

Herbert George Wells

THE TIME MACHINE

时光机器

(英) 赫伯特·乔治·威尔斯

That Space, as our mathematicians have it, is spoken of as having three dimensions, which one may call Length, Breadth, and Thickness, and is always definable by reference to three planes, each at right angles to the others. But some philosophical people have been asking why THREE dimensions particularly—why not another direction at right angles to the other three?

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文·书系

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(英) 赫伯特·乔治·威尔斯 著
秦晓 译

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总序

外研社自创立之日起就一贯秉承“记载人类文明，沟通世界文化”的宗旨。上世纪九十年代以来，我们陆续出版了“九十年代英语系列丛书”、“大师经典文库”、“英美文学文库”等系列经典图书，在最大限度满足国内英语学习者阅读需求的同时，也为中华民族引进和吸收海外优秀文化发挥了重要的桥梁纽带作用。

在多年出版实践中我们发现，对原版图书简单地以外语形式呈现，会使一些初级和中级学习者望而却步；而纯粹的译著，在翻译过程中又容易失掉原著中的某些精妙之笔，甚至丢失信息，因为每种语言都蕴含着其他语言无法精确对应的情致、智慧和真善美的洞见。文化交流是一个双向互动的过程，因此在大量引入外文作品的同时，我们也不能忽略本民族文化在世界范围内的推广和传播，即把中国传递给世界。

基于上述考虑，我们应时推出“外研社双语读库”，立足经典，涵盖中外名家名作，涉及社会科学各个领域，以书系划分，采用双语编排，对文化背景附有注释。旨在积累世界各民族精粹文化的同时，向世界传递中国文化，也为广大英语学习者提供更为丰富和实用的学习读物。

读库第一批收录的20部西方经典，多出自十九、二十世纪著名作家、学者、思想家和哲学家笔下，作品题材丰富，类型多样，包括学术作品1部、传记2种、小说3本、游记4部、杂文9辑以及回忆录1册。文章难度介于普及性读物与专业性读物之间，可作为由一般英语学习者向专业英语使用者过渡时的教材使用。

翻开书，这边厢波涛荡荡，那边厢涟漪漾漾。在英语的海洋里戏水，水性再好的人也难免精疲力竭，那就到汉语的礁岛上歇歇脚吧。

买了书是缘，翻开书，则是海边度假了。

译者 序

赫伯特·乔治·威尔斯 (1866—1946) 是英国著名的小说家、新闻记者、政治家、社会学家和历史学家。1884 年，威尔斯获得奖学金进入伦敦一所理科师范学校。他兴趣广泛，修读了物理学、化学、地质学、天文学、生物学等，这为他的小说创作提供了丰富的理论基础和想象空间。威尔斯的科幻小说对该领域影响深远，1895 年出版的科幻小说《时光机器》使他一举成名。他和法国作家儒勒·凡尔纳一起被称为科幻小说之父。威尔斯著作颇丰，涉及科学、文学、历史和社会各个领域，代表作还有《莫洛博士岛》《隐身人》《星际战争》《当睡者醒来时》《现代乌托邦》《安·维尼罗卡》《托诺—邦盖》《世界史纲》等。

光阴流转，穿梭不息，时钟的滴答声是任何力量也无法阻挡，更无法逆转的。圣人孔子也只得感叹“逝者如斯夫，不舍昼夜”。也许你也跟我一样，曾经梦想一睹唐朝的繁荣兴盛，也曾想踮起脚尖企图瞥一眼未来究竟会是什么样子。然而，我们却只能在史书里倾听秦汉战马的嘶鸣，拼凑唐朝辉煌的画面，在梦境中想象世界未来的模样。未知的事情总像是蒙着一层神秘的面纱，吸引着我们去追寻，去探索。然而，此刻在将来也必会成为历史，未来在很大程度上取决于现在。过去、现在和未来是紧密联系，交织在一起的。我们研究历史是为了照亮现在的道路，向更美好的未来迈进；我们也前瞻未来，给现在以指引、鼓舞和警示。令人惊叹的是，早在 19 世纪末期，英国一位年轻小说家就在自己的作品中大胆地描绘出八十多年后的人类世界。他就是赫伯特·乔治·威尔斯。

