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Edited By

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Editor's Introduction

This is the sixth volume of the *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion* series. As with earlier volumes, these essays follow the tradition of providing a non-sectarian and non-partisan snapshot of the subdiscipline of philosophy of religion. This subdiscipline has become an increasingly important one within philosophy over the last century, and especially over the past half century, having emerged as an identifiable subfield within this time frame along with other emerging subfields such as the philosophy of science and the philosophy of language. This volume continues the initial intention behind the series of attracting the best work from the premier philosophers of religion, as well as including top philosophers outside this area when their work and interests intersect with issues in the philosophy of religion. This inclusive approach to the series provides an opportunity to mitigate some of the costs of greater specialization in our disciplines, while at the same time inviting greater interest in the work being done in the philosophy of religion.

Included in this volume is the winning essay in the Sanders Prize in the Philosophy of Religion competition, awarded annually by generous support from the Marc Sanders Foundation. The winning essay is Jonathan Jacobs's "The Ineffable, Inconceivable, and Incomprehensible God: Fundamentality and Apophatic Theology." Professor Jacobs is Associate Professor of Philosophy at St Louis University. Congratulations are extended to Professor Jacobs and thanks to the Marc Sanders Foundation for making the prize possible.

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1

Knowledge First and Ockhamism

Alexander Arnold

Philosophers sometimes make progress by learning that a new approach to an issue in one area of philosophy has surprising, interesting, and hitherto unnoticed lessons for an issue in a relatively distant area of philosophy. In this chapter I argue that the *knowledge first approach in epistemology* (hereafter KFAE)—in particular Timothy Williamson’s development of the approach (1995; 2000)¹—provides strong support for *Ockhamism*, which is a reply to Nelson Pike’s (1965) argument that divine foreknowledge is incompatible with free creaturely action, the *locus classicus* for modern discussions of questions concerning divine foreknowledge and human freedom.² A central claim of Ockhamists is that some past facts about God’s beliefs concerning future creaturely actions are “temporally relational” or so-called *soft facts* about the past, and thus dependent (in a particular way) on the future.³ Many have judged Ockhamism to be unsatisfying for two reasons: (a) there is little

¹ For other developments and applications of KFAE, see Sutton (2005, 2007); Bird (2007). Most other applications of KFAE are restricted to issues in epistemology, usually issues surrounding the nature of epistemic justification or rationality. This chapter represents an application of KFAE to an issue outside of epistemology.

² An older, but essential, collection of readings on this argument is Fischer (1989). See also Zagzebski (1991), Fischer (1992), Zagzebski (2008), Fischer et al. (2009), Merricks (2009, 46–55), and Fischer and Todd (2011). Pike’s argument is prefigured, of course, by Boethius in book 5 of *Consolatio Philosophiae*.

³ Classic articulations of Ockhamism include Adams (1967) and Plantinga (1986). See also Fischer (1985). More about Ockhamism and the associated distinction between hard and soft facts appears in this chapter.

motivation to think that facts about God's beliefs are soft, and moreover, (b) there are good reasons to think that Ockhamism is false.⁴

In this chapter, I develop a potential rebuttal to (a) by showing how KFAE provides material for a novel argument for Ockhamism, thereby improving the prospects of a successful defense thereof. The basic idea is that KFAE supports the claim that facts about God's beliefs depend in a particular way on facts about God's knowledge, which opens up new space for Ockhamists to advance their position. As an added bonus, I explain how this new argument for Ockhamism might help its defenders rebut two objections that John Martin Fischer has leveled against it, thereby partially rebutting (b).

In §I I discuss Pike's argument and the associated distinction between hard and soft facts about a time, and I explain what the basic Ockhamist maneuver is. In §II I argue that KFAE's core theses together provide strong support for a thesis—the *Knowledge Priority View*—that the Ockhamist might use to argue that some facts about God's past beliefs are soft facts. I then show in §III how this thesis combined with the account of soft facts articulated earlier generates a novel argument for Ockhamism; I also consider some potential weak points of that argument. Finally, in §IV I explain how KFAE provides responses to two of John Martin Fischer's criticism of Ockhamism.

I

Nelson Pike argued for the thesis that creaturely free action is incompatible with the existence of an essentially omniscient being—call this thesis “incompatibilism” for short. A terse statement of the argument: suppose that Park eats kimchi today. Given the existence of an essentially omniscient being⁵—let us call this being “God”—it follows that God knew eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi today.⁶ Since

⁴ See e.g. Fischer (1983, 76–9) and Fischer (1986).

⁵ For the following inference to go through, we must assume that every proposition about the future is either true or false, and that if a being is essentially omniscient, it knows all truths. Some have rebutted Pike's argument by rejecting one of these assumptions, but I will not discuss them, since they fall beyond the scope of this chapter's objectives.

⁶ A further assumption of Pike's argument is that God's existence is of limitless duration—in short, that God is *sempiternal*. This assumption is usually not questioned in discussions of Pike's argument. For discussion of a different way to interpret the doctrine of God's eternity, see Pike (1970) and Stump and Kretzmann (1981).

knowledge requires belief, it follows that God believed eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi today. Park is free with respect to eating kimchi today only if she is able to refrain from eating kimchi today. Park is able to refrain from eating kimchi today only if she is able to bring it about that God didn't believe eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi today.⁷ But that is absurd: Park is not now able to bring it about that a particular *past* fact—<God believed eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi today>⁸—failed to obtain. The past is *fixed*, in the sense that it is now beyond anyone's (even God's) control. Generalizing, if there is an essentially omniscient being, then no one is free to do otherwise than she actually does.

