The *Atheist's Wager* is an atheistic response to Pascal's Wager regarding the existence of God. The wager was formulated in 1990 by Michael Martin, in his book *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification*, and has received some traction in religious and atheist literature since.

One formulation of the *Atheist's Wager* suggests that one should live a good life without religion, since Martin writes that a loving and kind god would reward good deeds, and if no gods exist, a good person will leave behind a positive legacy. The second formulation suggests that, instead of rewarding belief as in Pascal's wager, a god may reward disbelief, in which case one would risk losing infinite happiness by believing in a god unjustly, rather than disbelieving justly.

**Explanation**

The Wager states that if you were to analyze your options in regard to how to live your life, you would come out with the following possibilities:

- You may live a good life and believe in a god, and a benevolent god exists, in which case you go to heaven: your gain is infinite.
- You may live a good life without believing in a god, and a benevolent god exists, in which case you go to heaven: your gain is infinite.
- You may live a good life and believe in a god, but no benevolent god exists, in which case you leave a positive legacy to the world; your gain is finite.
- You may live a good life without believing in a god, and no benevolent god exists, in which case you leave a positive legacy to the world; your gain is finite.
- You may live an evil life and believe in a god, and a benevolent god exists, in which case you go to hell: your loss is infinite.
- You may live an evil life without believing in a god, and a benevolent god exists, in which case you go to hell: your loss is infinite.
- You may live an evil life and believe in a god, but no benevolent god exists, in which case you leave a negative legacy to the world; your loss is finite.
- You may live an evil life without believing in a god, and no benevolent god exists, in which case you leave a negative legacy to the world; your loss is finite.

The following table shows the values assigned to each possible outcome:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A benevolent god exists</th>
<th>No benevolent god exists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belief in god (B)</strong></td>
<td><strong>No belief in god (¬B)</strong></td>
<td><strong>No belief in god (¬B)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good life (L)</strong></td>
<td>+∞ (heaven)</td>
<td>+X (positive legacy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evil life (¬L)</strong></td>
<td>-∞ (hell)</td>
<td>-X (negative legacy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given these values, Martin argues that the option to live a good life clearly dominates the option of living an evil life, regardless of belief in a god.