

# ‘Pascal’s Wager’ Argument

Blaise Pascal believed in the Christian / Perfect Being God, based upon “reasons of the heart.” Pascal was also an intellectual giant and was perplexed by how the findings of modern science and philosophical questioning challenged his belief in God. He wanted to know if his faith, in addition to its “reasons of the heart,” also made any kind of rational sense. Theoretically, objective considerations might not justify faith. But subjectively and practically – as a matter of the requirements of action / choosing / living -- it might.

Pascal reasoned: What if one looks upon belief in God as a kind of ‘bet’ or wager.’

\*We are not certain that if we bet a certain way, we will win.

\*We are not certain that if we bet a certain way, we will not win.

\*We accept a risk of being wrong / losing whenever we bet – in order to have the opportunity of winning / being correct.

There are **two options regarding one’s choice** / bet on God’s existence:

1. Believe that God exists.
2. Not-believe that God exists.

There are **two options regarding God’s existence**:

1. God exists
2. God does not exist.

There are **four possibilities**:

- 1) Not- believe that God exists and God does not exist. (Result: “finite gain”)
- 2) Not believe that God exists and God does exist. (Result: “Infinite loss”)
- 3) Believe that God exists and God does not exist. (Result: “finite loss”)
- 4) Believe that God does exist and God does exist. (Result: Infinite gain”)

Thus, if one **does not believe** in God - one will realize **either a “finite gain” or an “infinite loss.”**

If one **does believe** in God - one will realize **either a “finite loss” or an “infinite gain.”**

**Conclusion: One has ‘more to gain and less to lose’ if one is believing in God.**

Pascal did not himself believe in God because of this argument. He did not encourage others to believe in God because it was a ‘better bet.’ But for the sincere believer or inquirer, it showed (Pascal held) that it makes a certain practical sense / is practically rational to believe in God for one has “less to lose and more to gain.” Pascal’s Wager raises an interesting practical / pragmatic question that different persons will answer in differing ways: **“What do I have to gain or lose** in coming to believe / continuing to believe in God?” and **“What do I have to gain or lose** in coming to not-believe / continuing to not-believe that God exists?”