
Understanding Pascal's Argument About The Existence Of God

What is a wager? I was unsure of the definition, but all it took was a brief search on the internet for me to understand the word "wager" is sort of like the act of gambling. You place something, it can be anything, on the line unaware of the results. Learning this definition helped me better understand Pascal's argument about the existence, or non-existence, of God.

Pascal says there is really no way to figure out if God truly exists. Nobody really knows what occurs after death. But he utilizes basic reasoning to determine the consequences of believing and not believing in God's existence. The argument is quite simple and can be divided into four scenarios. First scenario, God exists and you believe in him. There is no punishment, in fact, you are given a spot in heaven and eternal rewards. What is better than being able to obtain all the rewards you desire, eternally? Nothing, says Pascal. That is what you receive in exchange for your faith on the almighty God. Second scenario, God exists but you don't believe in God. Terrible idea. You are stranded in hell and receive eternal suffering, obviously nobody desires that in their afterlife. Third scenario, you believe God exists but he doesn't, nothing happens, no punishments or rewards. And lastly, if you don't believe in God and he doesn't exist, you have absolutely nothing to lose or win.

So the question now is, should we believe in God? We are selfish creatures. Always looking to see what benefits us, how we can suffer the least possible through our actions? Our rationale makes us think of this all the time. An example of this was discussed during the lecture and goes as follows; Your child is about to get hit by a car and you are able to prevent this by placing yourself there instead of the kid. Bystanders might think this is a heroic act, a selfless sacrifice. In reality, why did you save your child? Because it's your kid and you love him/her? This is partly true but there is more reasoning behind this action. Many parents would say, "Well of course I'd sacrifice my life for my child. The pain of losing him/her would be unbearable." And there it is, the reward or benefit you would receive in exchange for your actions. You would rather let that child live instead of yourself because you do not dare live in pain or suffer, instead, you'd want to erase your existence and feel no guilt. It was all for your benefit.

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