

FREEDOM VS. ETERNALISM: SOME OBJECTIONS TO THE INSIDE OUT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The free will problem has traditionally been viewed as an incompatibility between the concept of freedom and the concept of determinism. This paper is concerned with a slightly different framing of the problem: with the compatibility between free will and the metaphysics of time.

Carl Hoefer, in his 2002 article "*Freedom from the Inside Out*" has argued that the source of the free will problem is our unconscious assumption of the A-theory of time. He also argued that if we adopt a B-theory of time and imagine our actions from a static block universe perspective, then freedom would be saved. He argues that this is the case, because bidirectional determinism in the static block does not privilege past to future determination.

My aim in this paper is to present two new objections to Hoefer's view. Firstly, I argue that his description of the A-series is problematic and does not help him establish that the A-series is the source of the free will problem. Secondly, I argue that his theory is susceptible to the threat of ontological fatalism and that this is in conflict with freedom understood as the ability to do otherwise

Keywords: free will; determinism; eternalism; A- and B-theories; block universe; metaphysics of time

1. Introduction

Free will is often believed to be in conflict with the thesis of determinism: the idea that a past state of the world in conjunction with the laws of nature entails one single possible future. If freedom is the ability to act

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otherwise than how in fact I've acted, then it seems that I cannot be free in a deterministic world. Traditionally, there have been two notable positions regarding the tension between the two concepts. One can be a compatibilist and argue that free will and determinism are actually compatible and can co-exist together in the same world, or one can be an incompatibilist and argue that the two concepts cannot co-exist together.

I am concerned with a different approach to the problem of free will in this paper: the relation between free will and the metaphysics of time. Carl Hoefer in his article "*Freedom from the Inside Out*" (2002) has defended a compatibilist account of freedom that I shall refer to as the Inside Out Perspective. This proposal seeks to make free will compatible with determinism by adopting a different conception of time than the one we unconsciously assume.

The aim of this paper is to present a number of objections to the Inside Out Perspective. Two of them belong to Jason Brennan (2007) and the other two belong to me. The main objection I raise is that Hoefer's theory is susceptible to a certain kind of fatalism: **ontological** fatalism. Why this matters for the Inside Out Perspective will become clear in the later sections of the paper.

To Hoefer, the free will problem arises because of a tension between determinism and our common sense view of time. Using McTaggart's distinction between **A-series time** and **B-series time**, Hoefer argues that we unconsciously assume an A-series view of time, meaning we assume that the past is fixed, the present is a flowing instant that moves through time and that the future is indeterminate. Since this view of time privileges a past→future determination, we are led to believe that a past time slice in conjunction with the laws of nature can entail only one single possible future (Hoefer 2002, 206).

Therefore, in order to make free will and determinism compatible we need to change our conception of time. Hoefer considers that the A-series' rival, the B-series would be the suitable alternative. He invites us to adopt a static block universe perspective, a model of spacetime inspired by Minkowski that consists of three spatial dimensions and one temporal dimension. This temporal dimension is the B-series, an ordering of events in time that retains the temporal direction present in the A-series, but loses the ontological distinction between past, present

and future. In a B-theory of time, we deal only with static and permanent relations between events. These relations between events are *earlier than*, *simultaneous with* and *later than*. All events are thus ontologically the same in the static block. There is no difference in “realness” between events that are “future” with respect to me and events that are “past” to me.

Hoefer proceeds to argue that within this block universe, we are able to view our actions as **not** being determined by events in the past in conjunction with the laws, but by our own volitions. This is possible because the B-theoretic block universe allows for bidirectional determinism. This means that past→future determination is no longer privileged. Future→past determination is also possible and, more importantly, determination from the *inside-out* is also acceptable. My actions within the block can thus be viewed as partially determining both earlier time slices and later time slices relative to me. For Hoefer, it seems, the fact that one direction of determination is no longer privileged in a block universe seems to be sufficient to make freedom possible. The proposal seems to make free will compatible with bidirectional determinism. However, as I shall argue, the Inside Out Perspective is an eternalist theory and does not seem to escape the threat of ontological fatalism.

The plan of this paper is as follows: In the second section I will present the temporal assumptions of two incompatibilist arguments (the Forking Road Argument and the Consequence Argument) in order to demonstrate the relevance of the metaphysics of time to the free will debate.

In the third section I will present Carl Hoefer’s compatibilist proposal. In the fourth section I will present two lines of criticism that have been put forward by Jason Brennan. The first involves the asymmetry of causation and its threat to free will that is left unaddressed in Hoefer’s article, and the second involves the uncertain ontological status of actions within the block.

Finally, in the fifth section, I will present two of my own objections to Hoefer’s view. Firstly, I will argue that his characterization of the A-series is too specific and does not help establish his conclusion that the A-series is responsible for the tension between free will and determinism. Secondly, I will show why ontological fatalism is a threat to the Inside Out Perspective defended by Hoefer. This kind of fatalism (coined by Joseph Diekemper) is the type that is entailed by eternalist ontology.

2. Free will and its relation to time: Two incompatibilist arguments and their temporal assumptions

There is a common argument for incompatibilism that is typically known as the Forking Road Argument. This is the idea that whenever we make a choice we are like a traveler that chooses one of the alternate routes from a forking road. The alternate roads stand for possible futures and the singular road behind us is analogous to the past. This picture shows us that if determinism is true (the thesis that the actual past in conjunction with the laws of nature entails one single possible future), then there cannot be multiple alternate routes to choose from. The past plus the laws entails only one road and that's it. If indeterminism holds true, then there is such a thing as a set of alternatives to choose from when we act. If I think of baking a cake, then I could choose the road containing my baking of the cake or the road which does not contain my baking of the cake.

What is this argument's conclusion? The conclusion is that determinism and freedom are incompatible concepts, because freedom presupposes the existence of alternatives. A common definition of free will views it as the ability to do otherwise (or dual ability). According to Peter van Inwagen, I freely act if and only if I have the ability to act otherwise than I actually do. A denial of free will would be to say that what I *can* do and what I *do* coincide (van Inwagen 1975, 188).

However, Kadri Vihvelin criticizes this common argument for incompatibilism. She says:

But several assumptions have been smuggled into this analogy: assumptions about time and causation and assumptions about possibility. The assumptions about time and causation needed to make the argument work include the following: that we "move" through time in something like the way we move down a road: that our movement is necessarily in one direction only, from past to future; that the past is *necessarily* "fixed" or beyond our control in some way that the future is not. These assumptions are all controversial; on some theories of time and causation (the four-dimensionalist or eternalist theory of time, a theory of causation

that doesn't deny the possibility of time travel and backward causation), they are all false. (Vihvelin 2013, 126-127)

Thus, this incompatibilist argument carries with it some metaphysical assumptions. What is of concern in this article are its assumptions on time. As Vihvelin rightly remarks, the Forking Road Argument presupposes that we as agents move through time like we move on a road, that the direction of time is past to future and that the past is fixed. These assumptions are typically the theses of the *A-theory* of time. Although not all A-theories of time share all three assumptions, it is clear that they do share the assumption that time is flowing. There is an objective privileged present that moves through time and is the explanation for why it passes.

