

Is It More Rational to Bet That God Exists?

You are going to die.

Your life is quickly passing away, and your death will be for eternity. And the moment of this death is unpredictable. It could come 50 years from now or 5 minutes from now.

It's this sobering fact that forms the starting point of one of the most famous proofs for God's existence: Pascal's Wager.

Okay, so it's less a proof for God's existence than it is an argument for acting *as if* God exists.

Let me explain.

The famous mathematician and philosopher [Blaise Pascal](#) (1623-62) laid out his "wager" in [part III](#) of his [Pensées](#). He prefaces his argument with a reflection on the "foolishness," "blindness," and "weakness of mind" of those who were untroubled by their impending death.

Just like today, many in Pascal's time lived as if they were never going to die. They went about their existences wholly consumed with the challenges, anxieties, and enjoyments of the day-to-day. (And indeed, that's what many of us are raised and educated to focus on.) "The sensibility of man to trifles," writes Pascal, "and his insensibility to great things, indicates a strange inversion."

But according to Pascal, it is unconscionable to be indifferent to death. Because of its eternal nature, he thought that one must take some definite position on it, and guide one's life by that position: