

To Whom It May Concern:

If you are reading this tome, then it means one of two things: you are one of my friends, or I have been lost to the Fogs of Time. As I have no friends, I must assume the worst.

It is crucial that you seek me out in the Fogs of Time, not just for my own personal safety, but for the safety of Ilo itself. Without my guardianship, Oberon, the Adversary, will come to Avalon. But before you travel those serpentine hallways of fog, you must understand the nature of time itself.

Read on young would-be friend. The fate of Time itself rests on your shoulders.

# *On Time Travel and Free Will*

*(With a Short Discourse on the Life of Merlin)*

*Musings from the Guardian of Time*

*Vol. 1*

I have always questioned the theory that there are infinitely many worlds parallel to our own but different in some notable way. Presumably, in these worlds, there are instances of myself that did not take up the mantle of the Guardian of Time or did not even draw the Sword from its Stone; worlds where YOU did not read these words.

As near as I can tell as Steward of Avalon and the Guardian of Time, our universe (including all Realms, known and unknown, not merely Ilo herself) does not conform to this theory.

This is a relief to say the least. If

everything that could happen did happen, then life would hold no meaning. For every universe that fought to overcome the evil gripping her, there would be another that had already succumbed to it. Even to some external observer independent of these universes, they would merely need to "change the channel" so to speak, to arrive at a universe that contained their requisite happy ending.

But what of the issue of Time Travel? I know of Einstein and Rosenberg, I have read Hawking. I have lived for a long, long time, and have seen many, many

things.

It is my belief, therefore, that Time Travel as a means to effect a change in the present is not possible. The past is immutable, and if individuals were able to travel to the past (which they are not), then they have already been to the past before they left.

What then of the illusion of Free Will? Do people of the present have Free Will? Or is the future written in stone? If the past is immutable, then does that mean the future is as well?

Thankfully, this is even more easily

debunked than the idea of infinite worlds. Even Merlin, although too involved in the everyday affairs of Ilo to become the Guardian of Time, was aware of the truth of Free Will.

Merlin and I are both creatures that "live backwards in time". But Merlin was not always such a thing. Merlin the boy came to live in a time where magick was fleeing Ilo faster than it could be generated, the time shortly after the Seal of the Seven Archmagi, but he was of mixed heritage.

Part-elven, part-hume, Merlin was born to magick and therefore doomed.

His mother, a Magickian of no mean skill, could give up magick as it was not a part of her blood and the humes always had short memories, but his father, an elf, could no more give up magick than Merlin could. His father changed, forsaking Good, and becoming a creature of the night—an Incubus.

Merlin's Mother could not stand the site of her former lover, and sent him from her. When Merlin began to manifest magicks as a boy, his mother wailed and moaned. Claiming that she feared he would become an incubus like his father, but the young Merlin knew

the truth: she was unable to bear another creature that possessed the magick she no longer could control.

Merlin lived long in the wilderness, becoming more wild and feral than any creature under the sky, but his time in the wilderness is not of import here.

What is important is that Bleise came to Merlin then.

A student of the Archmagi, Bleise was one of the few humes left alive that could channel magick to any considerable degree. But Bleise had not seen power the likes of Merlin since before the Seal, and he knew at once

that Merlin was the key to breaching the Seal and seizing magick for himself once more.

Bleise took years to win the feral youth over to him, but Merlin would never be tamed and would remain wild and unpredictable until the day he died. I still remember with fear any time I had been summoned before the great Magus, always hoping that he would remember me and not attempt to roast and eat me.

Bleise mentored Merlin, teaching him the formalities and rituals of magick that Merlin knew by instinct alone.

Bleise's power was great for a hume, but paled in comparison to Merlin. Merlin grew from student to trusted colleague to master in magick. He took to leaving for long periods of time, infuriating Bleise, who always insisted they continue their work into destroying the Seal of the Archmagi.

Merlin's mother was dying and she sought out the rumors of a great Mage that could heal. Merlin allowed himself to be known to her. She begged him for forgiveness. Merlin healed the ravages of disease and infirmity that afflicted her, but did not forgive her. He

walked away from the woman that was his mother to never see her again. She eventually joined some cult to starve herself to death.

As for his father, the incubus had found passage to the Faerie Realms, but had not returned to Lysia, the Realm of the Elves. Merlin sought him out in the dungeons of Oberon's Castle.