The most popular A-theories are the following:

Presentism: The view that only present entities exist and no non-present entities exist. The past and the future are, thus, unreal according to presentists.

Growing Block Theory: The view that the past and the present are real, but the future is unreal. The passage of time here is simply the addition of new slices of existence onto the block as the present moves further and further.

The Branching Theory: The view that the past and the present are real and the future consists of multiple branching courses of events. The possibility of each of these non-actual branching futures is entailed by the actual past and the laws of nature. One must note that the branching theory is clearly an indeterminist view and actually entails an open future. Presentism and the growing block are compatible with an open future, but don't necessarily entail one (Miller 2005, 198).

The Moving Spotlight Theory: The view that time is a four-dimensional block universe of events onto which a privileged present is added. On this view, all events exist eternally, however

the distinction between past and future is kept due to the add-on of an objective present that “shines” on the line of temporal events.²

If one were to compare these A-theories, she or he would see that the Forking Road Argument works best on the branching theory or on the growing block theory. As Miller (2005) argued, the growing block theory is compatible with an open future and is also compatible with a closed future. It does not predispose us to accept an open or a closed future. However, the branching model explicitly commits us to an open future with multiple alternatives. Therefore, it seems that the validity of the Forking Road Argument rests on the assumption that either the branching theory or the growing block theory is true. This is an obvious blow to the strength of the argument itself. An eternalist theorist (which I happen to be) can reject this argument right from the start.

What, then, is eternalism?³ The A-theory is contrasted with its rival, the *B-theory* of time. This is a static theory of time in which there is no objective becoming of events, no passage of time and no objective distinction between past, present and future. The present is no longer objective, but merely perspectival. The flowing “now” is reduced to a simple indexical. On an A-theory, events have different properties such as pastness, presentness or futurity. On a B-theory, no such properties exist. All events are equally real and they are distinguished with respect to their relations with each other. These static relations are *earlier than*, *simultaneous with* and *later than*. In contrast, the properties of events on an A-theory are ever-changing. As John Ellis McTaggart put it (the philosopher who coined the distinction between A-series time and B-series time):

Positions in time, as time appears to us *prima facie*, are distinguished in two ways. Each position is Earlier than some, and Later than some,

² For defenses of presentism, see Bigelow (1996) and Markosian (2004). For defenses of the growing block, see Broad (1923) and Tooley (1997). For defenses of the branching theory, see Belnap (1992) and Belnap and Green (1994). Finally, for a defense of the moving spotlight theory, see Skow (2009).

³ For presentations and overviews of the issues with eternalism, see Wasserman (2018), Miller (2013) and Le Poidevin (2013).

of the other positions. And each position is either Past, Present, or Future. The distinctions of the former class are permanent, while those of the latter are not. If M is ever earlier than N, it is always earlier. But an event, which is now present, was future and will be past. (McTaggart 1908, 456)

Thus, A-theoretic change (or *genuine* change, as McTaggart calls it) is the change of an event from being future to being present and then to being past. B-theoretic change is supposed to be the change in an object's properties at a time. An object can have a set of properties in an earlier state and then have a different set of properties in a later state.⁴

Perhaps what the A-theory and B-theory have in common is the thesis that time has a direction and, of course, an ordering of events. As remarked by Matt Farr, McTaggart's A-series has a classification of events into past, present and future, a direction of time and an order. The B-series series eliminates this classification and retains the directionality (represented by the *earlier-later* relation) and the order of time. Of course, there is the less discussed C-series which retains only an ordering of events, but this series does not concern us in this article (Farr 2012, 87-88).

What can we gather from all this? We can observe that the Forking Road Argument for incompatibilism fails to be convincing for philosophers that are B-theorists, because they reject the argument's assumptions on time. However, the relation between the metaphysics of time and the problem of free will reaches deeper than this. Let's consider the most popular and, arguably, the most powerful argument for incompatibilism: the Consequence Argument. Although this particular argument has been expressed in different forms, its clearest and most notable formulation is that given by Peter van Inwagen. In his famous book, *An Essay on Free Will* (1983) he states it as follows:

If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us

⁴ For an introduction into the debates between A-theorists and B-theorists and their differing views on tense and change, see Le Poidevin, Robin (1998) *Questions of Time and Tense*, Oxford University Press, Chapter 1.

what went on before we were born, and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us. (van Inwagen 1983, 16)

If the consequences of the past in conjunction with the laws of nature are our present actions, then our present actions are not up to us. If our present actions are not up to us, then we do not have free will. Therefore, if determinism is true, then we do not have free will. If I have the ability to act otherwise than how in fact I do, then I must be able to make the conjunction of the laws with the actual past to be false. However, if I can make the conjunction (let's call it P & L) false, then I can make either P false or L false or both. Typically, we do not think that our present actions can render P false, because the past is remote, beyond our control and *fixed*. Furthermore, the idea of backward causation (present actions having a causal influence on past events) is met with a lot of resistance by our intuitions.

As for rendering L false, it's quite doubtful that we as mere human beings are capable of rendering false a law of nature. However, David Lewis had a lot to say on this point in response to van Inwagen's argument. It's ridiculous to claim that we are able to break the laws by simply acting freely, but it may not be ridiculous to claim that I have the ability to do something which, if I had done, would have broken a law of nature (Lewis 1981, 123). The tactic used here is to attack the LAW premise of the Consequence Argument: It is not up to us what the laws of nature are.⁵

What of the PAST premise? The idea that the past is not up to us seems to belong to common sense. However, one must be more precise here. What does it mean to say that the past is not up to me? It may mean that I cannot change the past, but one could say that it wouldn't make sense to claim that I could change the future either. A simple

⁵ Another way to reject the LAW premise is to argue for a Humean conception of laws in which the laws of nature are simply contingent generalizations of how the fundamental events or particles in the world move. The laws here do not have the power to necessitate or dictate the way in which objects or events behave, but are simply patterns of those behaviors. For more on this view, one could read Beebe and Mele (2002), Esfeld (2021), Loewer (2012).

tautology is that the future will be what it will be. This does not imply that my actions are causally powerless towards the future. There is a perfectly reasonable sense in which my actions causally affect the future. So this would mean that there is a distinction to be made between *affecting* and *changing* and an observation to be made: that affecting does not imply changing (Le Poidevin 2013, 537).