The notion of the past's fixity is important for discussions of incompatibilism, and the issues surrounding it are quite complicated. One central complication is this: a proponent of the past's fixity need not be committed to the claim that *all* facts about the past are now beyond anyone's control. To see why, consider the fact about 2008 that Obama was elected president five years prior to my writing this chapter. This is a fact about the past. But presumably it is not *now* fixed in the sense of being now beyond my control—if it were, logical fatalism would follow, and the defender of Pike's argument is not committed to that conclusion (Fischer and Todd, 2011, 102–3). Strictly speaking, then, it is not true that every fact about the past is now beyond anyone's control, for plausibly, *some* facts like the fact about 2008 that Obama was elected president five years prior to my writing this chapter are now within the control of someone—namely, me. Facts like this are *soft facts*.⁹ Consider,

⁷ Here I am simplifying the presentation of Pike's argument. Strictly speaking, Park is able to refrain from eating kimchi today only if either (a) she is able to bring it about that God had a false belief eighty years ago, or (b) she is able to bring it about that the person who was God eighty years ago wasn't God eighty years ago or (c) she is able to bring it about that eighty years ago God didn't believe that Park would eat kimchi today. Options (a) and (b) are not options for most, so I omit further discussion of them in the main text.

⁸ A declarative sentence enclosed within angled brackets refers to a fact.

⁹ From "*f* is a soft fact about the past" it does not follow that "*f* is now within anyone's control," as many have pointed out (e.g. Hoffman and Rosencrantz, 1984, 432–3; Fischer, 1986, 595). For example, the fact about 2008 that Obama was elected president four years prior to the solar eclipse in 2012 is soft, but it is not within anyone's control whether or not a solar eclipse occurs in 2012. To succeed in rebutting Pike's argument, the Ockhamist must show that facts about God's past beliefs are soft, and that they are the sort of soft facts that aren't fixed by something else. In this context, however, if the Ockhamist can show that some facts about God's past beliefs are soft, she is halfway to her desired goal, which is good enough for this chapter's purposes.

in contrast, the fact about 2008 that Obama was elected president. That fact is fixed, in the sense of now being beyond my control—it is a *hard fact* relative to now. Many philosophers believe (though there is some dissent on the issue—see n. 10) that hard facts are governed by the following principle:

Hard Fact Powerlessness: For all facts f , and for all times t , if f is a hard fact about the past relative to t , there is no agent S who can bring it about at t that f fails to obtain.¹⁰

The distinction between hard and soft facts is crucial to the debate over Pike's argument, for recast with this distinction in mind, the reconstruction requires the claim that <eighty years prior to today, God believed today that Park would eat kimchi today> is a hard fact about the past relative to today. Stated more generally, the premise is this:

Hard Beliefs: For all times t , all facts f , and all propositions p such that p is about a creature's future (relative to t) action, if f 's form is <God believes at t that p >, then at all times after t , f is a hard fact.

In conjunction with Hard Fact Powerlessness, Hard Beliefs entails that no one is now able to bring it about that in the past, God believed differently than he did. And the rest of Pike's argument falls into place.

The Ockhamist response to Pike's argument denies Hard Beliefs, instead claiming that facts about God's past beliefs are soft facts relative to now. But this response seems rather strange to some philosophers, for Hard Beliefs seems unassailable. It strains credibility to think that <eighty years prior to today, God believed that Park would eat kimchi today> is a soft fact. On analogy, consider <yesterday, I believed that I would eat lunch today>. That fact does not seem to now be within my control: I am not able to do anything such that, were I to do it, <yesterday, I believed that I would eat lunch today> would fail to obtain. Whether or not I eat lunch today, nothing I, or anyone else (even God), could do would make that fact fail to obtain.

¹⁰ This principle is not proposed as stating some trivial consequence of the concept of a hard fact. It is a substantive, and thereby controversial, principle about what sorts of facts are now within someone's control. Nonetheless, both Ockhamists and proponents of Pike's argument accept Hard Fact Powerlessness, and so there is no need to motivate it here.

So the Ockhamist is in a difficult spot. Granted, the position is *in principle* available, but it seems to suffer from a lack of sufficient motivation—it might even strike the neutral observer as *ad hoc*—not to mention *prima facie* implausibility. To fix these defects, it would be nice to have some *argument* for the claim that past facts about God's beliefs are soft facts. A first step of such an argument would invoke an account of the distinction between hard and soft facts. But in what does the hardness or softness of a fact consist?¹¹ Suppose we have some fact *f* which obtains at *t*, and suppose that *t* is some time in the past. What is it that makes *f* hard or soft relative to the present time? According to Pike, a hard fact about the past is one which is “over and done with” or “fully accomplished” in the past (Pike, 1966, 370), while a soft fact about the past (presumably) isn't “over and done with,” or “fully accomplished” in the past. According to Fischer and Todd a hard fact is “temporally nonrelational as regards the future (relative to the time they are about)” while a soft fact is “temporally relational as regards the future (relative to the time they are about)” (2011, 102). As stated, these glosses are probably true, but they are not particularly informative. The Ockhamist needs a more informative account of the distinction between hard and soft facts about the past, one that can serve as a premise in an argument for her position. Here is, for Ockhamist purposes, a workable account of soft facthood:

Soft Facthood: A fact *f* about a time *t* is soft if and only if what it is for *f* to obtain—its essence—depends on some fact *g* about a future (relative to *t*) time *u*.¹²

We may then say that a hard fact is any fact that does not satisfy Soft Facthood. Here it is necessary to clarify the idea of a fact's *essence* depending on another fact. Let me discuss some examples. First, consider <the

¹¹ The discussion of this issue occupies a vast quantity of philosophical literature that I cannot adequately discuss within the scope of this chapter. See Fischer (1989) for a representative sample of that literature. For a recent and novel treatment of this issue, see Todd (2013).

