

PASCAL'S WAGER: BETTING YOUR LIFE

"Let us weigh the gain and loss, in wagering that God is. Consider these alternatives: if you win, you win all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Do not hesitate, then, to wager that He is." – Blaise Pascal

Pascal's Wager

- Rationality for belief in God
- The ultimate world view is with Theists
- There is overall meaning to life

Blaise Pascal: Philosopher-Genius

- Born in Provincial France 1623
- Educated by his father
- Father withheld math until later...
- Discovered on his own Euclidian geometry at age 12
- Age 13 argued in an open forum with the intellectuals of his day
- Age 19 began working to invent a calculator
- Catholic
- Never religious until age 30
- Religious Experience shaped his life
- His notes were published shortly after his death (age 39) *The Pensées*, or The Thoughts – worldwide bestseller
- He was seldom wrong in his deduction

The Wager

- Life is a gamble
- We are always placing our bets...
- Little is certain in this world
- We are constantly making rational calculations as to what we need to do
 - Structure of our lives
 - Order to our values and goals
- We wager time and energy on our hopes and dreams
- Life is process
- We are engaged in avoidance behavior concerning the things that matter most
- Busyness of life keeps us at a distance from life's most important issues
- We are hurdling forward unaware towards the edge of a cliff without knowing what life is all about
- Diseases of the soul
- Worse than the diseases of the body
- Sleepwalking through life (Sleep run)

- We are out of touch with the deepest issues that we need to address
- We cut ourselves off from wisdom
- Then we complain about how life is going

Pascal's Night of Fire

- Religious experience
- Turned his life around
- Sewn into the lining of his coat was a memorial to the mystical experience he carried everywhere
- Dated, with the word for "Fire" on it
- He records not the experience but his response to it
- A secret that gave him his life's meaning

Results of His Night of Fire

- The deepest reality is spiritual
 - Physical level is the body
 - Intellectual level is the mind
 - Spiritual level is the heart
 - The core, where thought and feeling come together
- There is a living God
- God should be the focus and inspiration our lives
- Pascal sees all around him successful people who are disconnected from this Source and writes his argument

Argument for Religious Belief

- Life is one huge game
- Two thoroughbreds
- Theism
- Naturalism
- Evidence goes both ways...
- Gamblers do not always place their bets on the most likely to win
- Rational gamblers place their bets for winnings over the long run

Expected Value Formula

Bet: $(\text{Chance} \times \text{Payoff}) - \text{Cost} = \text{Expected Value}$

Example of a Bet Illustrating The Expected Value Formula

<i>Bet</i>	<i>Chance</i>	<i>Payoff</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Expected Value</i>
Greta	.6	\$10	\$5	\$1
Annie	.4	\$20	\$3	\$5

The Issue of Theism and Atheism Cast as a Gambling Situation

<i>Bet</i>	<i>Chance</i>	<i>Payoff</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Expected Value</i>
Atheism	.5 or so	Finite	Finite	Finite
God	.5 or so	Infinite	Finite	Infinite