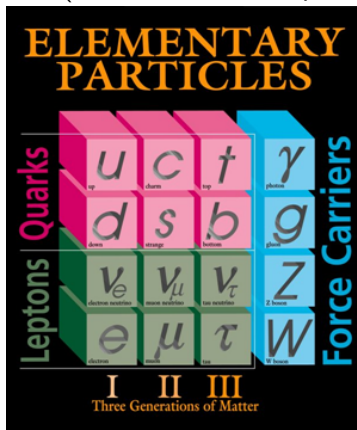
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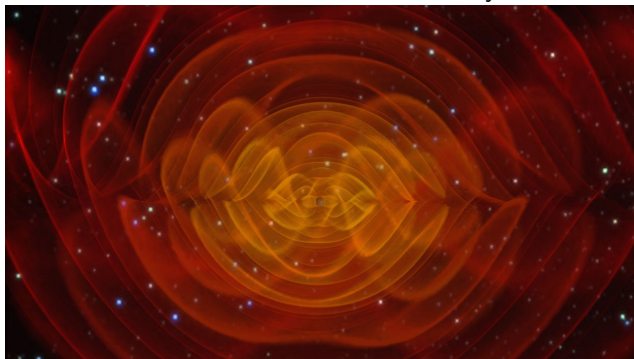
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Amazing achievement of humanity
from late 1600 till early 2000!

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- ▶ Is there something else missing?
- ▶ Yes: the dark side of the Universe! (dark matter, dark energy)
Understanding the dark side may take a couple of decades — interesting times for fundamental physics!

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We may be lucky and witness not only the completion of the Standard Models, but also a first glimpse into the dark side of the Universe within our lifetimes!

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How to measure gravitational waves?

- ▶ In principle easy!



How to measure gravitational waves?

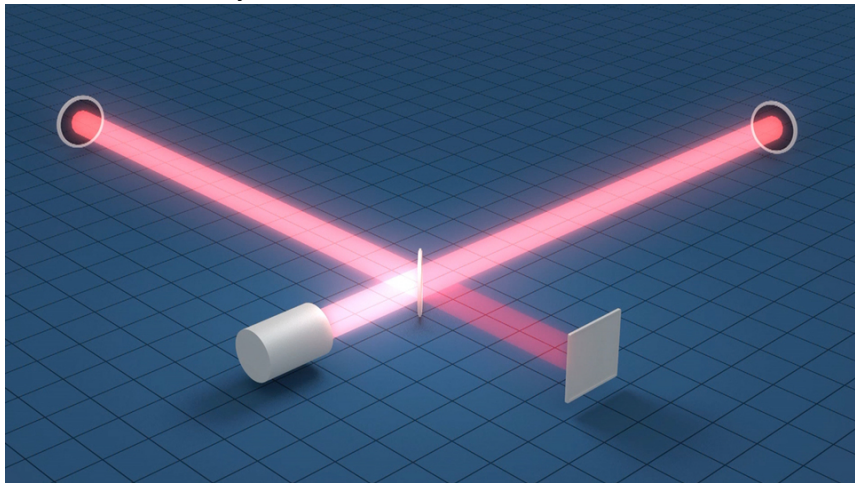
- ▶ In principle easy!
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Typical gravitational waves change spatial distances by a small fraction of the size of a proton!



How to measure gravitational waves?

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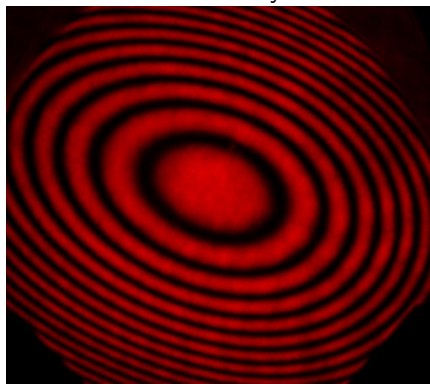
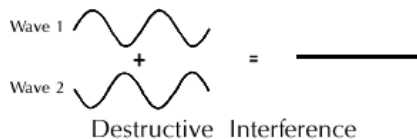
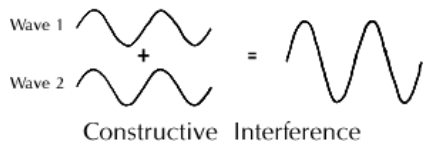
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(Advanced) LIGO needed 25 years of development and 500 million \$ investment, involving more than 900 scientists and engineers

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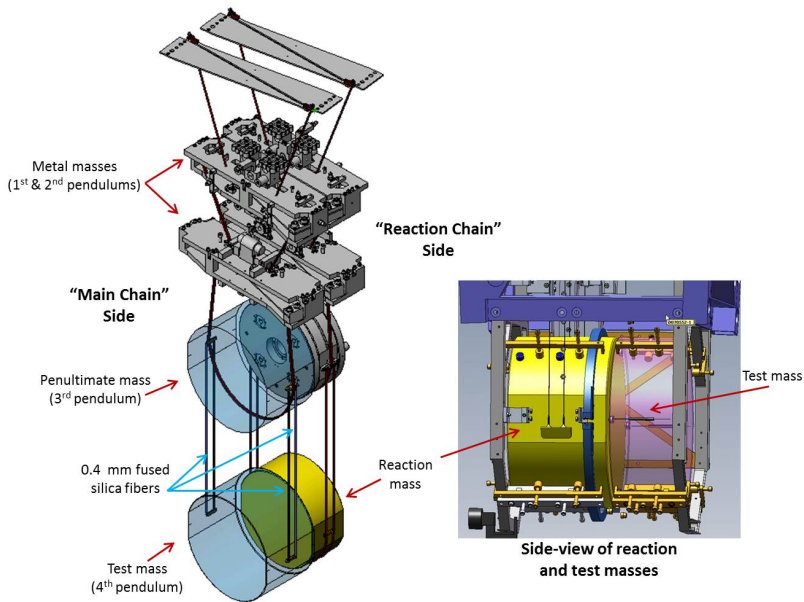


