

Time and Fate

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 01 Apr 1999

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Roy C. Lackey — 01 Apr 1999, 01:01

I knew better than to bring up time-travel paradoxes; it's an argument that isn't winnable by anyone, yet I still maintain what I wrote earlier. But, because time travel isn't possible--other than in the personal, poetic, linear-future sense that John Bishop alluded to--I can't go back and change it. It is precisely because time-travel stories necessarily involve paradoxes that some authors attempt to circumvent them by various plot devices; time travel only in one direction, one-time-only time travel, alternate timelines, limited time-travel duration, etc. Once unlimited time travel is postulated then most anything is possible, given enough time. <g>

The only continuity there can be, from the point of view of the time traveler, is in memory, which, by definition, is always of the personal past. Thus John Bishop's Dr. Parah, having published the purloined books, becomes, for their readers, their author. Dr. Parah knows better. Sev, when Canog overhears him, is relating the plot of Dr. Talos's play, not events from his memory. Without resorting to the time-travel-paradox-dodging gimmicks mentioned above, one is left with such paradoxes.

When the entire universe--Urth's universe--can be traversed, spatially and temporally, from beginning to end, by a ship such as Tzadkiel's, then any possible outcome one desires can be achieved. Just keep doing it over and over again until you get it right, or cause it not to have happened in the first place. All crises are false. There is no freewill; all is predetermined by whomever/whatever gets to make the rules. The game is fixed, and for all the myriad pawns--who are legion--that's just too damned bad.

When Tzadkiel, at the Brook Madregot, tells Sev that he could not have died before his test, nor die before he brings the New Sun, then that is predestination. Whether Sev is aware or not at any point in his life of this is irrelevant; his "free will" is an illusion. He can not act differently because he did not act differently--in the future. This is not my opinion; this is what the text says, chapter XL of Urth. Also there:

"It must have appeared to Agilus and Typhon, and to many of the others who struggled against you, that the fight was an unequal one. If they had been wise, they would have known the fight was over already, some where and some time; but if they had been wise, they would have known you for our servant and not fought against you at all."

For all the unwashed masses, now washed in the New Flood of the New Sun's coming, who had no part in old Sol's death agonies and resurrection, but who had their personal time machines--their lives--snuffed out because of it, it must have come as no small satisfaction, as their lives flashed before their eyes, that their deaths were just "collateral damage" in a cosmic game that needn't have been played at all, or, if played, might just as well have been played by other rules on another board with different pieces.

Roy