There might then be a reasonable sense in which the past is affected by my actions or even a sense in which it is determined by my actions. Let's consider the concept of determinism. One could distinguish two kinds of formulations of the thesis of determinism. Consider the following two:

The world is deterministic if and only if, given a specified way things are at a time T, together with the laws of nature, jointly logico-mathematically determine a single possible future of the world. (Hofer 2004, 101)

Now consider:

(...) the propositions stating the laws of nature and the propositions describing the state of the world at an arbitrary time t (i.e. the propositions describing the initial conditions) entail the propositions describing the state of the world at any other time. (Esfeld 2019, 78)

The first kind of formulation I shall call the Tensed Definition of Determinism and the second I shall call the Tenseless Definition of Determinism. The first is usually stated as follows:

Tensed Definition Of Determinism: (Actual Past & Actual Laws of Nature) → One possible Present (or Future) course of events and only one.

This is typically the most common statement of the thesis. We are often told that the past in conjunction with the laws of nature entail our present actions or our future. However, this formulation contains temporal terms and assumes that past to future determination is privileged. A tenseless version of determinism does no such thing. We can state it as follows:

Tenseless Definition of Determinism: (State of the world A & Actual Laws of Nature) \rightarrow State of the world B.

Or in other words, for every X, if X is a state of the world, then in conjunction with the actual laws, X logically entails any state of the world. By “state of the world” I may mean a conjunctive statement in which I enumerate the simultaneous events that occur at an instant in time (or on a time slice). Peter van Inwagen uses this kind of definition and claims that deterministic relations are actually entailments between propositions (van Inwagen 1975, 186-190). Michael Esfeld also holds a similar view as it is evident from this passage: “Thus formulated, it is clear that determinism in science is—only—about entailment relations among propositions.” (Esfeld 2019, 78)

This tenseless version of determinism does not, of course, assume that a certain direction of determination is privileged and, as a result, it favors a bidirectional relation between states of the world. My actions in the present both logically entail later states and also logically entail earlier states. If this is so and the relation of determination goes both ways rather than one way only, then the Consequence Argument’s PAST Premise is false. This is the move that Carl Hoefer makes in his interesting article *Freedom from the Inside Out*. In the following section, I will present Hoefer’s Inside Out Perspective, in which he attempts to make free will compatible with the deterministic physics inside a four-dimensional static block universe.

3. The Inside Out Perspective

Carl Hoefer’s Inside Out Perspective is a compatibilist account of free will, but this is not the usual compatibilism that is generally being talked about in the literature. Hoefer attempts to make free will compatible with deterministic physics by appealing to a certain theory of time: the static block eternalist theory. He writes:

The challenge to free will from determinism has not come from the physics, but rather from the unholy marriage of deterministic physics with our A-series view of time. (Hoefer 2002, 206)

According to him, we unconsciously assume a common sense view of time and that time is the A-series. Typically, he says, we think of the past as being fixed, the present as a moving instant and the future as being open to possibilities. I argue that this characterization is a bit problematic and I will explain why I believe so in a later section. However, Hofer states:

The worry we have is that a *past* slice (...) determines our actions *now*. We never think of a *now*-slice (including the voluntary actions we perform now) determining what happened in the past. Why not? (Hofer 2002, 206)

This is why the problem of free will arises. The culprit isn't actually determinism *per se*, but the assumption that past to future determination is privileged. This assumption is present, because we have this A-theoretic intuition of time. Then how could someone try to make free will compatible with determinism again? Naturally, we could try harmonizing free will with a different conception of time, and this is exactly what Hofer attempts to do.

Given a proper understanding of time, we will see that freedom and determinism are compatible in a much more robust sense than has ever been thought possible. (Hofer 2002, 202-203)

The saviour theory would be the B-theory of time. Hofer invites us to view time as a four-dimensional static block universe inspired by Einstein-Minkowski spacetime that contains all temporal events of the world. The block has three spatial dimensions and one temporal dimension which is thought to be the B-series time. As on any eternalist theory, there is no single event or time slice within the block that can be identified as the "flowing now" (Hofer 2002, 203-205). Past, present and future are A-theoretic terms and have no place in a B-theory. Events in the block are all equally real. The events of today are not ontologically different from the events of one billion years ago. As stated in the previous section, any B-theory must preserve a direction of time. This direction is given by the earlier-later relation between events within the

block and can also work as a later-earlier relation since tenseless determinism is bidirectional.

As McTaggart stated, these relations are permanent and static. One might also note that statements about these B-relations don't change their truth values at different times. For example, it will always be **true** that World War II is later than World War I and it will always be **false** that the Romanian Revolution of 1989 is earlier than World War II.⁶

Given such a view of time, how could one argue that free will is possible under it? If there is no ontological distinction between events and all exist indiscriminately, then the later time slices seem to be fixed and beyond my control. I lack control over the future just as I lack control over the past. Eternalism seems to entail fatalism: the thesis that no matter what we do, the way the future will be is unavoidable. Hofer doesn't share this thought. He writes:

The very "timelessness" of the 4-D block (in an A-series sense) leaves us free to reject the customary view that past events determine present choices. From the B series perspective, there is no reason to think of past→future determination as more important or real than future→past determination. And, even more to the point, one can equally view a set of events in the *middle* as determiners of both past and future events. (Hofer 2002, 205)

Furthermore, he states:

The idea of freedom from the inside out is this: we are perfectly justified in viewing our own actions not as determined by the past, nor as determined by the future, but rather as simply determined (to the extent that this word sensibly applies) by ourselves, by our own wills. (...) Instead, we can view our own actions, qua physical events, as primary explainers, determining – in a very partial way – physical events outside ourselves to the past and future of our actions, in the block. (Hofer 2002, 207)

⁶ For an introduction to the debate between tense and tenseless semantics and for an overview of the issues in the philosophy of time, see Fischer (2016).

Thus, if I am an agent within the block, my actions partially determine both later time slices and earlier time slices of the universe. The reason we are reluctant to accept this kind of bidirectional determinism is because we think it implies absurd backward causation and wish to avoid it. The asymmetry of causation shows us that causes precede their effects and effects follow their causes. The direction of causation is only one way and, thus, our actions can causally influence only the future. However, this need not be so in the case of determinism. If we accept bidirectional determinism, then our actions within the block can influence both earlier and later time slices.

