

Epistemic possibility: An event is possible *given what I know*.

Logical possibility is usually considered the broadest sort of possibility; a proposition is said to be logically possible if there is no logical contradiction involved in its being true. "[Dick Cheney](#) is a bachelor" is logically possible, though in fact false; most philosophers have thought that statements like "If I flap my arms very hard, I will fly" are *logically* possible, although they are *nomologically* impossible. "[Dick Cheney](#) is a married bachelor," on the other hand, is *logically impossible*; anyone who is a bachelor is *therefore* not married, so the sentence involves a logical contradiction.

Nomological possibility is *possibility under the actual laws of nature*. Most philosophers since [David Hume](#) have held that the laws of nature are *metaphysically contingent*--that there could have been different natural laws than the ones that actually obtain.

Technological possibility: Possible under the restrictions of technology (a targeting computer accurate to 3000 miles might be logically and nomologically possible, but not technologically possible)

Temporal possibility is *possibility given the actual history of the world*. [David Lewis](#) *could have* chosen to take his degree in Accounting rather than Philosophy; but there is an important sense in which he *cannot now*. The "could have" expresses the fact that there is no logical, metaphysical, or even nomological impossibility involved in Lewis's having a degree in Accounting instead of Philosophy; the "cannot now" expresses the fact that that possibility is no longer open to becoming actual, given that the past is as it actually is.

Question: Can miracles provide satisfactory justification for believing that God exists?

What are we really asking. What exactly *is* a miracle?

- “God makes the impossible possible”. Disambiguate meanings here.
 - Logically* impossible? No—that’s too strong (why? Divine omnipotence)
- “A suspension/violation of a natural law”. How do we know what a natural law is? What constitutes a violation?
 - Something “only a god could do”

Discussion pt: What kinds of events might constitute miracles? Can we construct alternative explanations?

Hume: “I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened.”

-It’s always *more* likely that I’ve made a mistake than that I’ve witnessed the suspension of a law of nature. So I should never believe I’ve seen a miracle.

Objection: But we sometimes *change* our views on what the laws of nature are. How could we do that if we adopted Hume’s view? We’d have to assume that any observed phenomenon that failed to correspond to the LoN was observed in error.

-Well, we can learn more about the conditions in which the law appears to be broken. If we can establish some regularity *within* that set of conditions, then we can re-describe the relevant law of nature.

-But then doesn’t this make the laws of nature unfalsifiable (or at least Hume’s view)? What could *possibly* count as a miracle in this regard?

Objection: If we already have good reason to believe that God exists, then miracles aren’t all that unlikely after all

-But this does no good. The point of miracles was to serve as evidence of god themselves. If we need to grant that god exists to countenance miracles, then it doesn’t look like *miracles can justify the existence of God*. Something *else* must provide the justification for that belief.

How about personal experience?

At the end of the conversation, Jules has adopted a separate issue. But it’s an interesting one. Could a ‘religious experience’ justify religious belief?

-If you were on a hike and a bush appeared to burst into flame and begin speaking to you, would you assume that it was god talking to you? Or that your senses were in error?

No—We might conclude that we’ve seen something *epistemically* impossible, but not something *nomologically* impossible

Hume: “I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened.”