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The metaphysics of freedom : time, Kant and compatibilism

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Abstract:

"Does a commitment to the block universe and 'tense-less' B-series time help meet the determinist challenge to free will advanced by the incompatibilist?" Incompatibilism is the position that the free will thesis and the thesis of determinism are not co-tenable. Compatibilism is the denial of incompatibilism. In this essay I examine a theory advanced by Carl Hoefer which aims to establish the compatibility of free will and determinism based upon – what he claims – is the correct understanding of time. I submit that Hoefer's theory faces problems but that his essential insight regarding the relevance of time to the free will debate is important. As such, I analyse various arguments for and against incompatibilism by the lights of a particular metaphysic of time: that given by McTaggart's B-series, Eternalism and the block universe. I suggest that many incompatibilist arguments turn upon an unjustified assumption regarding asymmetries in time and sketch various possible amendments to arguments on both sides of the debate. In particular, I suggest that arguments regarding the challenge to free will from determinism cannot proceed by invoking merely determinism but must deal with the metaphysics of time and causation.