Hoefer argues that we need not worry about backward causation. He makes it clear that deterministic relations are logical entailments and not causal relations. Our actions constrain how the earlier (or later) states can be, but they do not have causal influence over the earlier states (Hoefer 2002, 209-210). But what do these logical constraints amount to?

My typing on my keyboard at t_2 determines the later state t_3 which contains, let's say, the finishing of this current sentence. My typing at t_2 also constrains the earlier state t_1 to be in a certain way, but these are not *macro*-level constraints (events like my previous typing of sentences in this document, objects such as the keyboard on which the typing is being done or my functional computer). Hoefer's proposal is that our actions impose logical constraints on how the past⁷ is at the *micro*-level, not at the macro-level. He writes:

(...) let's assume that a human action (including the perceived surroundings of the agent's context) is a physical event type that has innumerable instantiations at the microphysical level. We assume, in other words, that there is some ill-defined and probably infinite set of microphysical-state types that are 'good enough' to count as a supervenience base for my typing 't' in the assumed context. (...) If I freely choose to type this letter, 't', the choice in its context entails that some one of this enormous micro-state types shall be, and that is all. The constraints this places on how the past

⁷ "Past" is here used as meaning "earlier time slices than the ones which contain my current actions".

should be, even (say) the past of only one minute earlier, are probably either trivial or non-existent. (Hofer 2002, 210)

And later he writes:

At the microphysical level the constraint is just that earlier microphysical states have to be logically consistent with a microstate of the correct type (i.e., one corresponding to my typing a 't') obtaining, at the time and place that it does. (Hofer 2002, 211)

My current typing logically constrains earlier states of the universe to be in a certain way microscopically, not macroscopically. Hofer does not mean to say that if I had chosen to type a different sequence of letters now,⁸ then the *macroscopic* past would have been different in perceptible ways, but that the *microscopic* past would have been different in certain ways. He notes:

I think I have freedom of the following kind: even given that the past history of the world is, macroscopically, as I (and indeed every other agent) knows it to be, I can either type the 's' or the 'z' (depending on which I choose). (Hofer 2002, 215)

To sum up, Hofer believes that the free will problem arises because of the clash between our A-series intuitions on time with deterministic physics and that the problem can be avoided if we adopt the Inside Out Perspective which assumes B-series time and the block universe model with a bidirectional determinism. This, he maintains, allows us to conceive our actions as fundamental partial determiners of both earlier and later time slices within the block. This bidirectionality of determinism, obviously, does not privilege past to future determination over future to past determination and removes the worry that a past time slice plus the laws could determine our current actions.

Worries of backward causation are also put to rest, because deterministic relations in the Inside Out Perspective are held to be logical entailments

⁸ This is an indexical use of "now", of course.

or logical constraints on how earlier or later time slices are at the microphysical level. They are not causal relations. Hoefer explains causality's unidirectionality (and the fact that we have causal control over the future and not towards the past) by appealing to other asymmetries such as the asymmetry of entropy, as B-theorists usually do (Hoefer 2002, 212).

I believe that Hoefer's arguments can be formulated as follows:

A-series Argument:

- (i) If A-series time privileges a past→future determination, then A-series is the source of the tension between determinism and free will.
- (ii) If the A-series is the source of the tension, then the A-series must be discarded in favor of a better metaphysical theory of time that supports compatibilism.

Therefore, (iii) If A-series time privileges a past→future determination, then the A-series must be discarded in favor of a better metaphysical theory of time that supports compatibilism.

B-series Argument:

- (iv) If we adopt a static block universe perspective (with B-series time), then we can also assume bidirectional determinism.
- (v) If we assume bidirectional determinism, then there is no privileged past→future determination.
- (vi) If there is no privileged past→future determination, then the conflict between determinism and free will is avoided.

Therefore, (vii) If we adopt a static block universe perspective (with B-series time), then the conflict between determinism and free will is avoided.

In the following section I shall present Jason Brennan's criticism of Hoefer's proposal and then, in the final section of this paper, I will present my own objections to the Inside Out Perspective.

4. Two criticisms of the view

4.1 *The asymmetry of causation*

Two lines of criticism have been proposed by Jason Brennan (2007) to Carl Hoefer's Inside Out Perspective. One objection concerns the very relevance of Hoefer's proposal to the problem of free will. There is the assumption that the past to future determination is the reason why determinism seems to conflict with free will. The Inside Out perspective seems to avoid this privileged direction of determination by adopting bidirectional determinism within an eternalist static block universe. My actions in the present are determined both by earlier time slices and also by later time slices. However, nothing keeps me from conceiving my own actions as being part of a time slice that determines earlier states and later states. The time slice I inhabit is as much a determiner as any other time slice.

Brennan isn't convinced by this argument. Hoefer, he argues, may succeed in showing that determinism wasn't the threat to free will, but it seems that the asymmetry of causation could very well be one. In the block universe, our actions have logical consequences towards the past and the future, but this symmetry does not hold with respect to causation though.⁹ Causation remains asymmetrical and unidirectional. Our actions have causal effects towards later time slices and not towards earlier time slices. I can finish writing this paper at t_1 and make it the case that it will be ready for submission to a journal at t_2 and this would perhaps lead to the paper being reviewed at t_3 . No such effects can occur towards earlier states. Hoefer explains this asymmetry by appealing to asymmetries in physics such as the direction of entropy given by the second law of thermodynamics, but Brennan remarks that Hoefer has not given an argument for why unidirectional causation isn't a threat to free will (Brennan 2007, 211-212).

⁹ Carl Hoefer views determinism and causation as distinct concepts. He gives arguments for this separation in his article "*Causality and Determinism: Tension or outright conflict?*" in which he states that deterministic relations are relations of entailment and causal relations are metaphysical and non-logical relations. (Hoefer 2004, 101)

One could still argue that given the fact that the direction of causation is past to future, then all my actions are causally necessitated by antecedent events. If all my actions are necessitated by antecedent events, then, one could say, I have no free will. This past to future necessitation seems to be exactly the kind of privileged determination that Hoefer thought caused the tension between free will and determinism. In other words, Brennan's question to Hoefer would be: If a privileged past→future determination is responsible for the tension between free will and determinism, then why isn't past→future **causation** a threat to free will just as much?¹⁰

Of course, given that the Inside Out Perspective is a B-theory, Hoefer could run into another problem regarding causation: the issue of whether or not causation is actually compatible with eternalism. Causation is thought of as having a past to future direction, but in B-theoretic terms, this would be the earlier-later relation. This concept, *prima facie*, doesn't seem to be incompatible with eternalism. Later states are simply causally dependent on earlier states. Time has thus a direction on the B-theory, because of the direction of causation. There does not seem to be a problem.

