One Ought Too Many*

Stephen Finlay and Justin Snedegar
University of Southern California
finlay@usc.edu, snedegar@usc.edu

Draft of March 15, 2012; Please seek permission to cite

ABSTRACT: Some philosophers hold that 'ought' is ambiguous between a sense expressing a propositional operator and a sense expressing a relation between an agent and an action. We defend the opposing view that 'ought' always expresses a propositional operator against objections that it cannot adequately accommodate an ambiguity in 'ought' sentences between evaluative and deliberative readings, predicting readings of sentences that are not actually available. We show how adopting an independently well-motivated *contrastivist* semantics for 'ought', according to which 'ought' is always relativized to a contrast set of relevant alternatives, enables us to explain the evaluative-deliberative ambiguity and why the availability of these readings depends on sentential grammar.

Normative branches of philosophy take special interest in claims expressed by sentences of the form '*S* ought to φ', where *S* is some agent and φ-ing is some action (broadly conceived). We'll call sentences satisfying this description *agential*. These claims raise many important philosophical issues, such as: Which ones are true? What makes them true? How can we know if they are true? What follows from them? Some philosophers have hoped that light would be cast on these issues if we could get clearer on the exact meaning of this word 'ought'. Once we start looking to language for philosophical clues we should notice that the word 'ought' is also employed in different kinds of sentence. It appears in normative sentences with different grammatical forms, like 'It ought to be that Charlie was born a girl', and 'There ought to be less suffering in the world'. For convenience we'll call sentences like these *nonagential*.[1] (It also has a non-normative *epistemic* use meaning approximately *what is probable*, as in 'The sky ought to get dark soon'.) In these other sentences, 'ought' appears to represent a propositional operator, *O(p)*.

---

* We owe this play on Bernard Williams' famous line to Jake Ross; it has also been previously used in a different connection by Terence Cuneo as a section title of his book *The Normative Web* (Oxford University Press, 2007). For help with the content of the paper, we are grateful to Matthew Chrisman, Brian Cutter, Shyam Nair, Jake Ross, Mark Schroeder, Robert Shanklin, and audiences at UT Austin, USC, the Conference on Practical Reason and Metaethics at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and the IVth annual Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Justin Snedegar's work on this paper was supported by the USC Oakley Fellowship.

[1] 'Agential' and 'nonagential' are here used merely as labels of convenience for two sentence groups of interest, and do not provide an exhaustive or deep classification of 'ought' sentences, many of which are neither agential nor nonagential by our definitions.

Are these other kinds of sentences clues to the meaning of 'ought' in the cases of special interest to normative philosophy? This will be the case if 'ought' has just one linguistic meaning, a unified semantics and logical form (syntax), as is the standard view among linguists. Many philosophers have also embraced this view, which we'll call the *Uniformity Thesis*.[2] On this view agential sentences like 'Vince ought to stop driving drunk' are semantically and logically equivalent to nonagential sentences like 'It ought to be that Vince stops driving drunk', with 'ought' representing a propositional operator in both. This view is rejected by other philosophers who maintain that (at least sometimes) the 'ought' in agential sentences represents rather a normative relation between the agent *S* and the action of φ-ing, with the logical form *O(S, φ)*, and meaning roughly *is obligated to* or *has most reason to*.[3] According to this *Ambiguity Thesis* 'ought' is semantically and logically ambiguous, and it is a mistake to try to draw any philosophical lessons about the agential 'ought' claims of interest to normative philosophy from the other uses of the word.

While remaining neutral about whether the Uniformity Thesis is ultimately correct, in this paper we defend it against the central objection that it cannot account for all the linguistic data from ordinary usage of 'ought'. Versions of this objection have been raised by a number of philosophers including Gilbert Harman, Peter Geach, Anthony Price, and most recently and rigorously, Mark Schroeder. After clarifying the exact identity of the ambiguity at issue and explaining the Overgeneration problem it yields, we introduce a contrastivist semantics for 'ought' and show how it provides resources for accommodating and explaining the problematic data without any need to posit any semantic or logical ambiguity in the word 'ought' itself.

---

[2] In linguistics the seminal texts are Kratzer 1977, 1981. Philosophical advocates of uniformity (at least for all normative uses of 'ought') include Chisholm 1964, Wertheimer 1972, Williams 1981a, Horty & Belnap 1996, Horty 2001, Finlay 2009, ms.

