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## The Virtual Time Machine: Part I

Parts I and II of this paper suggest a possible way to resolve some of the paradoxes of time travel, by introducing a radical approach to the nature of our physical universe and its scientific laws. It begins, in Part I, with extensive "quotations" from a story, "The Virtual Time Machine" - a possible sequel to *The Time Machine* - in which I indicate some of the possible explanations. In this way, my presentation has the maximum dramatic impact on someone hearing or reading it for the first time! In Part-II (which will appear in the next *Wellsian*) these "quotations" will be developed and explained in relation to the very latest theories about time and time travel. Part II will also explore the concepts of "virtual reality", "virtual universes", and "virtual time travel". I hope that these papers will cater for all types of Wellsian interests.

### I Some Extracts from "The Virtual Time Machine"

The book should be imagined as following directly the end of H.G. Wells's own text of *The Time Machine*.

#### 1.1 The Time Traveller Sets Out

"The Time Traveller was so eager to rescue Weena, that he forgot his important lunch appointment. A desperate plan entered his mind. He would move forward in time to the moment when she was attacked by the Morlocks, come well-armed, and in turn attack her kidnappers. Before they had time to recover, before they had a chance to kill her, he would carry Weena back to the Time Machine, and then travel back with her to the present time. He entered the Time Machine, and set its dials to the precise day in the year Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One, when the fight with the Morlocks had taken place. He pressed its lever to move forward, and saw his laboratory grow faint and hazy. He saw the ghostly, indistinct figure of his lunch guest enter the laboratory, but it was too late to go back now! He would have to explain his behaviour later. ....

"When he got out of the Time Machine, the scene was totally unexpected. In some ways, it was similar. As before, buildings were interspersed within large areas of parkland. As before, the climate was warm, and it was a fine sunny day. But the details were different. The buildings had another style, the trees in the parkland were more varied, and the landmarks, with which he had previously become familiar, were

nowhere to be seen. There was no sign of the Palace of Green Porcelain. His heart sank. What if he were no longer to be able to find Weena. But, to his relief, he could not see the wells into the Morlocks' underworld either. Eventually, he met some people, but found that he could not speak their language. It was not English, and it was also different from the language of the Eloi. In desperation, he continued to speak in English, and was at first met with blank stares, until someone came up who at least recognised the language that he spoke, and had an idea. ....

#### 1.2 The World Brain

"The Time Traveller was taken to a public building, and placed in front of a coloured visual display screen of enormous sophistication. Its display was designed so that any person could use it without previous instruction and it was even set to communicate in the English language; this was still one of the very many languages in its vast repertoire. The date that was shown was indeed exactly what he expected; at least the settings of the Time Machine had been perfectly accurate! The screen also explained that its display was directly connected to the 'World Brain', a global information and communication network that was immensely comprehensive and very well organised. He soon found out that he could retrieve information about any subject that he wished. It was not long before he realised that there were no such people as Eloi, no such creatures as Morlocks, in the version of ultramodern civilisation that he was experiencing. Nor had there ever been. He looked for the name 'Weena' in vain; it was not to be found anywhere, except in a very ancient work of fiction. He could only obtain access to history as ancient as that by making a special request to the Guardians of the World Brain. He found that the current human order was the Civilisation of the White Law, whose origins went back deep into the mists of 'prehistory'. Sooner or later, he came across the World Brain's 'artificial intelligence' feature, the 'cognator'. ....

"With its immense 'intuition', the cognator was almost able to read the Time Traveller's Mind, and began to work out a strategy that he could adopt. He should return to his Time Machine, and trace his way back through history, to find where it had diverged from its previous course of events. Even before the year 2000, the Theory of Chaotic Quantum Relativity had been discovered, which had explained why possible histories have many 'critical decision points', or 'multifurcation points', which determine along which of several possible 'world paths' the next phase of history will actually unfold. Clearly, the Time Traveller had sped along a different branch from where he had been before, and he had to find his way back to the branch point. To do this, he had to go back to the mid-1990s, the era of human history when

research on time travel had burgeoned. The cognator explained that, for various reasons, Time Travel was not used at the present time; it had been found too dangerous, rather like opening Pandora's box. ....

### 1.3 The Polymath

"Back in London in 1995, the Time Traveller met the Polymath, who introduced him to the leading lines of current thought on the problem of Time Travel. The Time Machine had been parked at a convenient location, while the Traveller sought guidance about what to do next. He was even told about a crucially important Symposium at Imperial College, London, due to take place a few weeks later, at the end of July, where the Polymath would present a key paper. Then he received the bad news that the Time Machine had vanished! Several experts on the Theory of Relativity, especially Kip Thorne, had worked out theoretically how Time Travel could work, and how a Time Machine might in principle operate. It would be very, very difficult in practice, if not impossible. It involved the appropriate manipulation of the right sort of 'wormhole', in space time. 'Beastly, silly, rotten hole!' he exclaimed. Some other way had to be found. Could he ever reconstruct his Time Machine? Not so likely, because he had 'found' one of its design features, together with one of its crucial parts, under mysterious circumstances in 1895. Clearly they were 'visiting cards' left by some extraterrestrial scientists. ....