However, we generally think that the effect does not exist prior to its cause. Causes bring their effects into existence. When I light a match on fire, I bring forth an event into existence. Causation seems thus to imply bringing events into existence. I strike the match at t1 and at t2 it lights on fire. Prior to t2 there could have been various events in the world or conditions unknown to me that could have interfered with the bringing about of said effect. This seems to be in tension with a basic tenet of the B-theory: the idea that it is static. If a theory of time is static rather than dynamic, then existence is not time-relative. Causation understood as the bringing of events into existence seems to be incompatible with the B-theory thus. Robin Le Poidevin writes:

¹⁰ It has been pointed out to me by a reviewer that the threat to free will by universal causation could arise only if our actions have prior sufficient causes, not simply because our actions have causes. Many compatibilists do not see the fact that our actions have causes as a threat to free will at all. Brennan does not seem to provide reasons to think that all our actions have prior sufficient causes.

Consider the various connotations that causation has: we think of a cause as bringing about its effect, as bringing that effect into being, to make real what before was unreal. And if the direction from cause to effect is from earlier to later, then that, of course, implies the unreality of later times. At the time of the cause, the effect is still unreal. And that runs entirely counter to the view of (what we call) the future advocated by the B-theory. (Le Poidevin 2013, 540)

However, this problem is not mentioned by Brennan, because it is not an issue that is specific to Hofer's Inside Out Perspective, but to any B-theory in general. Brennan suggests that Hofer, in order to escape the causal asymmetry objection, should accept the symmetry of causal efficacy. This should imply that our present actions have a causal influence over earlier time slices and towards later time slices (Brennan 2007, 214). Hofer would object here, of course, because symmetric efficacy, being a causal notion, implies that we bring about effects towards the past. This is unacceptable backward causation that needs to be avoided.

Brennan argues that Hofer is faced with a **dilemma**:

- (viii) Either he accepts that unidirectional causation is a threat to free will or he accepts that it is not.
- (ix) If unidirectional causation is a threat to free will, then the Inside Out Perspective is irrelevant to the free will problem.
- (x) If unidirectional causation is not a threat to free will, then Hofer needs to argue why it is not.

Therefore, (xi) Either the Inside Out Perspective is irrelevant to the free will problem or Hofer needs to argue why unidirectional causation isn't a threat to free will (cf. Brennan 2007, 213-214).

This dilemma is perhaps a false dichotomy. Hofer may simply revise his theory and be an eliminativist with respect to causation. This position was also endorsed by Bertrand Russell, who argued that causation is a "*relic of a bygone age*", a concept that physics does not use or need (Russell 1912, 1). Since Hofer argued that A-series time concepts such as past, present or future have no place in contemporary physics (from

Einstein's theory of relativity onwards) and are unnecessary, then he could argue the same about causation, much like Russell did (Hofer 2002, 203). However, of course, the price of eliminating causation from a theory of time may be too high.

4.2 *An ontology of free actions*

The second line of criticism that Jason Brennan brings concerns the ontology of our free actions. What kind of things are free actions in the block universe? Of course, they are events, but what explains their occurrence? They may be fully explainable by later states or earlier states, but we must remember that Hofer proposes something different:

Instead, we can view our own actions, *qua* physical events, as primary explainers, determining – in a very partial way – physical events outside ourselves to the past and future of our actions, in the block. (Hofer 2002, 207)

Our actions are best explained by our beliefs and intentions and not by physical events outside our time slice, he argues. This seems like a very common compatibilist view: the idea that a necessary condition of a free action is being caused by its agent. This is very much like agent causation, the view that free actions must be caused by the agent's will and not be necessitated by antecedent events. However, Brennan sees a problem with this approach.

He argued that if our choices in the block universe are to be viewed as basic, fundamental determiners, then they are either brute facts or random occurrences. If they are brute facts, then they lack any explanation for their occurrence. If they are random, then, of course, our actions are not within our control. We would have as much control over our actions as we have over the outcome of a coin toss. This is particularly devastating for the Inside Out Perspective, because it leaves it open to the problems of indeterminism (Brennan 2007, 215).

Furthermore, if Hofer wishes to adopt agent causation into the Inside Out Perspective, then, Brennan argues, agent causation seems to

be sufficient to solve the free will problem and it would then be unclear what role the Inside Out Perspective is supposed to play (Brennan 2007, 215). Adopting agent causation seems to make Hofer's B-theory irrelevant again. However, one could argue that even if agent causation could be successfully integrated in Hofer's static block without making the Inside Out Perspective useless, then one could still not get rid of the threats of indeterminism.¹¹

This concludes the presentation of Jason Brennan's objections to Carl Hofer's Inside Out Perspective. If one were to sum up the criticisms brought forth, it would be through the following question: How exactly is the Inside Out Perspective relevant to the problem of free will? In the following and final section of this paper, I will present my own objections to this compatibilist proposal and argue for the changes that could be made in order to save some of it.

5. Further objections to the view

5.1 *The problem with the A-series argument*

In the article "Freedom from the Inside Out", we are presented with a characterization of the A-series that serves to show how our common sense view of time is responsible for the conflict between free will and determinism. Hofer writes:

First, we unconsciously assume a metaphysical picture that is A-series based and incompatible with the block universe: we think of the past as 'real', fixed or determinate, the present as 'real' (or becoming so), but the future as indeterminate or 'open'. (Hofer 2002, 206)

This characterization of the A-series, I argue, is problematic. McTaggart referred to the A-series and the B-series as possible orderings of events or positions in time, not as fully fledged metaphysical theories. The traits

¹¹ For an argument against agent causation as a viable solution to the free will problem, one could see van Inwagen (2000, 15-16).

that Hoefer enumerates are not present in all A-theories. The reality of the past and the unreality of the future, for example, are not necessary assumptions. In fact, presentism views the past as unreal and the moving spotlight theory views the future as real. Then what A-theory fits Hoefer's description best? One possible candidate would be the growing block theory.¹²

I have described the growing block theory as a metaphysical theory of time that assumes a real past, a moving present and an unreal future. The movement of the present is simply the adding of time slices to the block. C.D Broad, a proponent of the theory, writes:

It will be observed that such a theory as this accepts the reality of the present and the past, but holds that the future is simply nothing at all. Nothing has happened to the present by becoming past except that fresh slices of existence have been added to the total history of the world. The past is thus as real as the present. (Broad 1923, 66)

On this theory of time, the past→future determination is clearly favored. The trunk of the past together with the laws of nature could imply a closed fixed future. As Kristie Miller argued, the growing block is compatible with an open future, but it does not entail it (Miller 2005, 198). Thus, the growing block theory is the best candidate for Hoefer's A-series characterization for two reasons:

1. One could think of it as having a closed and fixed past, a moving present and an open future.
2. One could equally worry that, because the past→future determination is the direction of determination, the real past in conjunction with the laws of nature entails a closed and fixed future, making our free will seem illusory.