[3] For example Harman 1973, Vermazen 1977, Schroeder 2004, 2011, Price 2008 (who also attributes the view to St. Anselm), Ross 2010, ms. Pritchard (1912: 24) and Geach (1982) claim that 'ought' has only the relational and not any propositional sense; we do not take this radical view seriously here. A compromise view (e.g. Broome 1999, Wedgwood 2006, 2007) proposes that 'ought' sometimes represents a relation between an agent and a *proposition*. This view yields wrong predictions about the acceptability of various 'ought' sentences and the availability of readings (see criticism in Schroeder 2004: 343, 2011, Price 2008: 64-6), and we do not address it here.

1. The Ambiguity

'Ought' sentences seem ambiguous in a variety of ways. We can distinguish normative readings from epistemic readings, moral from prudential readings, and more. Not all of these differences present a challenge for the Uniformity Thesis, as we'll explain. The challenge is motivated by one difference in particular, which can be observed between paradigmatic examples of nonagential sentences, like

(1) It ought to be that every election is free and fair.
(2) It ought to be that Larry wins the lottery.

and of agential sentences, like

(3) Bill ought to kiss Lucy.
(4) Vince ought to stop driving drunk.

The nonagential sentences (1) and (2) say that certain states of affairs ought to be the case (the "ought-to-be"). Here 'ought' is commonly interpreted as meaning *it is best that*…,[4] so we can call these readings *evaluative*.[5] From some state of affairs being best nothing directly follows about how any agent has most reason to act, and so these sentences seem to have only indirect bearing on agents' deliberations. Sentence (2), for example, entails neither that somebody has most reason to rig the lottery so Larry wins, nor even that Larry has most reason to buy a lottery ticket, since the odds of his winning would still remain extremely long.

By contrast, the agential sentences (3) and (4) on a natural reading do seem to entail claims about the agents' reasons to act (the "ought-to-do"), and so to bear directly on their deliberations. They do not, however, entail that any particular state of affairs would be best. We can call these readings *deliberative*. Mark Schroeder offers five hallmarks of deliberative readings that distinguish them from evaluative readings. The deliberative 'ought', unlike the evaluative 'ought', (i) matters directly for *advice*; (ii) functions to close *deliberation*; (iii) is characteristically tied to assessments of agents' *accountability*; (iv) *implies 'can'*;[6] and (v) is closely

[4] E.g. Sloman 1970, Williams 1981b: 125.
[5] Our terminology follows Schroeder's. Others have called these readings 'political' or 'situational'.
[6] Here he cites Moore 1922, Humberstone 1971, and Wedgwood 2007.

related to *obligation*.[7] We accept that these differences between readings exist, but reject the ambiguity theorists' claim that the Uniformity Thesis cannot accommodate and explain them.

How can ambiguities in 'ought' sentences coherently be admitted without accepting the Ambiguity Thesis? The issue between the Uniformity and Ambiguity Theses more precisely is whether any of these sentential ambiguities are due to the word 'ought' itself having more than one meaning. Other explanations of an 'ought' sentence's admitting different readings are possible, which are compatible with a uniform semantics for 'ought' itself. One possibility is that there is an ambiguity in some other part of the sentence. A solution of this kind is the *agency-in-the-prejacent* theory of Nuel Belnap and John Horty. This theory explains the difference between evaluative and deliberative readings of 'ought' sentences by postulating an implicit agency operator, *stit* ('sees to it that'), present in deliberative readings and absent in evaluative readings.[8]

While Schroeder discusses and rejects the agency-in-the-prejacent theory, other kinds of explanation are also available which to our knowledge have not been addressed by ambiguity theorists. (i) If 'ought' were *indexical* like 'now' and 'I' then it could contribute differently to the proposition expressed by an 'ought' sentence depending on context of use, without varying in meaning. 'Now' does not have a different (semantic) meaning at every time of utterance, for example. Or (ii), if 'ought' is semantically *incomplete* in having one or more implicit places for an argument or variable provided by context—as, for example, 'poisonous' has an argument place for a subject: poisonous *to whom/what*?—then a common underlying semantics for 'ought' could accommodate indefinitely many different readings of the same 'ought' sentences. Finally, (iii) use of the same sentence can communicate different information *pragmatically*, depending on the context of use. Our solution in section 4 will apply a combination of the last two strategies, appealing to incompleteness and pragmatics.

Ambiguity theorists believe that the evaluative/deliberative ambiguity provides an especially—perhaps even uniquely—strong case for an ambiguity in 'ought' itself, because it

---

[7] Schroeder says only "closely connected" because 'ought' is in different ways both weaker and stronger than 'is obligated': weaker in that what ought to be done needn't be obligatory (viz. the contrast between 'ought' and 'must'), and stronger in that whereas obligations can conflict, 'ought' expresses an all-things-considered verdict.

[8] Belnap & Horty 1996, Horty 2001. See also discussion in Price 2008: 66n.

appears to be not merely semantic but also *logical* (syntactic).[9] Grammatically, this means that these two senses of 'ought' allegedly obey different rules in composing meaningful sentences through combination with other words. Whereas the evaluative 'ought' takes a sentence as its object and logically expresses an operator on propositions, the deliberative 'ought' takes two objects, a noun referring to an agent and an infinitival verb clause referring to an action, and logically expresses a relation between the agent and the action. Consequently the Ambiguity Thesis yields a testable kind of prediction: that 'ought' sentences with certain syntax will only admit one kind of reading and not the other.

Naïvely, one might suppose this prediction to be already confirmed by the association of agential 'ought' sentences with deliberative readings and nonagential 'ought' sentences with evaluative readings, which we utilized ourselves to illustrate the ambiguity, above. But care is needed, because 'ought' sentences with the grammatical form of agential sentences also admit evaluative readings. For example, the sentences

(1a) Every election ought to be free and fair.

(2a) Larry ought to win the lottery.

have natural evaluative readings as equivalent to (1) and (2), respectively, lacking Schroeder's five hallmarks of the deliberative 'ought'. The linguistic explanation of this is that 'ought' is a *raising* verb, like other sentential operators in English. An idiosyncrasy of English grammar is the requirement that every sentence have a grammatical subject (noun or noun-phrase). For example, although the word 'might' takes a whole sentence (like 'Today is Sunday') as its semantic object, it is ungrammatical to say 'Might be that today is Sunday'. One way of complying with the rule is by employing an expletive or non-referring subject term like 'there' or 'it', as in 'It might be that today is Sunday'. This is found in the nonagential 'ought' sentences like (1) and (2), with the constructions '*There* ought to be…' and '*It* ought to be that…'. A different way of complying with the rule is by "raising" the noun from the subordinate or *prejacent* sentence (e.g. 'Today is Sunday') to the subject position before the verb (e.g. 'Today might be Sunday')—hence the name "raising verb". English grammar

[9] This contrasts with the normative/epistemic distinction, for example, which might initially be thought clear evidence of ambiguity. But normative and epistemic 'ought's have both been analyzed as propositional operators, and multiple theories offer ways of accounting for the distinction with a uniform semantics for 'ought' itself; e.g. Sloman 1970, Wheeler 1974, Kratzer 1981, Finlay 2009.

therefore allows the nonagential sentence (2) to be transformed via subject-raising into the agential sentence (2a) without change in meaning or logical form.

The upshot is that if the Ambiguity Thesis is correct then agential 'ought' sentences will be logically ambiguous between (i) evaluative readings where 'ought' is a raising verb like 'might', and (ii) deliberative readings where 'ought' is rather a *control* verb like 'wants' and 'tries'. (A control verb has a semantic subject for its verb argument that is also the semantic subject of the control verb itself. For example, in 'Bill wants to kiss Lucy', Bill is the subject of both the control verb 'want' and its verb argument 'kiss'—i.e. the wanting and the kissing at issue are both Bill's.) Therefore it is impossible to confirm the Ambiguity Thesis by finding that agential 'ought' sentences do not admit evaluative readings, as it concedes to the Uniformity Thesis that evaluative readings of these sentences will always be available. However, the behavior of raising and control verbs do differ in some significant ways, and it is to these differences that ambiguity theorists must appeal for evidence that deliberative readings can only arise from a control sense of 'ought'. We turn now to examine this evidence.

