

31. 科学者セシリア・ペインの学生時代(1)：構造理解

Hydrogen is a basic building block of the universe. We know that it existed soon after the universe was born and that it still appears as a large part of the interstellar medium in which stars form. It is also the nuclear fuel that keeps stars radiating great amounts of energy as they evolve over ages to create the chemical elements.

But how did we learn that hydrogen is a widespread and fundamental part of the universe?

Not enough people know that the cosmic importance of hydrogen was first grasped by a student, Cecilia Payne, who in 1925 discovered hydrogen in the stars. Indeed, she earned a PhD at a time when it was still extremely difficult for women to do so, and did breakthrough research for her thesis.

For all the success of her science, her story also shows the barriers and sexism that made it difficult for women to fulfil their scientific goals.

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