Perhaps from some misbegotten belief that his father was a kindred spirit or would be able to offer him some universal truth, Merlin came to him eagerly. Merlin was mistaken.

His father was an addict of magick and taken to stealing magick from others. As an elf, he had been able to gather magick naturally, but now that he had become an incubus, he was forced to steal it from the life-force of others. Merlin was forced to assert himself magickally several times during their conversation as his father attempted to feed upon him.

Finally, Merlin left his father to his jailors in disgust.

Merlin then met with Oberon. Together, the two devised a way to grant Oberon ready passage into the Realm of Ilo: an

island, an oasis of magick amongst the dark wasteland of Ilo-Avalon.

Merlin brought back three objects from his time in the Faerie Realms: a piece of the Firmament fashioned into a great anvil, spun Mist woven into a cloak of stars, and the Staff of Oberon himself, the head of which was said to be the heart of a star.

But Merlin was treacherous. He left with his gifts of the fey and the knowledge of their ways while all along he planned to betray Oberon and seize Avalon for himself.

Merlin returned to Bleise and told him of his plans: a way to fashion a pocket universe from Ilo and the Seal of the Seven Archmagi that could connect to other subRealms and the Faerie Realms; a way of accessing the Astral Realm in spite of the blockade of the Seal.

Bleise gave his life and magicks over to the project and was lost in its completion. The dark wizard Merlin seized ever more magicks from the universe to make the Island of Avalon a reality.

The explosion rocked the axis of the

Realms themselves. The Seal shuddered from its power, but held together. The explosion was confined to a single subRealm and even more! Confined to a single young mage that aged hundreds of years from the ordeal. Merlin lost his magicks, his memories, his youth and even himself that day, but he gained his Sight of the Future and he created, or rather, discovered, the Isle of Avalon.

The story of how Merlin saved Avalon from Oberon using only his Sight and regained his magicks is legendary, and not important for the purposes of this tome. The Sight of the Future is the

important thing!

Merlin could see the future! No creature alive in the aeons before this singular event had knowledge of the future beyond some petty attempts at prophecy, not even the Dragons! But here was Merlin who could not just see the future, but remembered the future! He was living backwards in time!

I have made no small attempt in understanding the phenomena of Merlin's Memories, and I think I have arrived at the solution.

My knowledge of the primordial

universe is small, and I make no attempt to understand the ways of the ancient dragons before they created the universe, but the manner in which they created the universe is the key.

It was an explosion. A massive eruption of magick and energy that rocketed through the Fabric of the Cosmos creating hundreds of Realms— individual universes with planets and life! But more than that, the explosion set time rolling forward.

It is the “Big Bang” of the beginning of everything that allows time to venture forth and allows beings such as you or I

to perceive time.

What then would happen if a being of impossible power attempted to create another universe? What if Merlin had attempted the impossible and Avalon was not just a subRealm of Ilo, but an entire universe of its own? Or more! A universe that encompassed all universes! And his explosion, his immensely powerful, monstrous, terrible, wondrous explosion set time rolling backwards...at least a little.

At least enough for Merlin, who was stripped of all he was, to perceive events that had yet to come to pass.

Although he became able to remember the future, he unfortunately could not remember anything from his "past," and once an event came to be, he could not remember it any longer.

Merlin compensated for this lack by keeping copious diaries (which you will find in my library), and writing frequent notes to himself; things like, "Arthur's your doing, make sure you look after the bloody kid," and, "You lost a tooth yesterday—taffy is getting too taffy-like for us."

Thankfully as the Guardian of Time, I remember the past AND the future and

am not reduced to writing notes to remember.

But even Merlin knew the future was not fixed; that Free Will did exist.

There were many times in Merlin's life, and even more in mine, that we remember an event that never came to pass. At several points, he even believed that I was killed by my nephew or son or something.

If the future was fixed, if a deterministic model of the universe were true, wouldn't our memories of the future always be true?

In fact, I believe that a deterministic model of the universe is true in every way except for one: magick. Magick and what creatures do with magick is unpredictable. The very act of working magick is manipulating the universe—altering reality! Magick cannot be quantified, qualified or predicted.

In short, Magick is Free Will, and Free Will is Magick.