2. The Overgeneration Problem

The central problem for the Uniformity Thesis is *overgeneration*. Semantic and logical uniformity seems to predict deliberative readings of 'ought' sentences which in actuality only admit evaluative readings.[10] There are two major pieces of data here. The first comes from nonagential 'ought' sentences, with the grammatical constructions 'It ought to be that…' and 'There ought to be…'. Only raising verbs can occur in these constructions. Control verbs (like 'wants') cannot because they require genuinely referring nouns in subject position. The Ambiguity Thesis therefore predicts that nonagential 'ought' sentences should never admit deliberative readings, as they have only non-referring nouns in subject position. By contrast, the Uniformity Thesis entails that every agential 'ought' sentence has a semantically and logically equivalent nonagential sentence as its grammatical transformation. So it seems to predict rather that nonagential 'ought' sentences should admit all the same readings as their agential transformations, including the deliberative readings of those sentences. Schroeder

[10] In his 2011, Schroeder claims there is both an overgeneration problem and an *undergeneration* problem. In conversation he concedes that both are really instances of overgeneration, as explained below.

claims that the data confirms the prediction of the Ambiguity Thesis and disconfirms the prediction of the Uniformity Thesis: nonagential 'ought' sentences like (1) and (2) admit only evaluative and never deliberative readings. This is the first piece of the case for semantic and logical ambiguity in 'ought'.

The second piece of data comes from *passivization*.[11] Contrast the sentences

(5a) Bill ought to kiss Lucy.
(5b) Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill.

According to the Uniformity Thesis, (5a) is formed by applying 'ought' to the prejacent sentence 'Bill kisses Lucy'. 'Bill' becomes the grammatical subject of the sentence by being raised from its position as the subject of the prejacent, as described above. Similarly, (5b) is formed by applying 'ought' to the prejacent sentence 'Lucy is kissed by Bill', with 'Lucy' being raised from its position as the subject of the prejacent. Since the sentence 'Lucy is kissed by Bill' is simply the passivization of the sentence 'Bill kisses Lucy', these two prejacents differ only grammatically and not semantically or logically. The Uniformity Thesis therefore seems to predict that (5a) and (5b) also differ only grammatically, and are semantically and logically equivalent, just like

(6a) Bill might kiss Lucy.
(6b) Lucy might be kissed by Bill.

For convenience we will refer to 'ought' sentences like (5b) as *passive*.[12]

As observed above, the Ambiguity Thesis accepts that (5a) has an evaluative reading with a raising 'ought', which is equivalent to (5b). But it also predicts that on the rival, deliberative reading the meaning of (5a) will differ significantly from that of (5b). In (5a) 'ought' logically connects the agent Bill with the action of kissing Lucy, while in (5b) 'ought' logically connects Lucy with the "action" of being kissed by Bill. The Ambiguity Thesis therefore predicts that the readings of this pair of sentences will differ significantly, like those of the following two sentences involving an uncontroversial control verb:

---

[11] See also Humberstone 1971, Harman 1973, Geach 1982, Price 2008.
[12] Calling (5b) the passivization proper of (5a) would be to assume what is in question, that 'ought' in (5a) is a raising verb.

(7a) Bill wants to kiss Lucy.

(7b) Lucy wants to be kissed by Bill.

Here too the data is claimed to confirm the prediction of the Ambiguity Thesis and not that of the Uniformity Thesis. Whereas (5a) has a deliberative reading, "on which it is appropriate for advice for *Bill*, on which it settles *Bill's* deliberative question of what to do, on which *Bill* is accountable if he does not kiss Lucy, which implies that *Bill* is able to kiss Lucy, and which is on a par with the claim that *Bill* has an obligation to kiss Lucy",[13] it is maintained that (5b) allows no deliberative reading. This is the second major piece of the case for semantic ambiguity in 'ought'.

At first glance this looks like a strong case for ambiguity.[14] Our primary response will be to demonstrate that the Uniformity Thesis can accommodate and explain this data. However, we pause briefly here to voice some doubts about the data.[15] While we agree that nonagential and passive 'ought' sentences do not naturally suggest deliberative readings, it seems to us that these readings can sometimes be available, especially with a suitable context. Consider the scenario of a dating game show where the host is about to reveal which of three contestants is obliged to give Lucy a kiss. In this context we find it quite natural to interpret his utterance of (5b), 'Lucy ought to be kissed by…Bill!' as having all five of Schroeder's hallmarks for deliberative 'ought's. The parallel point holds, we think, of 'It ought to be that…Bill kisses Lucy!'