And from here on, one could argue like Hoefer, that our freedom is not the thing that is illusory, but our common sense A-series conception of time.

The problem here is that Hoefer's characterization of the A-series is too specific. It appears to only adequately apply to the growing block

¹² One could say that the branching theory fits Hoefer's description better, because it entails an open future. However, the branching theory is an indeterminist theory of time and would not help Hoefer in proving that the A-series favors past to future determination.

theory. The branching theory, on the other hand, necessarily entails an open future and is an indeterminist theory and thus cannot lead to Hofer's A-series conclusion. Presentism seems to be compatible both with an open past and with a closed future and thus does not predispose us to privilege past to future determination.¹³ The moving spotlight theory rejects a nonexistent future by default, because it assumes the thesis of eternalism as true and simply adds a moving objective present. Therefore, Hofer's description of the A-series seems to actually be the description of the growing block theory.

This makes his case (that A-series time is responsible for the free will problem) a bit weak. He did not manage to show that A-series is the source of the free will problem, but that a very specific theory of time is: the growing block. One natural response available to Hofer would be to claim that the growing block is actually our common sense view of time and that is why the threat of free will from determinism is such a powerful intuition.¹⁴ However, this doesn't establish the conclusion that A-series time conflicts with free will. The branching theory with its indeterminate future clearly seems to not support it.

Hofer could make a slightly different claim: He could say that free will is actually made more plausible within a B-theory of time than within any A-theory of time. This proposal is, obviously, not without its problems.

5.2 *The threat of ontological fatalism*

While in the previous section I raise an objection to Hofer's perspective regarding his characterization of the A-theory, in this section I point out

¹³ Also, presentism seems to have a problem of its own regarding causality. The presentist needs to explain how causality is possible given the fact that causation is generally a relation between two non-contemporaneous events. The presentist seems to allow only for the possibility of simultaneous causation. Thus, if I talk of the past determining the future, under presentism, I would seem to be saying that a nonexistent determines another nonexistent. See Bigelow (1996) and Markosian (2004).

¹⁴ Hofer's characterization is very similar to what Miller calls "the intuitive view of time". According to Miller, presentism, the growing block and the branching theory fit our intuitive view of time. (Miller 2008, 173) As I argued, only the growing block helps establish Hofer's conclusion about the A-series though.

a threat to free will made possible by the adoption of the B-theory of time. In order to comment further on the Inside Out Perspective, I must introduce the distinction between **logical** fatalism and **ontological** fatalism. Fatalism is a thesis concerning human actions. It is the idea that our actions are causally inefficacious towards the future much like they are causally inefficacious towards the past. The fatalist, thus, believes that our actions are ineffective towards the future. No matter what we do in the present, we will not change what will become future.

Using Joseph Diekemper's taxonomy, **logical** fatalism is the kind of fatalism that has its source in the unrestricted application of the principle of bivalence to all declarative statements. If all statements are true or false, then future contingent statements like "Tomorrow there will be a sea-battle" (Aristotle's famous example used in *De Interpretatione*) are either true or false too. If they are already true or false at the moment of their utterance, then it's doubtful whether we could affect the future in a way in which we would change their truth values.

Eternalism seems to go hand in hand with fatalism. If eternalism is true, then for every statement about future contingent events there seems to be a fact in a later state of the world which acts as a truthmaker for that statement. If "Tomorrow there will be a sea-battle" is true, then the time slice of tomorrow must contain the event of the sea-battle already and would thus make my statement already true at the moment of utterance.

However, logical fatalism is not the type of fatalism I wish to address here. I wish to address **ontological** fatalism, the kind that follows directly from eternalism.¹⁵ Diekemper states that:

The thought here is that ontological fatalism is meant to follow directly from the nature of future events, and that this implication is independent of any implications arising from the status of propositions about those events. (Diekemper 2007, 434)

¹⁵ It could, perhaps, be argued that logical fatalism follows directly from eternalism too, but that would mean that bivalence would also follow directly from eternalism and that thesis would need a separate defense. The crucial point of distinction between logical and ontological fatalism (on my understanding of Diekemper's work) is that logical fatalism has as its source the application of logical bivalence to all declarative statements and ontological fatalism has as its source the eternal existence of future events.

If eternalism is the thesis that all events exist eternally; that there is no ontological distinction between events in terms of reality, then it seems that all events are fixed. If all events are fixed, then ontological fatalism seems to follow. Diekemper states:

If, however, we are considering the variety of ontological fatalism that is meant to follow from a temporal eternalism (whereby all events exist eternally), *and* fixity is grounded in ontology, then it is plausible that the fixity of the future both implies, *and* is a consequence of, (this variety of) fatalism. (Diekemper 2007, 436)

Thus, the Inside Out Perspective (being an eternalist theory) needs to address the issue of ontological fatalism. Put simply, the Perspective does not seem to make eternalism and free will compatible if ontological fatalism is not avoided somehow. Hofer mentioned in a footnote that Paul Horwich in his book *The Asymmetries of Time* has argued for the “correct refutation of the argument for fatalism (‘logical’ fatalism) based on the block universe” (Hofer 2002, 205). However, as noted, Horwich’s argument applies to logical fatalism and not to the fixity of eternally existing events that gives rise to ontological fatalism.

What I must add is that this objection from ontological fatalism is not an objection specific to Hofer’s proposal, but to compatibilists that hold eternalist views in general. A handful of other authors have also held similar eternalist compatibilist views regarding free will, but none seem to emphasize free will’s relationship with time more than Hofer. I will return to this issue at the end of the section.

Because of ontological fatalism, eternalism may be incompatible with a certain understanding of free will, that of freedom to do otherwise. How might this be so? This is the point at which the Forking Road Argument creeps in uninvited. Under the assumption of eternalism, there seems to be only one road in front of an agent when acting. Freedom to do otherwise seems to entail that there must be at least one other road I could take.