¹² This account of soft facthood bears many similarities to Patrick Todd's (2013) account of soft facthood (this is not surprising, since it is inspired by Todd's discussion). The main difference between his account and the one offered here is that his adverts to a structural conception of facts whereby they specify (where the relation of specification at issue is not given much substance) entities that have certain properties; soft facthood does not require any such conception of facts. This difference might indicate some interesting issues in the ontology of facts, but it makes little difference for the main argument of this chapter.

set {Barack Obama} exists>. What it is for that fact to obtain—that fact’s essence, you might say—depends on <Barack Obama exists>, and not vice versa.¹³ Another example: what it is for <José loves Maria> to obtain partly depends on <José exists> and <Maria exists>. The relevant moral to draw from these examples is that to state a fact’s essence is to state the facts constitutive of its obtaining. Call the sort of metaphysical dependence described *essence dependence*.¹⁴ Essence dependence comes in two varieties: whole and partial. I will assume that if a fact *f* is wholly essence dependent on *g*, then *f* is (improperly) partly essence dependent on *g*. All the principles to follow are about partial essence dependence.

Essence dependence has a formal feature that is important for the argument to come: it is *transitive*. In other words

Transitivity: For all facts *f*, *g*, and *h*, if what it is for *f* to obtain partly depends on *g*, and what it is for *g* to obtain partly depends on *h*, then what it is for *f* to obtain partly depends on *h*.

Though I cannot conjure an argument for it, Transitivity strikes me (and others—Schaffer 2009; Rosen 2010; Fine 2010) as plausible.¹⁵ To illustrate, suppose that a physicalist theory of mind according to which thought essentially depends on brain activity is true. Then what it is for <Socrates is thinking> to obtain depends on <Socrates’s brain is in brain state *B*>. Further, suppose that what it is for <Socrates’s brain is in brain state *B*> to obtain depends on <Socrates’s brain is in physical state *P*>. If Transitivity is true, it follows that what it is for <Socrates is thinking> to obtain depends on <Socrates’s brain is in *P*>. *Nota bene*: this is not an *argument* for Transitivity—merely an exhibition of its plausibility.

On this construal of soft facthood, we have a clearer idea of what the Ockhamist needs to do to adequately support her contention that facts about God’s past beliefs concerning future creaturely actions are soft: she must show that such facts are essence dependent on future facts about creaturely action. Here is where KFAE can be of use to the Ockhamist.

¹³ See Fine (1995), Lowe (1998, ch. 6) and Whitcomb (2012, 19–20).

¹⁴ Note that essence dependence is much more discriminating a relation than entailment. On the standard account of entailment, <José loves Maria> entails < $2 + 2 = 4$ >, but it is not plausible to think that part of what it is for <José loves Maria> to obtain is for < $2 + 2 = 4$ > to obtain—the latter fact is no part of the former’s essence.

¹⁵ That said, I do think that this is a claim worthy of further philosophical investigation.

II

I now argue that two key claims of KFAE—the knowledge-first approach in epistemology—provide strong support for a surprising claim that I call the *Knowledge Priority View* (KPV): that in all instances of *S*'s knowing *p*, the fact that *S* believes *p* is essence dependent on the fact that *S* knows *p*. In what follows, I focus on developing Timothy Williamson's (1995, 2000) articulation of KFAE for the purposes of constructing a new argument for Ockhamism.

The argument for KPV begins with a central thesis of KFAE, namely, that knowing is *prime* (Williamson, 2000, ch. 3). In Williamson's words:

[A] conception of knowing that is thoroughly externalist in the present sense will dispense with the [reductionist] program. On such a conception... knowing is not a metaphysical hybrid, because it cannot be broken down into such elements. (2000, 51)

Put more precisely, a property (including relational properties, like knowing)¹⁶ is prime if and only if it is not decomposable into a conjunction of internal and environmental properties.¹⁷ The claim that knowing is prime then seems to boil down to the claim that no *instance* of knowledge can be decomposed into purely internal and purely environmental conditions. As a result, no instance of knowledge is decomposable into a purely internal condition like belief, rational belief, or justified belief on the one hand, and an environmental condition like truth.

¹⁶ Williamson speaks of *conditions* rather than properties, but nothing important hinges on this difference in terminology. Conditions are *not* concepts, where concepts are taken to be mental entities of some sort, or modes of presentation. If this were the correct understanding of conditions, then the claim that knowing is prime would reduce to something conceptual: the concept of knowledge is not analyzable into internal and environmental concepts. Williamson does accept this, but it is distinct from the thesis that knowing is prime. Williamson is quite clear in all of his discussions to keep conceptual and metaphysical questions distinct (e.g. 2000, 50), and his discussion of the primeness of knowing makes it clear that he is talking about a metaphysical issue, and not a conceptual issue.