One might be tempted to suppose that the difficulty of obtaining these deliberative readings itself supports the Ambiguity Thesis over the Uniformity Thesis. This characteristic of nonagential and passive 'ought' sentences is certainly something that a defender of the

---

[13] Schroeder 2011: 15, his emphasis.

[14] Schroeder supplements this evidence by arguing that 'ought' on a deliberative reading satisfies three common linguistic tests for distinguishing control verbs from raising verbs. The upshot of these tests is that control verbs require a subject noun referring to a kind of agent or object that is of the right kind to stand in the relation expressed by the verb. The deliberative 'ought' allegedly shares this requirement, allowing only subject terms that refer to an agent. We provide an explanation of this feature of deliberative 'ought' sentences below, for a uniform raising semantics. Price (2008: 52) provides a further objection to uniformity appealing to the difference between 'Everyone ought to *F*' and 'It ought to be that everyone *F*s'. But this objection overlooks the scope ambiguity in the former between $\forall x O(Fx)$ and $O(\forall x Fx)$.

[15] For related objections to Schroeder's data see Chrisman (forthcoming). Chrisman challenges Schroeder's thesis by presenting competing evidence, not discussed by Schroeder, that 'ought' does not have a control sense, whereas here we attempt to defuse Schroeder's evidence by giving an alternative explanation of it that is consistent with semantic uniformity. Chrisman observes a couple of tests for control verbs that 'ought' fails: (i) control verbs allow *er-nominalization*—compare 'the wanter', 'the trier' (okay) with 'the mighter', 'the oughter' (not okay), and (ii) control verbs allow passive constructions like 'it was wanted' (contrast 'it was oughted', which patterns with 'it was mighted').

Uniformity Thesis is obliged to explain; we try to discharge this burden below in section 4. But if our intuitions about the data are right this presents a more serious problem for the Ambiguity Thesis, which predicts that deliberative readings of these nonagential and passive sentences should not be possible at all, just as there is no permissible reading of (7b) as equivalent to (7a). For the sake of argument however we will proceed by assuming that the ambiguity theorists' description of the data is correct.

3. A Contrastivist Account of Ambiguity

To our knowledge only one strategy for explaining the difference between evaluative and deliberative readings of 'ought' sentences with a uniform, raising semantics for 'ought' has been directly considered by ambiguity theorists. On that strategy, the agency-in-the-prejacent-theory, evaluative readings result from interpreting 'ought' sentences as containing an implicit agency operator, *stit* ('sees to it that'). A distinction can then be drawn between *It ought to be that Bill kisses Lucy* (evaluative) and *It ought to be that Bill sees to it that he kisses Lucy* (deliberative), as two possible readings of 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy'. Schroeder argues that this theory falls prey to the Overgeneration problem. Since it locates the ambiguity in the prejacent sentence, 'Bill kisses Lucy', it apparently predicts that this ambiguity would also occur in nonagential and passive 'ought' sentences, which are formed by applying 'ought' to the same prejacent.

Even if this objection against the agency-in-the-prejacent theory is successful,[16] there are other ways of explaining the ambiguity with a uniform, raising 'ought', which do not locate the ambiguity in the prejacent sentence. A *contrastivist* semantics for 'ought' provides the alternative that we wish to explore. According to contrastivism 'ought' claims are always relativized to a contrast class. For example, to claim that it ought to be the case that Larry wins the lottery is to claim of some set of alternative propositions {*a*, *b*, *c*, …} salient in the context that it ought to be the case that Larry wins the lottery *rather than* that any other of *a*,

[16] It could be resisted by denying that 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill' is allowable as a passivization of 'Bill ought to [stit: he] kiss Lucy'. This could be motivated by taking 'stit' to be syntactically the main verb and to leave a grammatical "trace". The correct passivization would then be 'Bill's kissing Lucy ought to be seen to by Bill'. However, this objection depends on some controversial assumptions in linguistics and *stit* semantics. It also provides no solution to overgeneration worries for nonagential sentences. We prefer our solution below.

