

The Trouble with Einstein's Time

Jimena Canales

MIT and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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Einstein's famous claim that "the distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion" underpins most physicists' current understanding of time. Yet in recent years, a growing number of contemporary physicists have opposed the need to write off our experience of emergent temporality from our understanding of the universe. The "hole at the heart of physics" (Scientific American, 2002) is usually traced back to how time is defined by the theory of relativity and the "block universe." Can these debates be solved by science alone or are they inescapably philosophical, historical and cultural? My talk will explore the origins of this persistent quandary by focusing on the relation of physics to philosophy, and history and the humanities