

Blaise Pascal's (1623–1662) Wager

Besides his work on probability, Pascal is known for his argument in defence of believing in God which was itself put forward in terms of gambling metaphor. His aim was not so much to prove the existence of God but to present a reason why it was prudential to believe based on a question of personal cost. Basically he argued that we should bet on the existence of God because that is our best option. While we cannot know for certain whether or not God exists we will have to take a position. In doing so we should consider what may be lost by not believing—a life after death and eternal happiness. It costs you nothing to choose to believe in God but there may be a lot to lose by not believing, so why not choose to believe?

Popkin, R. H. (1967). Pascal, Blaise. In P. Edwards (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of philosophy*. Vol. 5 (51–55). New York: Collier Macmillan.