"The Polymath introduced him to the works of Gordon Hyde, an English eccentric who had died suddenly in 1981. Only very scarce fragments of his writings were left, and a few very cryptic diagrams, some in colour. He had left sketches of a design for a 'cognator', but never worked out a full design for it, let alone built one. He had strange ideas of 'chronotopology' and 'topochronology' - clearly something to do with Time Travel - but actually working with these ideas was like assembling a very intricate jigsaw puzzle, of which only very few pieces had yet been found. Some who met him had the wrong impression that he was an ignoramus who was fond of using grand words, but others, who knew him better, considered that he could have been pretending to be ignorant, so that people would have little inkling of the real knowledge that he possessed; to release such knowledge too quickly would be too dangerous. ....

"The Polymath then showed him the latest issue of the *NeoMetaphysical Digest*, which had two articles on time travel and related themes. Under the right circumstances, its author John Williamson stated, 'one's consciousness will appear to have a travel experience, wherein the space and time through which one passes, seem to be

indefinable - like a cotton wool tunnel or fixed clouds.' He had actually had some experiences of time travel, having several times been carried backwards in time by the 'winds of desire'. To him, Time Travel was consistent with his unified practical philosophy, which he called 'neometaphysics'. The Polymath also pointed to a section on Time Travel, in Murry Hope's book *Time the Ultimate Energy* (181-85). Its author wondered how many 'flashes of inspiration' had resulted from telepathic communications across years of time. She cited several instances, where such 'mental' Time Travel might have been experienced. This might make it unnecessary to attempt to develop physical time travel. ....

"The Polymath then introduced him to two anonymous papers in *New Paradigms Newsletter*, drawing attention to ideas about computer-like universes and virtual reality, and to the possibility that the world of everyday life, as experienced, was not what it seemed. The author, Ramsey Dukes, one of whose books was briefly reviewed there, had come up with some such idea. We could even be living in a configuration of Virtual Universes, nested within each other like Chinese boxes! ....

### 1.4 The Grand Organiser of Data

"The Time Traveller began to despair. How could he ever meet Weena again? In a shout of utter desperation, he exclaimed: 'Oh God, if there is a God, please help me!' He shouted this out three times, each time louder than before. The Grand Organiser of Data responded. He was sitting at a vast console, his interface to a really tremendous intelligent computer system, one of whose main components was the Data Organising Genius operating system and software, which had been given the trade name 'K9'. The Grand Organiser of Data explained to the Time Traveller that he had just 'woken' from a very 'deep' Virtual Reality session. When things went wrong for the Time Traveller, and he had 'prayed' from the depths of his being, he had activated an alarm system in the Data Organising Genius, which had terminated his Virtual Reality Session, and brought him back to 'Actual Reality'.

"The Time Traveller asked various questions. 'Is there really a God?' 'Nobody really knows,' said the Grand Organiser of Data. 'Certainly, there is some vast Creative Intelligence in the Universe, far, far beyond our comprehension. We do not even begin to have the conceptual and intellectual equipment to understand it.' 'Why did I move off into a different branch of history?' asked the Time Traveller. 'Because you activated a critical decision point when you moved your Time Machine back in Virtual Time. Whenever you move backwards and forwards in Virtual Time, you are in effect altering the configuration of Virtual Space Time, which actually exists in the memory patterns of the Virtual Reality Computer to which you were connected.

“In your case, this had the following effects. In the Virtual History of 1975 which you activated, the elected leader of the British Conservative Party was Willie Whitelaw, not Margaret Thatcher. Willie Whitelaw became Prime Minister in 1979. He did not adopt ‘Thatcherite’ policies, and continued to maintain the political consensus about the welfare state. The Falklands War did not occur in 1982, or at any later time. In the usual swing of British politics, Michael Foot was elected Prime Minister in 1983, then there was a further Willie Whitelaw Government in 1987. As a result, the Thatcherite extremities of rich and poor never appeared. The ‘underclass’ never emerged. The criminal elements, who, in the previous branch of Virtual History, increasingly dominated and terrorised the ‘underclass’, never had a chance to gain power. In the previous branch, it was they who eventually evolved into the Morlocks. The affluent rich of the late 1990s gradually lost their power, and evolved into the Eloi.’

“The Time Traveller paused for a moment to take in this breath-taking scenario. He watched at the console of the great Virtual Reality Computer, on whose screen amazing dynamic patterns appeared, a supercomplex interplay of deterministic and random influences. He saw multicoloured whirling random spirals cascade across the screen, like veritable ‘Catherine Wheels of Chance’. Before he could ask his next question, a quiet, gentle young woman said to him with great affection: ‘Do you not recognise me? I was Weena!’ They embraced and kissed each other passionately.”

[The next issue of the *Wellsian* (1997) will present Part II of “The Virtual Time Machine”. This paper will provide an up-dated theoretical explanation of the ideas which inspired this extension of Wells’s *The Time Machine*, together with detailed documentation of the relevant scientific sources.]