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Getting a grasp on metaphysical modality

Metaphysical possibility and necessity are highly theoretical notions, yet we find ourselves appealing to allegedly pretheoretical intuitions time and again in debating what is or is not metaphysically possible. How then do we get a grasp on metaphysical modality, one which is not already influenced by a particular theory? This is a particularly pressing question for anti-rationalist theories of metaphysical modality, that is, theories that countenance so-called “strong necessities”, necessities whose contradiction seems perfectly conceivable. I propose a strategy for getting a pretheoretic grasp on metaphysical modality based on the language and linguistics of modality, and argue that this approach is not only implicit in much of the literature on metaphysical modality but is congenial to anti-rationalist theories.