¹⁷ Williamson (2000, 66) understands internal conditions to be all and only those conditions which supervene entirely on conditions "inside the skin." A condition is environmental if and only if it supervenes entirely on conditions "outside the skin." We should be careful not to infer from "*F* is not decomposable into internal and environmental properties" to "*F* is not decomposable at all." This point's importance will become evident when I discuss the thesis that knowledge depends on truth.

The relevance of the primeness of knowing for the Ockhamist's purposes becomes apparent when it is conjoined with another central thesis of KFAE, namely, the strikingly orthodox claim (striking given KFAE's otherwise maverick commitments) that, necessarily, every instance of knowledge is an instance of belief as well (Williamson, 2000, 41–8).¹⁸ That KFAE accepts this thesis in conjunction with the primeness of knowing raises an interesting question: why is every fact of the form $\langle S \text{ knows } p \rangle$ accompanied by a fact of the form $\langle S \text{ believes } p \rangle$? In short, why is there a necessary connection between knowledge and belief? One possible answer is the Belief Priority View (BPV): whenever a fact of the form $\langle S \text{ knows } p \rangle$ obtains, what it is for the fact $\langle S \text{ knows } p \rangle$ to obtain partly depends on the fact $\langle S \text{ believes } p \rangle$. (In the terminology of the previous section, knowing is essence dependent on believing.) BPV is accepted by epistemologists in the mainstream tradition of theorizing about knowledge.¹⁹

Its explanation of the necessary connection between knowledge-facts and belief-facts is that facts about knowing are *essence dependent* on facts about believing. In other words, whenever you know p , your knowing p partially depends on your believing p , and your mental state is knowing p partly in virtue of your believing p .

However, BPV is not open to the proponent of KFAE, for two reasons. First, BPV does not cohere well with certain remarks Williamson makes elsewhere on the relation between believing and knowing. In one place, he complains about externalists in epistemology “conced[ing] the internalist assumption that believing is somehow more basic than knowing” (2000, 50). In another place, he claims that “believing is not the highest common factor of knowing and mere believing, simply because it is not a factor of knowing at all (whether or not it is a necessary condition)” (2000, 47). On the most straightforward reading of Williamson's talk about “factors” and being “more basic”, both of these remarks amount to denials of BPV.

¹⁸ Williamson in several places seems to countenance rejecting the claim that knowledge entails belief. If a proponent of KFAE went this route, she could avail herself of a different response to Pike's argument than the one I develop in the main text: she could simply deny the premise of Pike's argument that God's knowing p entails God's believing p . I will return to this point further on.

¹⁹ It is also tacitly assumed by Pike's argument. More on this point later.

Furthermore, BPV does not cohere well with the claim that knowing is prime. If BPV were true, then knowing would be decomposable into purely internal and purely external conditions. But on the assumption that knowing is prime, this cannot be. To see why this is so, we must understand a bit more of the motivation the proponent of KFAE has for the claim that knowing is prime: to preserve yet another central claim of KFAE, namely that *knowledge is a mental state*. One might miss how radical this claim is by unwittingly reading it as

Traditional Claim: Knowing involves a mental state, i.e., for all agents x and all propositions p , if x knows p , then there is a mental state M such that x bears M to p .

But in articulating KFAE, Williamson is quite clear that KFAE's proponents intend something much more radical than the Traditional Claim:

Someone might expect knowing to be a state of mind simply on the grounds that knowing p involves the paradigmatic mental state of believing p . If those grounds were adequate, the claim that knowing is a state of mind would be banal. However, those grounds imply only that there is a mental state being in which is necessary for knowing p . By contrast, the claim that knowing is a state of mind is to be understood as the claim that there is a mental state being in which is necessary *and sufficient* for knowing p . In short, knowing is *merely* a state of mind. This claim may be unexpected. (Williamson, 2000, 22; emphasis in original)

In contrast to Traditional Claim, Williamson intends himself to be understood as accepting

Radical Claim: Knowing just is a mental state, i.e. for all agents x and all propositions p , there is a mental state M such that x knows p if and only if x bears M to p .

Invoking the claim that knowing is prime is necessary for a defense of Radical Claim. For suppose that knowing were composite, i.e. it were a conjunction of internal and environmental conditions. It would follow that the internalist contention that knowing merely *involves* a mental state is cogent, since there would be an internal condition that is a component of every instance of knowing. The Radical Claim would thereby be superfluous, which the proponents of KFAE are at pains to deny. So, the proponent of KFAE must deny the BPV, since, if it were true, there would be an internal "core" to knowing, and the Radical Claim would be superfluous.

Denying BPV leaves the proponent of KFAE with two options. She can claim that facts about knowing and facts about believing are essence *independent* of one another—call this the *Independence View*—and that therefore the necessary connection between knowledge-facts and belief-facts is brute. Or she can accept KPV, which (recall) says that whenever a fact of the form $\langle S \text{ knows } p \rangle$ obtains, what it is for the fact $\langle S \text{ believes } p \rangle$ to obtain depends on the fact $\langle S \text{ knows } p \rangle$. In short, KPV says that whenever you know p , your consequently believing p partially depends on your *knowing* p , and not the other way around.

At this point of the argument, we should note a divergence between my development of KFAE for the purposes of defending Ockhamism, and Williamson's development of KFAE. Williamson would object against KPV that it requires a commitment to metaphysical disjunctivism about belief, which is a position he is at pains to deny (Williamson, 2000, 45–6). But what is metaphysical disjunctivism about belief? And how does KPV entail metaphysical disjunctivism about belief?

To help us understand what metaphysical disjunctivism about belief might be, and why it might be entailed by the Knowledge Priority View, let's consider a (relatively) more benign kind of metaphysical disjunctivism, namely metaphysical disjunctivism about the precious ornamental stone *jade*. In 1863, Alexis Damour discovered that jade actually comprised two *different* types of metamorphic rock—one a silicate of sodium and aluminum, the other a silicate of lime and magnesium. Damour called the first kind of rock *jadeite* and the second kind of rock *nephrite*. Now, let us suppose that there is such a property as *being jade*. On this supposition, the metaphysical truth of the matter is that, at a more fundamental level, the property of *being jade* is realized in two different ways. Some instances of the property of *being jade* have that property by virtue of having the property *being jadeite*, while other instances of the property of *being jade* have that property by virtue of having the property *being nephrite*. To speak in the idiom of facts used in the chapter thus far: some facts of the form $\langle x \text{ is jade} \rangle$ are essence dependent on some fact of the form $\langle x \text{ is jadeite} \rangle$, while the remaining facts of the form $\langle x \text{ is jade} \rangle$ are essence dependent on some fact of the form $\langle x \text{ is nephrite} \rangle$.

If true, KPV seems to require metaphysical disjunctivism about belief that is analogous to the metaphysical disjunctivism about jade

just sketched. If KPV is correct, then it turns out that belief isn't a unified kind in much the same way that jade isn't a unified kind. According to KPV, belief is realized in one of at least two ways—it is realized by instances of knowledge, and then by instances of some other property (or properties). In short, if KPV is correct, belief has a *disjunctive* essence, much like jade has a disjunctive essence that we might express as *being jadeite or being nephrite*. To see why KPV has this consequence, first note that it provides an explanation of the necessary connection between knowledge and belief by inverting the explanation given by BPV. As a further consequence, it explains the existence of *some, but not all*, instances of belief, namely, those instances of belief that are essence dependent on some instance of knowledge.²⁰

But, what about instances of false, unjustified, or Gettiered belief? Here KPV is unable to explain why such beliefs exist, since there is no corresponding instance of knowledge to invoke. This inability of KPV to exhaustively explain all instances of belief is why the proponent of KPV should accept that, if KPV is correct, metaphysical disjunctivism about belief is correct as well.

That KPV entails metaphysical disjunctivism about belief might strike most philosophers as absurd—or at the very least, quite costly. But from the perspective of a proponent of KFAE, I don't see why one should reject KPV for this reason. Here Williamson and I disagree, however. His criticisms of metaphysical disjunctivism about belief are contained in the following remark:

The trouble is rather that there is no *more* reason to regard merely believing *p* as a unified mental state than to regard believing *p* as such. What unifies Gettier cases with cases of unjustified false belief is simply that in both, the subject believes without knowing; a good taxonomy of believing would not classify them together on the basis of some positive feature that excludes knowing. Moreover, it is hard to see how such a taxonomy could describe every species of believing without using the concept *believes*. But if a good taxonomy of believing does use the concept *believes*, that undermines the denial that believing is a unified state. (Williamson, 2000, 46)

²⁰ I should note that the kind of explanation at issue here is *non-causal and synchronic*. Compare: the existence of the particular instance of jade hanging about my sister's neck is explained by the existence of the instance of jadeite hanging about my sister's neck, but this explanation is neither causal nor diachronic.

This remark contains two reasons for denying metaphysical disjunctivism about belief, and, ipso facto, KPV. The first reason is that, allegedly, the proponent of metaphysical disjunctivism about belief is committed to thinking that *mere* belief that *p* (where mere belief that *p* is incompatible with knowing *p*) is a unified mental state, a commitment Williamson thinks is ill-founded—especially compared to the claim that belief *simpliciter* is a unified kind. The second reason is that it's difficult to imagine a good taxonomy of the instances of belief that employs a concept other than the concept BELIEF.

I don't think the proponent of KFAE should find either of these reasons to be compelling grounds to reject metaphysical disjunctivism about belief, and, correspondingly, KPV. With respect to the first reason, Williamson is wrong to attribute to metaphysical disjunctivism about belief a commitment that mere belief is a unified mental state. Metaphysical disjunctivism about belief, as I have described it, is compatible with thinking that mere belief is a highly gerry-mandered, non-unified kind of mental state whose instances nonetheless have in common some essential difference from beliefs constituted by knowledge. With respect to the second reason, I don't think that the proponent of KFAE should feel embarrassed by her inability to provide the kind of classification Williamson demands. She might rest her hopes on a future cognitive science that provides the requisite taxonomy.

So I think Williamson's criticisms of the metaphysical disjunctivism about belief entailed by the Knowledge Priority View are inconclusive. But there is more to be said in response to Williamson, by way of pointing out an unseemly cost of his own position. The main problem for Williamson's rejection of KPV is that it commits him to the Independence View, which, recall, is the claim that facts about knowledge and facts about belief are essence independent of one another. If Williamson is going to accept the Independence View *and* the claim that necessarily, if *S* knows *p*, then *S* believes *p*, he must either (a) accept that the necessary connection between knowledge and belief is simply brute, or (b) find some other way of explaining the necessary connection between knowledge and belief. The prospects for option (b) seem dim, so it seems that Williamson is stuck with a commitment that the necessary connection between knowledge and belief is brute. However, the intimate connection between knowing and believing seems to cry out for *some* kind of explanation.

Here the proponent of KFAE faces a choice. She can, on one hand, reject KPV and embrace the claim that the necessary connection between knowledge and belief is brute. On the other hand, she can embrace KPV and avail herself of an explanation of the necessary connection between knowledge and belief that is consistent with KFAE. I am inclined to think that the costs of accepting brute necessary connections are higher than the costs of accepting KPV, and so, were I accepting of KFAE, I would accept the KPV.²¹

Let me recap where exactly we are in the discussion. I have just argued that several core commitments of KFAE provide support for KPV. Next I will make apparent that KPV, in conjunction with some principles drawn from the previous discussion, results in an argument for Ockhamism.

III

Given what I have said in §I, an argument for Ockhamism is an argument for the thesis that facts of the form $\langle \text{God believes at } t \text{ that } p \rangle$ are essence dependent on facts in the future relative to t .²² For the sake of concreteness, let us work with the example involving Park's eating kimchi today.²³ On the assumption that there is an essentially omniscient being, and that it is God, it follows that

- (1) $\langle \text{God knew eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi today} \rangle$ obtains.

By the assumption that whenever anyone knows p , she also believes p , it follows that

- (2) $\langle \text{God believed eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi to-day} \rangle$ obtains.

²¹ Throughout the chapter, I have been careful to say that KFAE *supports* rather than *entails* resources for a new argument for Ockhamism. Part of my reason for making a weaker claim should now be apparent. KFAE certainly does not *entail* the KPV. However, in conjunction with some plausible principles about paying the relative costs of different philosophical views, KFAE does substantially support KPV.

²² If the Ockhamist succeeds in defending her key claim, she isn't finished yet. See n. 9.

²³ My argument reifies facts. I believe that for those who find such a reification objectionable, there is a workaround in terms of propositions, but for the sake of brevity, I do not give that here.

So far, this argument looks similar to Pike's argument. But it is at the next step where it diverges from Pike's argument. Here is a principle about knowledge:

Truth Grounds Knowledge: For every fact f of the form $\langle S \text{ knows } p \rangle$, what it is for f to obtain depends on $\langle p \rangle$. (Whitcomb, 2012)

(In our terminology, every fact about someone's knowledge of something is essence dependent on the fact known.) Truth Grounds Knowledge is quite plausible. As any beginning student of epistemology (and even the KFAE proponent, as noted earlier) acknowledges, knowledge is factive: necessarily, if S knows p , then p is a fact.²⁴ And while entailment is not sufficient for essence dependence, in this case, it seems plausible that what grounds knowledge's entailing truth is the essence dependence of knowledge on truth: when any fact of the form $\langle S \text{ knows } p \rangle$ obtains, so too does $\langle p \rangle$. And this is *because* facts about knowledge are essence dependent on the facts thereby known.

One might worry that the KFAE proponent cannot accept Truth Grounds Knowledge for the same reasons she could not accept BPV. The concern is that Truth Grounds Knowledge is inconsistent with the primeness of knowing:

since knowing is factive, whether one knows p constitutively depends on the state of one's external environment whenever the proposition p is about that environment. Consequently, whether one knows p is not determined by one's internal physical state. (2000, 49–50)

However, Truth Grounds Knowledge is consistent with the claim that knowing is prime. To see how, recall the motivation behind the claim that knowing is prime: to preserve KFAE's distinctive claim that knowing doesn't merely *involve* a mental state, but that it *is* a mental state. Accepting Truth Grounds Knowledge does not vitiate the claim that knowing is a mental state (unlike the Belief Priority View, which does) because it does not render the claim that knowing is a mental state superfluous (like BPV does). Moreover, to say that every fact of the form $\langle S \text{ knows } p \rangle$ is essence dependent on the fact $\langle p \rangle$ does not commit one to saying that every fact of the form $\langle S \text{ knows } p \rangle$ is decomposable

²⁴ Of course, some uses of "knows" in English are not factive, but those uses do not express the property that epistemologists are concerned with investigating.

into internal and environmental facts. It's plausible to think that what it is for the fact that God knows eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi today to obtain depends (in the essence-dependence sense) on the fact that Park eats kimchi today.

Let us return to the main thread of argument. From (1) and Truth Grounds Knowledge, it follows that

- (3) What it is for <God knew eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi today> to obtain depends on <Park eats kimchi today>.

From (1), (2) and KPV, it follows that

- (4) What it is for <God believed eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi today> to obtain depends on <God knew eighty years ago that Park would eat kimchi today>.

But then from (4) and the transitivity of essence dependence, it follows that

- (5) What it is for <God believed eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi today> to obtain depends on <Park eats kimchi today>.

(5) together with Soft Facthood yields the conclusion

- (6) <God believed eighty years prior to today that Park would eat kimchi to-day> is a soft fact about the past relative to today.

And (6), suitably generalized, is precisely what the Ockhamist wants.

One objection to the argument notes that, from the perspective of the argument just given, there is nothing special about God's beliefs—any thinker might be substituted in place of God, and a conclusion analogous to (6) may be inferred about their beliefs. For example, suppose that during one of her visions, God reveals to Joan of Arc that Park would eat kimchi today. Suppose further that the Maid of Orléans, being a woman of great faith (though no doubt puzzled why God would reveal such a trivial truth to her) comes to know—and therefore believe—that Park would eat kimchi today. An argument exactly similar to that just enumerated might be given, only with each instance of “God” replaced with “Joan of Arc,” and such an argument would arrive at the conclusion that <Joan of Arc believed 600 years ago that Park would eat kimchi today> is a soft fact about the past relative to today. Other things being equal,²⁵

²⁵ See n. 9.

it would follow that Park has a choice today about whether Joan of Arc believed 600 years ago that Park would eat kimchi today. And might this not seem a bit strange?

On reflection, this objection should not bother the KFAE-inspired defender of Ockhamism. On the plausible assumption that the deep metaphysical structure of divine knowledge is substantially similar to the deep metaphysical structure of creaturely knowledge, the conclusion that Park today has a choice about whether Joan of Arc believed 600 years ago that Park would eat kimchi today is precisely what the KFAE-inspired proponent of this Ockhamist argument would predict.²⁶ Moreover the incompatibilist should probably not complain that this reply implausibly assumes structural similarity between divine and creaturely knowledge. The more an incompatibilist wishes to advance the structural dissimilarities between divine and creaturely knowledge, the more she runs the risk of undermining Pike's argument, which itself assumes some level of structural similarity between divine and creaturely knowledge—enough to warrant the claim that divine knowledge, just like creaturely knowledge, requires belief.

By my lights, the argument's weakest point is the inference to (4), which relies on KPV. Perhaps this is where someone who defends Pike's argument will press objections. However, doing this will require the defender of Pike's argument to grapple with the arguments in favor of the theses of KFAE that play a key role in the argument for Ockhamism just given. I have not given any arguments for KFAE in this chapter, since such a project is beyond its scope; however, the arguments adduced in its favor are worth taking seriously, and the shift that KFAE has wrought in epistemology should spill over into debates elsewhere in philosophy, including the debate over Ockhamism's viability.

IV

In addition to the argument just given, KFAE provides Ockhamists with the resources to respond to two closely related objections that John Martin Fischer has leveled against their position. The first objection that

²⁶ Nothing in this paragraph is inconsistent with thinking that divine knowledge is still quite different from creaturely knowledge in its sources.

Fischer levels against Ockhamism arises out of what Fischer calls the *incompatibilist's constraint* on any account of the hard fact/soft fact distinction (Fischer, 1983, 76–9). The incompatibilist constraint, according to Fischer, is that it is possible for facts about God's past beliefs concerning future creaturely actions to be soft only if it is possible for *one and the same past state* of God's mind to count as one belief if a creature were to do one thing, and to count as a *different* belief were that creature to do another thing. But such a situation is not possible, according to Fischer, and so facts about God's past beliefs could not be soft facts.

The Belief Priority View is essential to the motivation of the incompatibilist constraint. Fischer motivates acceptance of the constraint by comparing facts about a creature's foreknowledge with facts about God's foreknowledge. He claims that every fact about creaturely foreknowledge is soft because the belief implicated by such a fact counts as knowledge given one future, but as not-knowledge given a different future. But if that is the explanation for why facts about the foreknowledge of creatures count as soft, it should (the reasoning goes) apply equally in the case of facts about divine foreknowledge. The Belief Priority View is implicit in the first step of Fischer's reasoning, where he tacitly assumes that a creature's state of foreknowledge counts as such in part because of a more fundamental *belief's* relation to some future fact.

The proponent of KFAE, in virtue of accepting the Knowledge Priority View, rejects this assumption. She explains why facts about creaturely foreknowledge are soft by appealing instead to the essence dependence of facts about knowledge on what is known. Belief nowhere enters into the explanation. Moreover, it is *false*, according to the proponent of KFAE, that one and the same mental state is implicated in both a case where someone foreknows *p*, and someone, despite believing *p*, fails to foreknow *p*. According to the proponent of KFAE, the mental states in these two cases are *different*. And so, if KFAE is the way one ought to understand knowledge, the incompatibilist constraint ends up lacking motivation. In summary, someone who adheres to KFAE has no reason to accept the incompatibilist constraint, and should probably be inclined to reject it as presupposing a false view of the metaphysical relationship between knowledge and belief.

The second objection Fischer levels against Ockhamism comes in his criticism of Ockhamists who might employ Joshua Hoffman and Gary Rosencrantz's account of the hard fact/soft fact distinction (1984).

Roughly put, on their account, a fact *fat* *t* is soft if and only if *f* entails some *immediate* or *temporally genuine* fact that obtains after *t*. Fischer claims that, even if the Ockhamist is right in thinking that past facts concerning God's beliefs about future creaturely action are soft (in the sense just given), such facts have a hard "core" to them that renders them fixed. His criticism begins by first noting that one can, intuitively speaking, "break" facts into constituent objects and properties. Fischer follows up this claim with a further claim that, in the case of past facts concerning God's beliefs about future creaturely action, such facts have at their core a *hard property*, namely, the property of believing *p* (for some *p*). A hard property is temporally genuine or non-relational, which is to say that it's being instantiated does not entail any immediate future fact (1986, 596–7). The reason for thinking that believing *p* (for some *p*) is a hard property is that it seems quite plausible, especially if one thinks of belief as being grounded in a dispositional state of some sort. That one instantiates a dispositional state does not entail any immediate future fact on its own (1986, 598).

