

Marcin Gorazda Pragmatism of faith. Jeff Jordan's correct and incorrect arguments for rationality of theism

The paper is a critical, extended review of the book by Jeff Jordan, Pascal's Wager. Pragmatic Arguments and Belief in God. The book was issued in 2006 by Clarendon Press – Oxford and has not been translated in Polish so far. The first part of the paper is an introduction to the problem presented in the book by the author. Generally, the main issue is to analyze the, so called Pascal's Wager, in terms of standard decision theory. The result of such analyze is supposed to be an answer whether the Pascal's Wager is compliant to the contemporary decision theory or not, and in consequence, whether we can, and if so, under what conditions say, that belief in God is rational. At the beginning the author of the book presents various formulations of the Pascal's Wager in Pensées. The most popular, which is referred to, in the paper is called the canonical version. Jeff Jordan is also trying to answer the troublesome questions like: the ethic of the wager and our ability to belief. The family of the most important objections against the Wager, the so called many gods objection, is separately reviewed in the chapter "The embarrassment of riches". Other, minor objection are also discussed. The book is ended with the dispute with John Schellenberg. The critical review of the book consist of three, in my opinion, incorrect arguments (problems) used by Jordan and one, which is very accurate, but unfortunately, not emphasized and weakly justified. The inaccurate issues are as follows: (1) The utilization of the decision theory to the Pascal's Wager. It seems like author were convinced that, if we use the decision theory in the way prescribed in the book, in result we get the proof of the rationality of our choices. It is not so. There are many different solutions and strategies in the game/decision theory, sometimes competitive. The utilization of particular strategies sometimes helps to make up agents' mind, but can't demonstrate the assumed rationality. (2) The problem of probabilities. It seems like Jordan misunderstood the concept of probability and its interpretation. (3) The axiom of monotonicity and the infinite values. Jordan is aware that Pascal's proposals are contradict to one of the axiom of standard decision theory. His counterarguments are weak and inaccurate. The accurate issue is a critic of evidentialism and James's formulation of the Wager. William James in his 1896 essay The Will to Believe, emphasized the utilities connected with the religious faith, which can be experienced by an agent during her earthly life. Although Jordan doesn't point on that, I strongly support this opinion, which seems also to be supported by the contemporary psychological researches.