

Mini Paper 10

Instructions: this assignment should be **printed out** and turned in **in class** on **November 19**. (If you can't make it to class, you should email it to me before class starts). This paper should be under a page. I like to grade as anonymously as possible, so please **do not put your name on the top of the paper, but instead put it on the opposite side of the page (or on a second page, if you can't print double-sided)**. If you have any questions about how to complete the assignment, please let me know.

This paper covers the excerpts from *Pensees* by Blaise Pascal. In your paper, you should answer **one** of the following two questions. Which one you answer is up to you!

1. Pascal does not think you can demonstrate via reason that God exists. Nonetheless, he argues that you should wager that God exists, by which he means roughly that you should try to get yourself to believe that God exists. One argument he gives for this is the following: "Let us then examine this point, and say, 'God is, or He is not.' But to which side shall we incline? Reason can decide nothing here. ... but you must wager. It is not optional. ... You have two things to lose, your reason and ... your happiness; Your reason is no more shocked in choosing one rather than the other, since you must of necessity choose. This is one point settled. But your happiness? Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager them without hesitation that He is." Reconstruct this argument in premise-conclusion form.
2. Pascal is sometimes interpreted as suggesting that even if your evidence doesn't support something, you can still choose to believe it. What do you think? Is he right about that? And if so, in what circumstances?

I don't have any new tips for this mini-paper, but my tips from previous mini-papers still apply!