KFAE provides resources for the Ockhamist to rebut this objection. On the assumption that God's instantiating the property of believing *p* (for some *p*) essentially depends on God's knowing *p*, and given the Knowledge Priority View, it follows that in a case of God's instantiating the property of believing *p* (for some *p*), that property is *soft*. It is soft because it depends on the instantiation of a property whose instantiation itself depends (according to Truth Grounds Knowledge) on the obtaining of some future (relative to the instantiation) fact. The proponent of KFAE, in essence, rejects the claim implicit in Fischer's argument that, in a case of knowledge, the concomitant belief is grounded in some dispositional state; instead, she accepts the thesis that, in a case of knowledge, the concomitant belief is grounded in the knowledge itself.

V

I have argued that KFAE provides Ockhamists with the resources to construct a novel argument for their position. I have also argued that KFAE provides Ockhamists with the resources to defend their position from two influential objections. Going forward, I hope that the revelation of this new argument for Ockhamism frees up some logical space

for philosophers of religion to explore the perennial debates about freedom and divine foreknowledge from some different angles. I also hope that this argument might inspire philosophers to consider the potentially interesting implications of KFAE for questions in other areas of philosophy.²⁷

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²⁷ For comments and discussion on this chapter and issues therein, I am indebted to Andrew Bailey, John Martin Fischer, Michael Rea, Bradley Rettler, Jeff Snapper, Patrick Todd, Ted Warfield, my audience at the 2012 Pacific/Mountain SCP meeting at Westmont College, and some anonymous referee(s) for this journal. The claims defended in this essay do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the John Templeton Foundation nor any of its officers, save the author.

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2

Religious Disagreement and Rational Demotion

Michael Bergmann

There are many religious disagreements: between religious and nonreligious viewpoints, between one religion and another, among adherents of the same religion, and among non-religious people discussing religion. I'll focus on *one* disagreement (i.e. whether or not theism is true) and mainly on *one* perspective in that disagreement (i.e. the theist's). I will defend the view that, in certain actual circumstances that aren't uncommon for educated westerners, an awareness of the facts of religious disagreement doesn't make theistic belief irrational. In the first section I will make some general remarks about when discovering disagreement (on any topic) makes it rational to give up your beliefs. In the later sections, I will defend the rationality of theistic belief in the face of disagreement.

1. Some General Remarks about Disagreement

In section 1.1 I discuss the two main possible outcomes of disagreement: defeat of one's disputed belief and demotion of one's disputant. In section 1.2 I consider the three main kinds of evidence that are relevant to demoting one's disputant and consider whether all three of them are appropriate to use for this purpose. And in section 1.3 I consider four kinds of epistemic assessment, clarifying which are essentially involved in demoting a disputant and which are not.

1.1 *Two Ways of Handling Disagreement: Defeat and Demotion*

If you view someone as your *epistemic peer* with respect to *p*, then learning that this person disagrees with you about *p* (thinking it's false) can give you a *defeater* for your belief that *p*—a reason to cease holding it.¹ You and I are epistemic peers with respect to *p* if your evidence with respect to *p* is approximately as good, epistemically, as mine and—when it comes to belief-formation with respect to *p*—you are approximately as good, epistemically, as I am at responding to such evidence.²

¹ But if I view you as an *epistemic inferior* with respect to *p*, then learning that you disagree with me about *p* needn't create much of a problem for my belief that *p*.

I define epistemic peerage in the next sentence in the text. We can think of epistemic inferiors and superiors along the same lines. Your epistemic inferiors with respect to *p* either have evidence for *p* that isn't as good, epistemically, as yours or—when it comes to belief-formation with respect to *p*—they're not as good, epistemically, as you are at responding to such evidence. Your epistemic superiors with respect to *p* either have evidence for *p* that is better, epistemically, than yours or—when it comes to belief-formation with respect to *p*—they're better, epistemically, than you are at responding to such evidence.

² What exactly makes one bit of evidence with respect to *p* epistemically better than another? And what makes one way of responding to such evidence (in terms of belief-formation with respect to *p*) epistemically better than another? These are difficult questions that I can't adequately address in this chapter. I'll make only a few brief remarks here. First, there are several factors involved in each case. For one bit of evidence with respect to *p* to be epistemically better than another, it matters how strongly and obviously it supports the truth, how it is acquired, and how misleading it is (e.g. how much it points away from the truth). And for one way of responding to evidence (in terms of belief-formation with respect to *p*) to be epistemically better than another, it matters how well that way of responding fits the evidence and how misleading that way of responding is (e.g. how much it involves being led astray by misleading aspects of the evidence). Second, a good rule of thumb to keep in mind in filling in the details further (in response to the questions at the beginning of this note) is this: the accounts given of *better evidence* and a *better way of responding to evidence* should be such that, in light of them, it's reasonable to think: "My recognition that *S* disagrees with me about *p* is less likely to count as a defeater for my belief that *p* if I also recognize that I have better evidence than *S* or a better way of responding to such evidence than *S* has".

I should note that my account of epistemic peerage differs in some ways from other accounts in the literature, in part because I focus on peerage *with respect to a proposition*. In addition, unlike some accounts of peerage, I don't require that peers have the same evidence (largely because I think people who disagree with each other almost never have the same evidence). And unlike other accounts that emphasize the importance for peerage of rough equality in intellectual virtue (i.e. intelligence, thoughtfulness, and sincerity in truth-seeking), I require for peerage rough equality in the epistemic quality of one's belief-responses to evidence, which neither guarantees nor is guaranteed by rough equality in intellectual virtue.