《时光机器》是威尔斯的成名作。小说字里行间流露出作者对社会问题的深刻认识，对人类未来的担忧和思考，对自己所处时代社会发展的反思和警示。孟子早在两千多年前就说过“生于忧患，死于安乐”。威尔斯在他的书里通过生动的讲述证明了这个道理，启迪我们深思。威尔斯对人类前途和命运的思索和担忧是他的作品不同于作家凡尔纳奇幻、乐观风格的一个重要特点，但是作品往往又在黑暗中让我们看到希望所在。正如作者在书中所说的那样，不管人类文明的成果有无意义，不论人类最终结局如何，我们还是要一如既往地生活下去。

《时光机器》这部作品叙述逻辑缜密，想象奇特，悬念迭起。虽然其中有很多假想，包括时光机器的构造、时空穿行的感觉，还有未来世界的种种景象，并涉及到一些物理、化学和生物知识，但是作者的讲述深入浅出，再加上细腻的心理刻画，让读者如闻其声，如临其境，读者仿佛在时光旅行者的叙述中跟着他一起穿梭时空。在翻译过程中，笔者反复斟酌，力求完整地把握作者所指，将时光旅行者脑中的画面生动地再现给读者。译文中的不足之处，欢迎广大读者和专家指正。

秦晓

2008 年冬

Contents

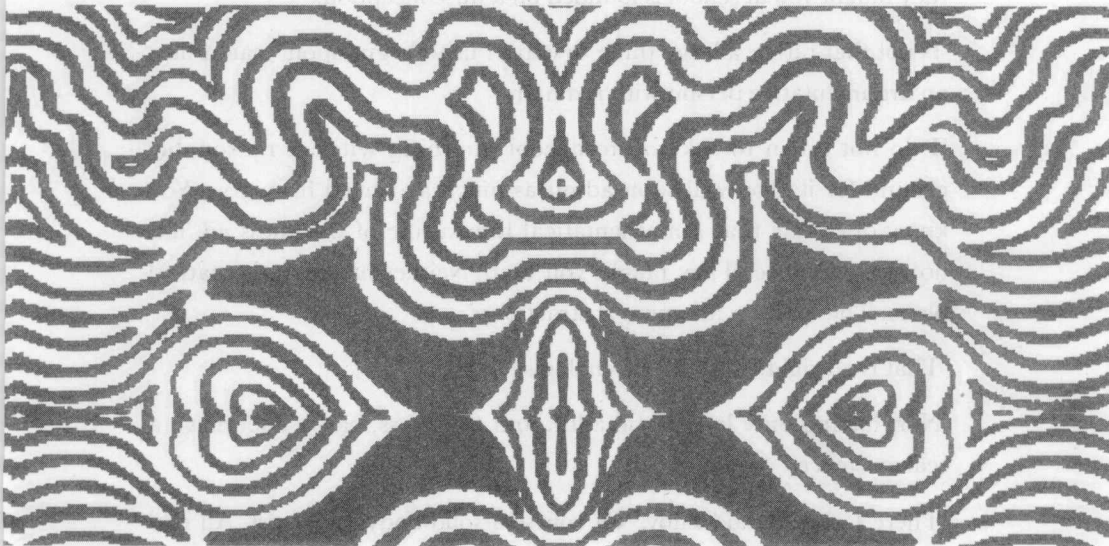
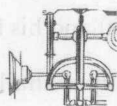
CHAPTER I	2
CHAPTER II	22
CHAPTER III	34
CHAPTER IV	46
CHAPTER V	66
CHAPTER VI	100
CHAPTER VII	112
CHAPTER VIII	126
CHAPTER IX	140
CHAPTER X	154
CHAPTER XI	160
CHAPTER XII	170
EPILOGUE	182

目 录

第一章	3
第二章	23
第三章	35
第四章	47
第五章	67
第六章	101
第七章	113
第八章	127
第九章	141
第十章	155
第十一章	161
第十二章	171
结语	183

Herbert George Wells

THE TIME MACHINE



CHAPTER I

The Time Traveller (for so it will be convenient to speak of him) was expounding a recondite matter to us. His grey eyes shone and twinkled, and his usually pale face was flushed and animated. The fire burned brightly, and the soft radiance of the incandescent lights in the lilies of silver caught the bubbles that flashed and passed in our glasses. Our chairs, being his patents, embraced and caressed us rather than submitted to be sat upon, and there was that luxurious after-dinner atmosphere when thought roams gracefully free of the trammels of precision. And he put it to us in this way—marking the points with a lean forefinger—as we sat and lazily admired his earnestness over this new paradox (as we thought it) and his fecundity.

‘You must follow me carefully. I shall have to controvert one or two ideas that are almost universally accepted. The geometry, for instance, they taught you at school is founded on a misconception.’

‘Is not that rather a large thing to expect us to begin upon?’ said Filby, an argumentative person with red hair.

‘I do not mean to ask you to accept anything without reasonable ground for it. You will soon admit as much as I need from you. You know of course that a mathematical line, a line of thickness *nil*, has no real existence. They taught you that? Neither has a mathematical plane. These things are mere abstractions.’

‘That is all right,’ said the Psychologist.

‘Nor, having only length, breadth, and thickness, can a cube have a real existence.’

‘There I object,’ said Filby. ‘Of course a solid body may exist. All real

第一章

时光旅行者（方便起见，这样称呼他）正在给我们解释一个深奥的问题。他灰色的眼睛此时闪着光芒，往常他总是面色苍白，这会儿却两颊泛着红光，富有生气。壁炉的火烧得很旺，银制的百合花形灯罩中，炽热的灯火散发出柔和的光晕，照在我们手中杯子里一闪即逝的气泡上。我们的座椅是时光旅行者的专利发明，不单是让人坐一坐那么简单，而是怀抱、轻抚着我们，十分舒适。晚饭后的气氛舒适惬意，大家畅快地交流思想，不必羁绊于表述的严谨。讲话中，关键的地方他总是用纤细的食指一顿。我们则坐在那里，懒洋洋地看着他专注地解释自己的新悖论（在我们看来如此），叹服他丰富的想象力。

“你们必须紧跟我的思路。我会推翻一两个几乎是普遍接受的观点。比如，你们在学校学的几何学，它的理论基础根本就是谬误。”

“从这个给我们讲起，是不是太大了点？”好争论的红头发菲尔比说。

“我不是说要你们接受任何观点，而不给你们合理的解释。你们很快就会承认我说的这些，正如我所期望的那样。想必大家都知道，数学上的一条线，一条高度为零的线，实际上是不存在的。数学课上都是这么教的吧？这样的一个平面也是不存在的。它们都只不过是些抽象的概念而已。”

“没错。”心理学家说道。

“一个立方体只具备长、宽、高，它就确实存在，这个说法也不对。”

“我不这么认为，”菲尔比说道，“一个物体当然可能

things—'

'So most people think. But wait a moment. Can an *instantaneous* cube exist?'

'Don't follow you,' said Filby.

'Can a cube that does not last for any time at all, have a real existence?'

Filby became pensive. 'Clearly,' the Time Traveller proceeded, 'any real body must have extension in *four* directions: it must have Length, Breadth, Thickness, and—Duration. But through a natural infirmity of the flesh, which I will explain to you in a moment, we incline to overlook this fact. There are really four dimensions, three which we call the three planes of Space, and a fourth, Time. There is, however, a tendency to draw an unreal distinction between the former three dimensions and the latter, because it happens that our consciousness moves intermittently in one direction along the latter from the beginning to the end of our lives.'

'That,' said a very young man, making spasmodic efforts to relight his cigar over the lamp; 'that... very clear indeed.'

'Now, it is very remarkable that this is so extensively overlooked,' continued the Time Traveller, with a slight accession of cheerfulness. 'Really this is what is meant by the Fourth Dimension, though some people who talk about the Fourth Dimension do not know they mean it. It is only another way of looking at Time. *There is no difference between time and any of the three dimensions of space except that our consciousness moves along it.* But some foolish people have got hold of the wrong side of that idea. You have all heard what they have to say about this Fourth Dimension?'

'I have not,' said the Provincial Mayor.