b, *c*, … obtains.[17] Different contrast classes generate different readings for 'ought' claims; for example, saying that it ought to be that Larry wins the lottery rather than that *a* or *b* is to make a different claim than saying that it ought to be that Larry wins the lottery rather than that *b* or *c*. Contrastivism about 'ought' is independently well-motivated, having been embraced by numerous philosophers and for a variety of reasons.[18] If the normative 'ought' is correctly glossed as meaning *best*, for example, then it would inherit its contrastive character from the contrastive character of *better than*.[19]

Contrastivism offers a simple explanation of how 'ought' sentences can be ambiguous without any ambiguity in 'ought' itself—or in the prejacent sentence either. We can instead explain the ambiguity as arising from different kinds of contrast classes. A single proposition as expressed by a prejacent sentence such as 'Bill kisses Lucy' can allow different dimensions of contrast. The relevant contrast can be supplied in various ways. In ordinary speech it is common to indicate it by focus, as conveyed by intonational stress and other forms of emphasis.[20] For example, contrast the following sentences, with italics indicating focus:[21]

(8) Bill kisses Lucy.

(8a) *Bill* kisses Lucy.

(8b) Bill *kisses* Lucy.

(8c) Bill kisses *Lucy*.

(8d) Bill *kisses Lucy*.

---

[17] Contrastivism permits different syntactic realizations. Perhaps 'ought' has an argument-place for a contrast class in its logical form (e.g. Finlay 2009). Or perhaps it directs us to a contrast class privileged in the context that determines truth-conditions without appearing in the logical form. We take no stand on this issue here. We also assume that contrast sets do not need to be exhaustive of logical space, and that they allow us to distinguish alternatives at varying levels of detail—something Yalcin (2011) and Cariani (forthcoming) label *resolution-sensitivity*.

[18] Sloman 1970, Jackson 1985, Finlay 2009, ms, Cariani 2009, forthcoming, Snedegar forthcoming.

[19] One of us has argued elsewhere for a uniform semantics for normative and epistemic uses of 'ought' in probabilistic terms (Finlay 2009, 2010, ms).

[20] See Rooth 1992. Schaffer 2004, 2008 also appeals to focus in his defense of contrastivism about 'knows'. A contrast class might also become salient simply by being the class of alternatives under discussion in the context, or the class of alternatives among which the agent (or perhaps the speaker) is deliberating. Cf. Cariani's discussion (forthcoming) of the *deliberative question*.

[21] We are not suggesting that (8a)-(8d) are semantically contrastive; this is one sentence expressing one proposition. The contrasts involved in an assertion of this sentence are rather pragmatic, concerning the relevance of the proposition in the context. (Is the conversational interest in what Bill is up to? In what is happening to Lucy? In what Bill is doing to Lucy? In whom Bill is kissing? ...)

In (8a) the focus is on 'Bill', naturally suggesting a contrast with a set of alternative propositions which each involve some person other than Bill kissing Lucy; e.g. {Tom kisses Lucy, Jack kisses Lucy, Mary kisses Lucy, …}. In (8b) the focus is on 'kisses', naturally suggesting a contrast with a set of alternatives in which Bill acts in some different way towards Lucy; e.g. {Bill shakes hands with Lucy, Bill says goodnight to Lucy, Bill hugs Lucy, …}. In (8c) the focus is on 'Lucy', naturally suggesting contrast with a set of alternatives in which Bill kisses someone other than Lucy; e.g. {Bill kisses Mary, Bill kisses Jill, Bill kisses Tom…}. In (8d) the focus is on 'kisses Lucy', suggesting contrast with a set of alternatives in which Bill does other things, perhaps with other people. In the case of (8) where no part of the sentence is emphasized, possible contrasts include sets of alternatives in which something completely different happens, perhaps involving different people and actions. For example, A: "What happens next in your play?" B: "Bill kisses Lucy".

These different contrasts are retained and exploited semantically when a propositional, raising 'ought' takes the sentence 'Bill kisses Lucy' as its prejacent:

(9) Bill ought to kiss Lucy.
(9a) *Bill* ought to kiss Lucy.
(9b) Bill ought to *kiss* Lucy.
(9c) Bill ought to kiss *Lucy*.
(9d) Bill ought to *kiss Lucy*.