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- ▶ Reduce local errors by suspension system to isolate mirrors from shaking

Suspension system works (in principle) like that of a (very advanced) car — wheels feel bumps, but are decoupled from car

LIGO suspension system



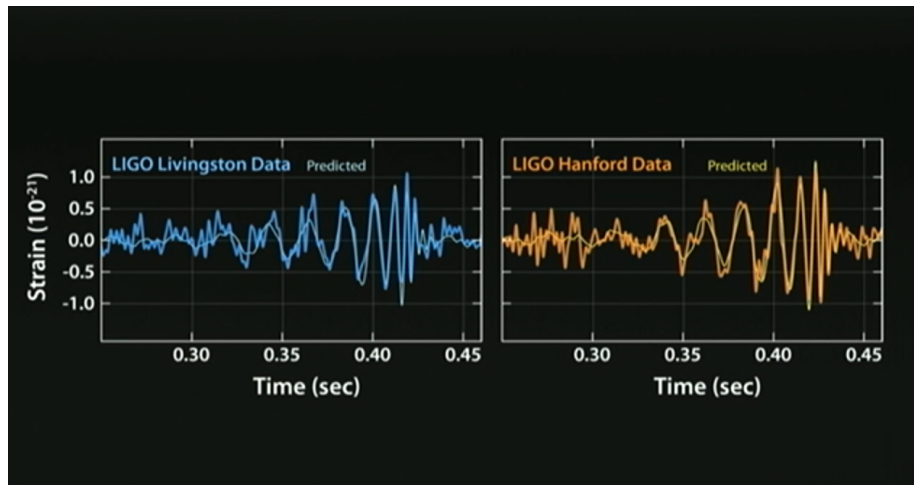
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- ▶ East and West coast data compatible with each other
- ▶ Gravitational wave signal significantly above background
- ▶ Matches very precisely predictions from black hole merger

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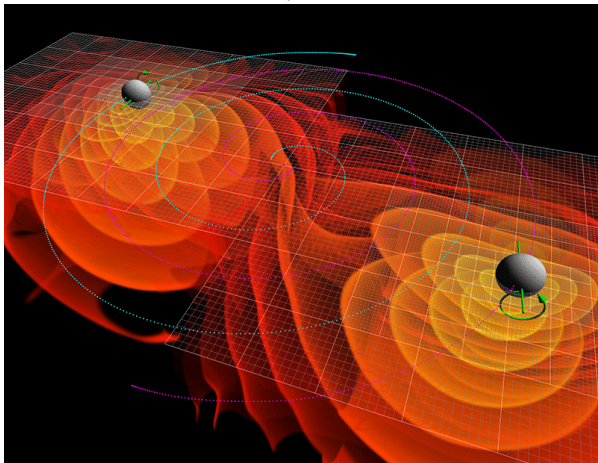
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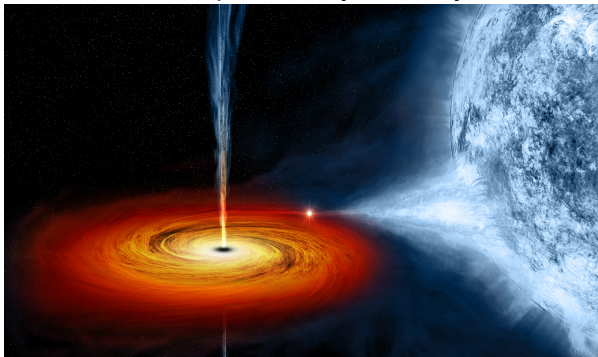
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Having said all this:

- ▶ gravitational waves were expected to exist
- ▶ interest therefore mostly in experimental applications!

Experimental applications: gravitational wave astronomy

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- ▶ You can hide from light in the shadows, but not from gravity

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- ▶ You can hide from light in the shadows, but not from gravity
- ▶ Example 1: new properties of black holes, neutron stars, or other massive objects

Experimental applications: gravitational wave astronomy

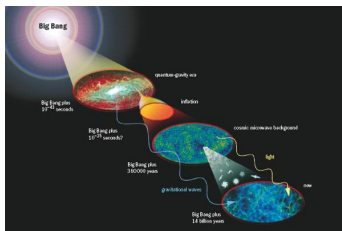
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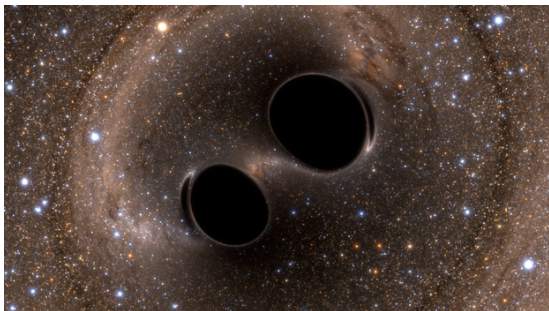
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- ▶ Conversely: Public funding should go to fundamental research, not to industry (Austrian funding agency FWF in dire straits)

Congratulations to the Advanced LIGO team at MIT and 90 other institutions!



I hope you enjoyed my talk!



... any questions?

Backup slide

Educational video by LIGO