'It is simply this. That Space, as our mathematicians have it, is spoken of as having three dimensions, which one may call Length, Breadth, and Thickness, and is always definable by reference to three planes, each at right angles to the others. But some philosophical people have been

存在了。所有实实在在的物体——”

“大多数人都是这么认为的。不过先别急，你们说，一个转瞬即逝的立方体能真正存在吗？”

“我没明白你的意思。”菲尔比说。

“一个立方体持续的时间为零，它能真实存在吗？”

菲尔比陷入了沉思。时光旅行者继续说道：“显而易见，任何真实存在的物体都必须具有四个维度：长度、宽度、高度，还有——持续时间。但是由于人自身的缺陷，我们很容易忽视这个事实。至于这一缺陷，我稍后再给大家解释。事实上，确实有四个维度，其中三个就是我们称作构成空间的三个平面，而第四个就是时间。但是，因为我们的意识从生命开始到结束都是沿着时间维度朝一个方向断断续续地向前推进，因此人们往往容易把前面三个维度和时间维度区别开来，而这个区别是不真实的。”

“这，”一个年轻人说着，一再地想要用灯火重新点燃他的雪茄，“这个……的确无可置疑。”

“可是现在，很明显，这一点通常都被忽视了，”时光旅行者继续说道，脸上多了一分满意的微笑，“这才是第四维度的真正所指，尽管有些人谈论第四维度，却不知道他们所说的就是时间。其实这只是换一种角度看时间。除了我们的意识沿着时间流动外，时间与空间的其他三个维度毫无差别。不过有些愚蠢的人曲解了这个观点。你们都听过这些人关于第四维度的说法吧？”

“我没有。”一个来自外省的市长先生说道。

“简单来说是这样的。按照数学家的说法，空间有三个维度，可以称为长度、宽度和高度。三个平面互相垂直就可以确定一个空间。但是一些哲学人士就一直有疑问：

asking why *three* dimensions particularly—why not another direction at right angles to the other three?—and have even tried to construct a Four-Dimension geometry. Professor Simon Newcomb was expounding this to the New York Mathematical Society only a month or so ago. You know how on a flat surface, which has only two dimensions, we can represent a figure of a three-dimensional solid, and similarly they think that by models of three dimensions they could represent one of four—if they could master the perspective of the thing. See?’

‘I think so,’ murmured the Provincial Mayor; and, knitting his brows, he lapsed into an introspective state, his lips moving as one who repeats mystic words. ‘Yes, I think I see it now,’ he said after some time, brightening in a quite transitory manner.

‘Well, I do not mind telling you I have been at work upon this geometry of Four Dimensions for some time. Some of my results are curious. For instance, here is a portrait of a man at eight years old, another at fifteen, another at seventeen, another at twenty-three, and so on. All these are evidently sections, as it were, Three-Dimensional representations of his Four-Dimensioned being, which is a fixed and unalterable thing.

‘Scientific people,’ proceeded the Time Traveller, after the pause required for the proper assimilation of this, ‘know very well that Time is only a kind of Space. Here is a popular scientific diagram, a weather record. This line I trace with my finger shows the movement of the barometer. Yesterday it was so high, yesterday night it fell, then this morning it rose again, and so gently upward to here. Surely the mercury did not trace this line in any of the dimensions of Space generally recognized? But certainly it traced such a line, and that line, therefore, we must conclude was along the Time-Dimension.’

‘But,’ said the Medical Man, staring hard at a coal in the fire, ‘if Time is really only a fourth dimension of Space, why is it, and why has it always been, regarded as something different? And why cannot we move in Time as we move about in the other dimensions of Space?’

为什么就特定是三个维度呢？为什么不会有另外一个维度和这三个分别垂直呢？他们甚至尝试构造一个四维几何。就在大约一个月之前，西蒙·尼科姆教授还在给纽约数学协会解释这个四维几何。大家都能理解在一个二维平面上，可以再现一个三维物体。同样道理，他们就想到利用三维模型，可以再现四维物体，只要掌握这个物体的透视法就行了。你们都明白了吗？”

“我想是吧。”市长先生喃喃自语着。他紧锁眉头，自己反思着，嘴唇蠕动着，像是在那里叨念着什么咒语。沉默片刻，他忽然间恍然大悟：“啊，现在我想明白了。”

