

Consider Pascal's "Wager on God" and its implication on the decision of believing in God, try to delineate the elements of a counterargument. Can we envision a bet on atheism? How would we structure it? Could we claim atheism is the reasonable choice?

Alessandro Ferrari

December 6, 2020

Contents

1	Pascal's wager on god	3
1.1	Pascal's argument	3
2	Counter Argument	3
2.1	Fallacies in Pascal's wager	3
3	Wager on atheism	5

1 Pascal's wager on god

Wager on God	God exists	God doesn't exist
Theist	Heaven	Nothing
Atheist	Hell	Nothing

1.1 Pascal's argument

According to Pascal's *Wager on God*, no rational being would willingly choose to not believe in God, this is because he says that there are four possible outcomes in not believing in God:

- If you believe in God and God exists, you will go to Heaven
- If you believe in God but God doesn't exist, you conducted a life helping others, but you don't get anything in return
- If you don't believe in God and God exists, you will lose your opportunity to go to heaven, or you might even go to Hell
- If you don't believe in God and God doesn't exist, you don't get anything in return

Pascal also says that this argument shouldn't make people feel like they have no choice but to believe in God, but rather it should convert atheists into theists.

2 Counter Argument

2.1 Fallacies in Pascal's wager

Pascal's Argument feels like it has no logical fallacies, but this is only because it is based on false preconceptions. First of all, Pascal contradicts himself by creating this wager, this is because he believes and states that faith in God should

come naturally from each individual, and by creating this logical argument he is in a way forcing people to believe in God, because the alternatives are all negative. So if people followed his argument, they wouldn't actually believe in God, they would just pretend to believe in him in order to not go to Hell.

Pascal also creates a false dichotomy by saying that there are only four outcomes to this problem, while in reality it isn't only a matter of believing or not believing in God. For example, what if someone believes in a God which is different than Pascal's? If the answer to this question is "Pascal never specifies which God he is referring to, this argument applies to all religions.", then you are admitting that God doesn't exist. This is because you are saying that it's all about what the single person believes once they die, and not the truth (if you believe in a certain god, then your mind makes you believe that you will go to their heaven, if you don't, your mind doesn't create anything to alleviate death).

3 Wager on atheism

To show how by using false preconceptions you could create a fully functioning argument, we could start to envision a wager on atheism. In order to do this, lets isolate the discussion to the case in which we are sure that some form of God exists, we could create this table:

Wager on Atheism	God is good	God is bad
Theist	Heaven or Hell/nothing	Eternal shame and Hell
Atheist	Nothing	You go to Hell with pride

By using these preconceptions, you could divide the problem in 4 other cases:

- If you believe in God and a good God exists, you either believed in the correct God (so you go to Heaven), or you chose a different God than the one which exists, and depending on which God actually exists, you might go to Hell for believing in a different one, or nothing will happen.
- If you believe in God and a bad God exists, you will have eternal shame for having believed in a cruel God, and he will send you to Hell, because he has no interest in your being.
- If you don't believe in God and a good God exists, then nothing happens; since he is good, he won't send you to Hell just because you didn't believe in him.
- If you don't believe in God and a bad God exists, you will go to Hell since he doesn't care about your being, but you will feel no shame since you did the only logical thing you could have done.