

Paul Weingartner

# Omniscience

From a Logical Point of View



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## Preface

The main task of this book is to clarify the concept of omniscience and to reject attacks which are based on false or very questionable premises or on invalid argumentation. The book thereby defends the possibility to attribute omniscience to God in a consistent way.

The method is to divide the main task into 12 chapters which are formulated as basic questions. Each chapter begins with arguments pro and contra. Then a detailed answer is proposed which contains a systematic discussion of the question. This is the repetitive main part of the chapter.

These arguments pro and contra express different positions concerning the concept of omniscience and attacks against a consistent formulation of it. These problems are discussed and clarified in the commentaries to the objections at the end of the chapters. It has to be emphasized however that what is expressed in the pros and contras is not the opinion of the author. It is sometimes the opinion of other scholars as shown by quotations. The opinion of the author is expressed in the main part of the chapters and in the commentary to the objections.

The last chapter 13 contains a theory of omniscience formulated as an axiom system. It is to show that theism claiming an omniscient God, who knows everything about himself and about his creation (including the universe) is possible in a consistent way.

It should be observed moreover that this book is not a book about the existence of God; but about the possibility of a consistent concept of omniscience which can be attributed to a presupposed object of religion (God) which is usually understood as a most perfect being and as creator of this world (universe). This does not mean that this book is only readable for theists. Any reader interested in the topics of omniscience may study the book, accepting the assumptions which seem questionable to him only conditionally.

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Salzburg, March 7, 2007

Paul Weingartner



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# 1. Whether Everything is True What God Knows

The above question "whether everything is true what God knows" expressed in other words reads: Does it hold that if God knows something (say that some state of affairs obtains) then this (that some state of affairs obtains) is true. If we translate this question into the language of Epistemic Logic then it can be expressed more precisely thus: If  $g$  (God) knows that  $p$  (is the case) then  $p$  is true. Here ' $p$ ' stands for a proposition representing states of affairs. Symbolically:

$$gKp \rightarrow Tr(p) \quad \text{or:} \quad gKp \rightarrow p$$

This question can also be expressed by asking whether God is infallible. Because some person may be called infallible if it cannot happen that this person knows something which would not be the case.

## 1.1 Arguments Against

1.11 If everything is true what God knows, then he has to believe all and only truths. But as Grim says there can be no such being. For suppose there is, and consider a sentence we might term the Divine Liar:

God believes that (8) is false (8)

"On the supposition that (8) is true, it is true that God believes that (8) is false. But we are supposing here that (8) is true, and thus we are forced to conclude that God holds a false belief. On such a supposition he cannot then qualify as omniscient.

On the supposition that (8) is false, it is not the case that God believes that (8) is false. But our supposition here is that (8) *is* false, and thus there must be a truth – that (8) is false – that God does not believe and hence does not know. Here again he fails to qualify as omniscient.

If (8) is either true or false, then, God is not omniscient. But, of course, God is not alone in this respect: a similar argument will hold for any being

proposed as omniscient. It appears that there simply can be no omniscient being."<sup>1</sup>

This argument is also applicable if 'believes' is replaced by 'knows'. Thus on the supposition that (8') (God knows that (8') is false) is true, God knows a proposition which is false. But if everything is true what God knows, then he has to know all and only truths.

Therefore it does not seem to hold that everything is true what God knows.

1.12 The thesis "everything is true what God knows" seems to presuppose (as a necessary condition) a concept of knowledge which is defined as true justified belief. But as Gettier has shown there are some cases where all the three conditions: truth, justification, and belief are satisfied though one cannot speak of knowledge such that this definition is not satisfied.

Therefore the thesis "everything is true what God knows" does not seem to hold.

1.13 If everything is true what God knows, then the presupposed concept of knowledge seems to imply true belief. But in God there is no belief. Therefore it does not seem to hold that everything is true what God knows.

1.14 It cannot hold that everything is true what God knows. This can be shown by the following indirect proof:

1. Assumption to the contrary: Everything is true what God knows. Symbolically:  $gKp \rightarrow p$ . Now this premise of infallibility must necessarily hold for God such that we can assume the stronger premise:

2. Necessarily: Everything is true what God knows. Symbolically:  $\Box(gKp \rightarrow p)$

3. Instantiation: We substitute for 'p': the world exists, such that we get: Necessarily: if God knows that the world exists then the world exists. Symbolically:  $\Box(gK \text{ that the world exists} \rightarrow \text{the world exists})$ .

4. By a distribution law of Modal Logic the necessity operator ' $\Box$ ' can be distributed on the parts of the implication:  $\Box gKp \rightarrow \Box p$  or: If it is necessary that God knows that the world exists then it is necessary that the world exists. Symbolically:  $\Box gK \text{ that the world exists} \rightarrow \Box \text{ the world exists}$ .

5. But we can generally assume – since God's knowing belongs to God's essence and actuality – that he necessarily knows whatever he knows. Symbolically:  $gKp \rightarrow \Box gKp$ .

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<sup>1</sup> Grim (1991, IUN) p. 8.