Libertarians often tie the concept of freedom to that of the existence of open alternatives. The existence of alternatives might be taken to imply an open future. Robert Kane, the famous libertarian, considered that “Such

a picture of an open future with forking paths – a garden of forking paths, it has been called – is essential to our understanding of free will.” (Kane 2007, 6)

More recently, Marius Backmann has also tied freedom to do otherwise with the concept of an open future. He stated:

In libertarianism, one standard criterion for freedom is the power to do otherwise: in order for a decision to be free, it must be possible to decide between at least two actually open alternatives: If I want to freely choose whether to drink red or white wine, it must be possible that the decision goes either way. In the standard reading, this implies that there are, at the instant of a decision, at least two real alternative future courses of events available and the agent can bring one of them about by his decision. (Backmann 2016, 259)

Assuming this understanding of libertarian freedom, a genuinely open future seems to be a necessary condition for freedom to do otherwise. Since an open future is incompatible with eternalist ontology, it would seem that, as a consequence, freedom to do otherwise is incompatible with eternalism. If one would accept that (i) libertarian free will implies an open future; and (ii) eternalism implies a non-open future, then one can have a strong argument for the incompatibility between eternalism and freedom to do otherwise.

This might not seem convincing at first, but I believe that upon closer inspection, this argument does carry some weight. The argument is not so different from the Forking Road Analogy that I mentioned earlier. Let’s assume eternalism, and let’s say I wish to bake a cake today. The decision to bake it occurs at 14:00 PM. At 15:00, after shopping for ingredients, I start the process of baking the cake. Then at 16:00 the cake is ready. Now, from a God’s-eye view (the view which the block theorist invites us to take), there is this causal sequence of events that is extended in spacetime. However, all these events exist *simpliciter*. They do not exist simultaneously, of course, but all of them equally exist at different locations in spacetime.

We must remember that we have assumed eternalism, which means that the forking road analogy cannot apply. The only road I have in front of me at 14:00 is that which leads to the cake at 16:00. I seem to

be perfectly able at 14:00 to refrain from baking the cake and thus preventing it from bringing it about at 16:00. However, if I could choose not to bake it, then, assuming the forking road, I should have a route before the moment of my decision that sprouts from 14:00 to 15:00 where I begin doing something else instead of baking the cake (writing this paper, for example) and to 16:00 where no cake baked by me exists. In other words, I would need to have another branch, another alternate route that is open to me before I decide at 14:00 to bake the cake or not.

But this does not seem to be the case under eternalism. We do not have the advantage of the growing block theory of time or of the branching theory here. Both these theories are compatible with an open future that contains genuine alternatives, but eternalism cannot admit of the openness of the future since there is only one actually¹⁶ existing future¹⁷ in the static block.

Another point that the eternalist compatibilist needs to address, that is closely tied to the issue of causation in a B-theory, is the fact that bringing something into existence does not seem to make sense in eternalist ontology. Because on an eternalist B-theory we have an ontological symmetry regarding events (no difference in “realness” between earlier, simultaneous or later times), nothing can be said to be brought into existence (Le Poidevin 2013, 540-541). I cannot claim that at 16:00 the cake is brought into existence unless I take objective temporal becoming seriously (or an A-series account of change).

This point was also made by Niall Shanks. If the B-theory of time is true, then I lack any existential control over the cake. The cake does not get brought into existence if it exists eternally located at a later time slice relative to me (Shanks 1994, 57). Under the assumption of eternalism, we already assume that for every X, if X is an event, then X exists eternally. This is not to say that the cake will necessarily sprout into existence by some other causal chain, if I choose not to bake it, but that my baking it is already entailed by earlier and later events.

¹⁶ I take it as a given that all events in an eternalist ontology are actual since if there is no distinction between events in terms of “realness” (the event of me typing “now” is just as real as the start of the Romanian Revolution), then all existing events must be actual.

¹⁷ Here I, of course, use a perspectival meaning of “future” which is “the sequence of events that exist later relative to me”.

The following reasoning is valid: "If I had chosen at 14:00 to not bake the cake, then no cake would exist at 16:00. But a cake at 16:00 does exist! Therefore, I did decide to bake the cake at 14:00." However, the compatibilist could rightly add that this does not show that the existence of the cake at 16:00 determines or forces me to choose to bake it at 14:00. The existence of the cake at 16:00 merely implies that I in fact chose to bake it.

The compatibilist is, of course, correct here. This does not change the issue of the compatibility between eternalism and freedom to do otherwise though. Even if ontological fatalism does not actually follow from eternalism or doesn't actually pose a threat to free will, then there would still remain this tension between the concept of freedom to do otherwise (which may require an open future) and the ontology of eternalism (which does not admit of an open future).

One could argue that I have merely shown that there may be an incompatibility between eternalism and libertarian free will and that I have not shown that ontological fatalism is a threat to free will at all. But one would need to be a bit more careful here. Eternalism is not necessarily in conflict with freedom to do otherwise just because it presupposes that all events exist, but because it necessarily presupposes that future events exist. Then ontological fatalism can follow not just from eternalist theories of time, but from any theory of time that supposes that the future is ontologically real. For example, the very unpopular (but logically possible) shrinking block theory of time (in which the present and the future are real, but *not* the past) also entails ontological fatalism in virtue of the fact that the future is real and thus fixed.

Thus, it would seem that eternalism is incompatible with freedom to do otherwise, because it entails ontological fatalism. One could still remain unconvinced of the idea that ontological fatalism is a threat at all, of course. This point may perhaps be made stronger if one considers Joseph Diekemper's (2007) usage of the distinction between logical and ontological fatalism when considering time travel scenarios. Suppose that at 13:00 PM today I am visited by my future self who is a time traveler. My future self tells me that I will decide to bake the cake at 14:00, bake it at 15:00 and have it ready at 16:00. He even gives me a detailed description of how I will do so. Now, of course, my actions will

make the proposition "I will bake the cake today" true and the backward counterfactual "Had I not decided to bake a cake, the cake would not exist at 16:00 PM today" would also be true. It is true that I will bake it *not* because I am constrained by the truth of the future propositions told by the time traveler, but because I will do so by my own will.

However, this sort of anti-fatalistic response is effective against logical fatalism, not ontological fatalism. The truth of future propositions depends on the occurrence of those future events in question; the occurrence of those future events depends on my current actions. But in ontological fatalism we are dealing with events that already occur (tenselessly) and thus seem fixed as a matter of what I will do. As Diekemper states: "we have not only abstract future truth, but concrete future existence" (Diekemper 2007, 448). We must remember that the time traveler has already experienced and done the deed of baking the cake and had it ready at 16:00. Thus, he continues:

So, the response to the ontological fatalist cannot rely upon counterfactual claims, but must rely upon counter-existence claims: something along the lines of, 'If I don't pass through Village C, then it doesn't lie along my route.' (Diekemper 2007, 448)

Maybe not even this will be convincing for the eternalist compatibilist, but consider what has to be the case if I had freedom to do otherwise assuming the road analogy and eternalism. If I would be able to choose not to bake the cake, thus diverting from the road in front of me which contains the cake at 16:00 PM, then I would have to have an alternate route to go through. This kind of branching world metaphysics that makes an open future is at odds with the ontology of eternalism, but it would seem that this is the kind of ontology that freedom to do otherwise requires.

