PRINCIPLE OF INCERTITUDE

By GEORGE P. ELLIOTT

They don't wear robes, so you can't tell them from ordinary men;
Yet, like inquisitors, they deal with potencies which though everywhere are invisible
And which though different from us are subject to knowledge of some sort and to limited, visible orderings.
About those quanta which are not even things but of which all things are made, about those most small they can never know for the knowing;
Yet they created a sphere of fire which burned for three seconds bright as a little sun.
I shall never be the same again.
They know what they mean when they sign to one another the principles of incertitude;
But when they deal with us their word-hobbled believers, they talk about, for example,
The trouble a man has when he tries to wave from a fast train to a friend in a plane flying at nearly the speed of light.
The parable proves the point: I believe I must doubt.
Certitude, like one of the infra-reds which to bees' eyes are hues but which to ours are black.
Is the color of things known when one sees with the eyes of faith.
The physicists' way of knowing discovers the ultimate quantum itself, but obliges it to do that which it would not otherwise have done.
So that no one can be certain what is has done, is doing, or ever shall do, world without end.
A thing so blackly known is a thing unknown.
I shall never be the same again.
It is possible that those whose belief is that they cannot know shall be, visibly, burned to death.
If they are, I shall be there.