“现在，我不介意告诉大家我从事四维几何的研究已经有一段时间了。我的一些研究结果十分新奇。比如，这里有一个八岁男孩的画像，还有他十五岁、十七岁、二十三岁等各年纪的画像。所有这些画像都明显是一个人的不同阶段，可以说，这就是用三维再现出来的四维生命体，而这四维生命体的存在是确定的、不容改变的事实。”

待大家揣摩片刻后，时光旅行者继续说道：“科学人士非常清楚，时间只是空间的一种。这里有一张常见的科学图表，是记录天气变化的。我手指定位的这条线显示了气压的变化情况。昨天显示气压是这么高，昨天晚上有所下降，今天早上又有上升，就像这样缓缓升到这里。无疑，水银的这条变化曲线不是沿着普遍认为的任何一个空间维度所形成的，对吧？但是，它又确实是沿着这样一条线而变化。因此，我们必然得出这样一个结论，这条线就是沿着时间维度而变化的。”

“但是，”医生凝视着炉火中的煤块，问道，“如果说时间的确仅仅是空间的第四个维度，那它为什么总是一直被认为有所不同呢？在空间的其他几个维度中，我们可以自由移动，但在时间里为什么就不行呢？”

The Time Traveller smiled. 'Are you sure we can move freely in Space? Right and left we can go, backward and forward freely enough, and men always have done so. I admit we move freely in two dimensions. But how about up and down? Gravitation limits us there.'

'Not exactly,' said the Medical Man. 'There are balloons.'

'But before the balloons, save for spasmodic jumping and the inequalities of the surface, man had no freedom of vertical movement.'

'Still they could move a little up and down,' said the Medical Man.

'Easier, far easier down than up.'

'And you cannot move at all in Time, you cannot get away from the present moment.'

'My dear sir, that is just where you are wrong. That is just where the whole world has gone wrong. We are always getting away from the present movement. Our mental existences, which are immaterial and have no dimensions, are passing along the Time-Dimension with a uniform velocity from the cradle to the grave. Just as we should travel *down* if we began our existence fifty miles above the earth's surface.'

'But the great difficulty is this,' interrupted the Psychologist. 'You *can* move about in all directions of Space, but you cannot move about in Time.'

'That is the germ of my great discovery. But you are wrong to say that we cannot move about in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence: I become absent-minded, as you say. I jump back for a moment. Of course we have no means of staying back for any length of Time, any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground. But a civilized man is better off than the savage in this respect. He can go up against gravitation in a balloon, and why should he not hope that ultimately he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time-Dimension, or even turn about and travel the other way?'

时光旅行者笑着说：“你确定我们在空间里可以自由移动自如吗？左右移动不成问题，前进后退也毫无障碍，这些活动我们都经常做。我承认我们可以在两个维度中自由活动。但是我们也自由地上天入地吗？地球引力把我们限制住了。”

医生反驳道：“也未必啊，气球就可以上天。”

“但是在气球出现之前，除了蹦一蹦、跳一跳以及地势不平的原因外，人们是不能自由上下移动的。”

“但还是能小幅上下移动的。”医生还不放弃。

“落下来远比向上运动容易多了。”

“在时间里根本无法移动，人不能脱离现在这一刻。”

“我亲爱的朋友，这正是你们的错误所在，也正是全世界的错误所在。实际上，我们经常逃离此刻。我们的精神存在是非物质形态的，不具有任何维度。从我们出生直到死亡，它都是沿着时间维度匀速向前的。就像我们如果身处地球表面五十英里上空的话就会向下降落一样。”

心理学家打断道：“但是问题是，在空间的各个方向人都可以自由活动，而在时间里就不可以。”

“这正是我伟大发现的开始。但是你说我们在时间里无法自由移动可就不对了。例如，如果我正身临其境地回忆着过去的某件事，我就会回到它发生的那个瞬间。你们会说我心不在焉。有那么片刻，我跳回到了过去。当然，我们无法在过去停留哪怕一丁点儿的时间，就像一个野蛮人或是动物没法做到在离地面六英尺之上停留一分一秒一样。不过，在这方面，文明社会的人要比那些尚未开化的野蛮人强多了。既然他可以乘坐气球挣脱地球引力，为什么就不能期望最终在时间维度上停止或者做加速运动，甚至逆向运动呢？”