It would thus seem that any eternalist compatibilist that claims that libertarian free will is compatible with eternalism must first show how there is no tension between the two. One obvious route would be to show somehow that freedom to do otherwise does not entail an open future. Nonetheless, I believe that the tension is real and that it must be addressed by eternalist compatibilists.

Perhaps Hoefler could think of free will not in libertarian terms, but in traditional compatibilist terms. If the freedom to do otherwise is incompatible with eternalism, then perhaps a weaker sense of freedom could suffice. One could think of freedom as the absence of constraints or coercion. This negative sense of freedom has been advocated by many compatibilists in the past and could indeed be used by Hoefler or any eternalist that assumes the block universe perspective. However, Jason Brennan could of course reply that the shift towards compatibilism or to agent causation theory would make the block universe perspective useless to the debate on free will. Further modifications would then be needed to Hoefler's theory in order to make it relevant again to the free will problem.

At the beginning of the section, I noted that the objection presented is not specific to Hoefler's theory, but that it is quite general and may apply to any eternalist that defends freedom to do otherwise within an eternalist ontology. In the last decade, a number of philosophers including Michael Esfeld (2021), Barry Loewer (forthcoming) and Jenann Ismael (2016) have offered similar defenses of free will within eternalistic frameworks. The similarity that these proposals share with Hoefler's is that all seem to reject the PAST premise of the Consequence Argument by defending the idea that our actions also influence the past states of the world.

It is worth noting that Esfeld has explicitly stated in his "Super-Humeanism and free will" article that his own proposal does not appeal to a block universe perspective and his rejection of the PAST premise of the Consequence Argument is distinct from the way in which block theorists like Hoefler reject it (Esfeld 2021, 10-11). His argument does not rely on assumptions about the nature of time, but on a slightly different conception of Humeanism about laws – Super-Humeanism – which he uses to reject both PAST and LAWS premises from van Inwagen's Argument.

The reason why I have chosen Carl Hoefler's Inside Out Perspective as the target of the ontological fatalism objection of this section is because his proposal seems to be the first robust defense of free will within a block universe eternalist perspective.¹⁸

¹⁸ Hoefler acknowledges that there is a similarity between his proposal and Peter Forrest's (1985) backward causation defense of free will, but Forrest's account does not make any particular assumptions on the metaphysics of time.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I aimed to show old and new possible objections towards Carl Hoefer's Inside Out Perspective. Two of them belong to Jason Brennan (2007) and the other two belong to me.

After introducing the problem, I showed in the second section how the free will problem can be linked to the metaphysics of time by stating the temporal assumptions of two well-known incompatibilist arguments: the Forking Road Argument and the Consequence Argument.

In the third section, I presented the Inside Out Perspective that was proposed by Carl Hoefer in his 2002 article "Freedom from the Inside Out." The main idea there is that free will's conflict with determinism is not because of determinism itself, but because of our common sense view of time, the A-series, which privileges past→future determination. Hoefer also argues that if we adopt a B-theory of time, the block universe, then we can make freedom compatible with determinism.

In the fourth section I presented Jason Brennan's two criticisms against Hoefer's proposal: one involving the threat to free will from the asymmetry of causation that is left unaddressed by the block universe perspective and the other involving the unexplained ontological status of our actions within the block.

In the fifth and final section I presented my own objections to the view. I argued, firstly, that Hoefer's characterization of the A-series is too specific to sustain his general conclusion about the A-series. The conclusion that A-series privileges past→future determinism can perhaps be true only of the growing block theory of time and not necessarily true of the other A-theories. Secondly, I argued that if his proposal is successful in making determinism compatible with free will, then it must also address the threat of ontological fatalism. Ontological fatalism has been framed as the idea that the nature of eternally existing future events threatens freedom. I have suggested that the freedom under threat is the ability to do otherwise and that because such an ability, according to prominent libertarians, implies an open future with genuine alternatives, then this kind of freedom is in direct conflict with eternalism, which is incompatible with an open future. Thus, if Hoefer's perspective does not avoid ontological fatalism or explain how

eternalism can be reconciled with an open future, then his theory fails to secure freedom to do otherwise within the block universe.

The threat of fatalism was the objection that led people to believe that the block universe is incompatible with free will in the first place. And it is this initial objection that I believe Hoefer's account (and any other eternalist compatibilist account) does not avoid. One could still say: If there is no ontological distinction between past, present and future events, then the future is just as real as the past. If so, can I make those future events *not* occur? If I cannot, does this not threaten my ability to do otherwise?

The defender of the Inside Out Perspective might be able to respond to many or most of the objections presented in this paper. In order to avoid Brennan's first criticism, one might be an eliminativist towards causation in the spirit of Bertrand Russell, and claim that causation is a concept much like the A-series: they both have no place in contemporary physics. Although, of course, the price of renouncing causation might be too high even for the eternalist.

The brute fact/random occurrence problem raised by Brennan is a bit trickier. If one would bring in agent causation into the block, then one must then show how the block universe isn't beside the point and how agent causation isn't sufficient by itself to defend free will. One might try to counter this objection by arguing that it was never assumed that our actions are not entailed also by earlier and later time slices and argue that agents partially determine other time slices only from the inside-out perspective and not from the outside-in perspective. Our actions are indeed fully explainable at a certain level of analysis (the microphysical, for example) by earlier or later states of the world, but only if we view determination in the block from the outside-in and not if we view it from the inside-out, as Hoefer suggests.

As for my personal objections, the defender of the Inside Out Perspective can guard against the first one by shifting gears. One can claim that while there certainly are A-theories in which free will is possible, freedom is more compatible with determinism in a B-theory of time. As for my main objection towards the perspective (the threat of ontological fatalism), the defender could probably escape fatalism if the freedom under discussion would not be defined in terms of the ability to

do otherwise, but in terms of the absence of coercion and other influences (substances that alter brain states, hypnosis and so on). This “traditional compatibilist freedom” would probably raise the question of the Inside Out Perspective’s relevance to free will and this is perhaps the main point on which the defender of the static block must insist on. Nonetheless, it must be specified what kind of freedom we can have within the block.

As a final remark, I believe Hofer’s article is a very interesting contribution to the free will debate and pushes us to think about topics less discussed, such as the relation between free will and the various metaphysical theories of time. The compatibilist account of freedom within the block universe may have its issues, but the conversation started is one that warrants more pages to be written.

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