

1. Introduction

Pascal's wager:	God exists (Pr = n)	God doesn't exist (Pr = 1-n)	EV
Believe in God	ω	f1	ω
Don't believe in God	$-\omega$	f2	$-\omega$

Objection: taking the wager demonstrates bad motives, ones that God would not be pleased with (Flew 1976, Mackie 1982: 203, Oppy 1991: 167, Golding 2018).

Thesis: (i) Taking Pascal's wager need not demonstrate poor motives, and (ii) there's a way of taking Pascal's wager that demonstrates either genuine faith or genuine hope that God exists.

2. Faithfully Taking Pascal's Wager

2.1 Taking Pascal's Wager: making a commitment to God, largely motivated by non-epistemic reasons.

- Making a commitment to God:
 - *doxastic wager*: a belief-oriented wager that involves choosing to believe that God exists or taking steps to induce belief in God.
 - *acceptance wager*: an action-oriented wager that involves accepting, or acting as if, God exists.
- Non-epistemic reasons: include both practical and moral reasons (see Rota 2016).
 - *Largely* motivated: because probability matters, even in the infinite case.
- The wagerer is motivated primarily by the goodness of the outcome of God's existence, given they commit to God (shaded box above).

2.2 Faith: What is it to have faith that a proposition is true?

Cognitive states: mind to world direction of fit; represent the world (e.g. beliefs, credences, probability-beliefs)

Conative states: world to mind direction of fit; inherently motivational (e.g. desires, pro-attitudes, beliefs about the good)

S has faith that p iff (Howard-Snyder 2013; Buchak 2017):

- (i*) S has a positive conative attitude toward p (e.g. thinking p would be a good thing, desiring p)
- (ii*) S has a positive cognitive attitude toward p (e.g. thinking p is likely, having a high credence in p, believing p), and
- (iii*) S is resilient to new counterevidence against p

On condition (ii): My view fits with the idea that faith entails belief, but this requires the wager to be doxastic.

First pass definition can't capture the idea that faith seems deeply intertwined with our important life **commitments**. Even if commitment isn't associated with all cases of faith, it seems like a necessary part of theistic faith.

S has faith that God exists if (I only need (i)-(iv) to be jointly sufficient for faith):

- (i) S has a positive conative attitude toward God's existence (e.g. thinking God's existence would be a good thing, desiring God's existence)
- (ii) S has a positive cognitive attitude toward God's existence (e.g. thinking God's existence is likely, having a high credence in God's existence, believing that God exists),
- (iii) S is resilient to new counterevidence against God's existence, and
- (iv) S commits to God.

2.3 Putting it All Together

Those with faith that God exists and those who take Pascal's wager, then, have much in common:

- (i) They have a positive conative attitude toward God's existence.
- (ii) They have a positive cognitive attitude toward God's existence.
- (iii) They are resilient to counterevidence to p .
- (iv) They make a commitment (i.e. to God, to live a particular kind of life).

(i)-(iv) characterize the way of taking Pascal's wager described in sec. 2.1. At least a subset of the conditions that are sufficient for taking Pascal's wager are sufficient for having faith that God exists.

Preliminary conclusion: if S takes Pascal's wager, S has faith that God exists.

- If faith entails belief, then my argument is limited to the doxastic wager.
- NB: I'm not claiming that everyone who has faith takes Pascal's wager. One could have faith that is primarily motivated by epistemic considerations (for example).

Upshots:

- One can take the wager with virtuous motives.
- Helps with the impossibility objection, if taking Pascal's wager demonstrates faith (Pojman 1986, Speak 2007).

3. Hopefully Taking Pascal's Wager

Objection: Someone with very low credences in theism might take Pascal's wager, but this isn't consistent with having faith (especially not rational faith).

Reply 1: faith may be consistent with quite low credences (Jackson 2019).

Reply 2: even if one's credences are too low to count as having faith, the wagerer may nonetheless *hope* that God exists.

S **hopes** that p iff (Downie 1963: 248; Day 1969: 89; see Milona 2019):

- (i) S has a positive conative attitude toward p , and
- (ii) S has a weak positive cognitive attitude toward p (e.g. a non-zero credence in p , a belief that p is possible)

A loss of evidence may also cause one to move from faith to hope (Jackson forthcoming).

(Note: some add conditions to the standard view above, but these conditions are met by taking Pascal's wager.)

Thus, if one takes Pascal's wager, then one either has faith that God exists or hopes that God exists. The wagerer exemplifies theological virtues.

Final worry: given this appeal to hope, can we still answer the impossibility objection?

- **Reply 1:** from completely uncommitted to committed to God and hoping that God exists raises the probability of salvation;
- **Reply 2:** belief is very likely not necessary for salvation (e.g. young children).
- **Reply 3:** the wagerer may not be motivated only by salvation, but also by pre-mortem benefits, moral reasons, etc.
- **Reply 4:** even if there are stringent doxastic requirements for salvation, the wagerer puts themselves on a path to meet those.

Works Cited:

- Buchak, Lara. (2017). "Faith and steadfastness in the face of counter-evidence." *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 81(1-2): 113-133.
- Day, J.P. (1969). "Hope." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6(2): 89–102.
- Downie, R.S. (1963). "Hope." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 24(2): 248–51.
- Flew, Antony. (1976). *The Presumption of Atheism and Other Philosophical Essays on God, Freedom, and Immortality*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Golding, Joshua. (2018). "The Role of Pascal's Wager in Authentic Religious Commitment." In *Pascal's Wager* (P. Bartha and L. Pasternack, eds.), pp. 209–223.
- Howard-Snyder, D. (2013). "Propositional Faith: What It Is and What It Is Not." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50(4): 357–372.
- Jackson, Elizabeth. (Forthcoming). "Belief, Faith, and Hope: On the Rationality of Long-Term Commitment." *Mind*.
- Jackson, Elizabeth. (2019). "Belief, Credence, and Faith." (2019). *Religious Studies*. 55(2): 153–168.
- Mackie, J.L. (1982). *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and against the Existence of God*. Oxford: OUP.
- Milona, Michael. (2019). "Finding Hope." *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 49(5): 710–729.
- Oppy, Graham. (1991). "On Rescher on Pascal's Wager." *The International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 30: 159–68.
- Pojman, L. (1986). "Faith Without Belief?" *Faith and Philosophy* 3(2): 157-176.
- Speak, Daniel. (2007). "Salvation Without Belief." *Religious Studies* 43(2): 229–236.