

Preface

Three considerations motivated the choice of topic for the 2006 Royal Institute of Philosophy Conference at Leeds. The first was the, by now rather commonplace, observation that analytic metaphysics has enjoyed a huge resurgence in the last thirty or so years, as a result of a growing confidence in our ability to describe the world in terms of its genuinely mind-independent features, as opposed to our being restricted to the articulation merely of the structure of our ordinary conceptual schemes. More recently, there has been an intense focus on a group of related ontological questions: What is the nature of persistence over time? Does only the present exist, or should we regard the past and future as real too? What constitutes a particular object? Do objects have essences? How is a material object related to its parts? Do truths need truth-makers? All of these questions were key issues at the conference.

The second consideration was that metaphysics had so far featured relatively little in the topics for RIP conferences. The most metaphysical of those topics, namely those of the *Space, Time & Causality* conference at Keele (1981), and the *Time, Reality and Experience* conference at the LSE (2000), included a significant proportion of philosophy of physics. It was thought by the organising committee that the addition of a purely metaphysical topic would enhance the comprehensiveness of the list, as well as being extremely attractive to potential participants, and happily the RIP executive agreed.

The third consideration was that a Leeds-hosted event should reflect Leeds strengths, and the growing strength and interest in metaphysics within the Department of Philosophy here, culminating in the establishment of the Centre for Metaphysics and Mind, suggested that a metaphysical theme for the conference would be entirely appropriate. And so, across three days of a not-quite Indian summer in September, 2006, and in the elegant surroundings of Devonshire Hall, more than sixty delegates took part in *Being: Developments in Contemporary Metaphysics*.

The present volume reflects, rather than precisely reproduces, the structure and content of the conference. There are both similarities and differences. The theme of the volume, like that of the conference, is an ontological one. Of the papers published here, the first seven were presented, in one form or other, at the conference. Ted Sider also presented a paper, but not the one published here. The other contributors were all delegates, and indeed chaired some of the sessions. Conference talks were also given by Helen Beebe, Andrew

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McGonigal, John Hawthorne and Dean Zimmerman, but unfortunately they were not able to offer their papers for the volume. Most of the conference was based on a symposium format, where a paper would be followed by a reply, and that structure is reflected in the first six papers published here.

All but one of the papers in this volume are published here for the first time. The exception is the inaugural address, by Kit Fine, which was published under the title 'In Defense of Three-Dimensionalism' in the *Journal of Philosophy* Vol CIII, No 12, December 2006, pp. 699–714. Copyright for this article belongs to the journal. I am very grateful to Kit Fine and the Journal's editor for permission to reprint the article.

I would like to thank my colleagues in the Centre for Metaphysics and Mind, which hosted the conference, and in particular Andrew McGonigal, who helped me organise it; Susan Lacey, in the Conference Office, who took charge of the administration and finances; the staff of Devonshire Hall, for their hospitality; and finally the Royal Institute of Philosophy, and its Director Anthony O'Hear, for their support and generous sponsorship of the Conference, which made it all possible.

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