In each case the focus makes it natural to read the 'ought' sentence as saying that the state of affairs that Bill kisses Lucy is *better* (in some sense) than any of the alternatives in the contrast class suggested by that focus. So, for example, we read (9a) as saying that it is better that *Bill* be the person who kisses Lucy (than that it be Tom, or Jack, or Mary, etc. who does), while we read (9b) as saying that it is better that what Bill does to Lucy is *kiss* her (than that he shake her hand, tell her goodnight, hug her, etc.). These natural readings of (9a)-(9d) all differ significantly from each other, showing that when supplemented with contrastivism, the Uniformity Thesis can accommodate major ambiguities in 'ought' sentences.

These contrastivist ambiguities are plausibly relevant to the difference between evaluative and deliberative readings of 'ought' sentences. We hypothesize that to get a deliberative reading of an 'ought' claim for an agent *S* is approximately *to interpret it as having a*

content that S could (if she justifiably believed it) appropriately use to settle her deliberations about what to do. Deliberation aims at settling on one course of action out of a set of options lying within the agent's power. Hence, deliberating agents try to identify the best of the options within their power. We can then define a *deliberative set for S*: a contrast set of propositions involving alternative options *S* is able to choose. So for example the kind of contrast set naturally suggested by the focus on (9a)—i.e. {Tom kisses Lucy, Jack kisses Lucy, Mary kisses Lucy, …}—will not be a deliberative set for Bill, or presumably for any other agent.[22, 23] But each of (9b)-(9d) can naturally be read as suggesting a deliberative set for Bill. He may deliberate over whether to *kiss* Lucy, rather than shake her hand, tell her good night, or hug her; here (9b) will be at issue. Or he may deliberate over whether to kiss *Lucy*, rather than Mary, Jill, or Tom; here (9c) will be at issue.

Our contrastivist hypothesis is that to get a reading of an 'ought' sentence as deliberative for *S*, it is necessary that it be interpreted as relativized to a deliberative set for *S*. (We do not claim that a deliberative set interpretation is also *sufficient*; there may be other necessary conditions.[24]) The availability of deliberative set readings can be expected to depend on a variety of other, pragmatic factors in addition to focus. Some 'ought' sentences, like 'Larry ought to win the lottery', will resist deliberative set readings because they involve events that aren't sufficiently in the agent's power. Some contexts of utterance will strongly suggest deliberative set readings as what is required for a cooperative contribution to the conversation. Whispering to Bill 'You ought to kiss Lucy!' while he is saying goodnight to

---

[22] Perhaps it could be a deliberative set for God. Arguably, a deliberative set for *S* doesn't always have to consist in propositions about *S*. For example, Chrisman (forthcoming) observes that sentences like 'Rump roast ought to cook slowly' and 'Invitations ought to go out by post' can be used to give advice, in which context they can have all Schroeder's hallmarks for a deliberative 'ought'. But they are not plausibly read as relativized to deliberative sets *for rump roasts/invitations*.

[23] But isn't a deliberative reading compatible with placing focus on the agent? Consider the following exchange. A: "Did you say that Tom ought to kiss Lucy?" B: "No, I said that *Bill* ought to kiss Lucy. He's the one who promised to kiss her, not Tom." We accept that a deliberative reading is natural here, and we allow that focus needn't always function to indicate the contrast class supplied to 'ought'. Even on contrastivism, speakers will sometimes need to draw other kinds of contrasts. For example, there are two separate contrasts operative in "What I said was that *Bill* ought to kiss Lucy (out of: he kisses Lucy, he kisses Jill, he kisses Mary, …), rather than that *Tom* ought to kiss Lucy (out of: he kisses Lucy, he kisses Jill, he kisses Mary, …)" Here a contrast is drawn between two contrastive (and intuitively deliberative) claims. We think this is a plausible elucidation of the exchange between A and B.

[24] For example, we are sympathetic to the objection that a deliberative 'ought' doesn't identify an option in an agent's power as being best in some *objective* sense (e.g. from the "point of view of the universe"); see Ross 2010, ms. Plausibly, a deliberative reading requires that the option be identified as "best" in some agent-relative sense. In other work one of us has argued that normative 'ought' claims are also relativized to *ends* (Finlay 2009). We might say that a deliberative reading of an 'ought' claim requires relativization to the "agent's ends" in some salient sense. This move also blocks Jacob Ross's argument for ambiguity.

her on her doorstep, for example, will strongly suggest a deliberative set reading like that made salient by (9b), since the alternative readings with non-deliberative sets will not ordinarily be so cooperatively communicated in that context, like telling him that it is better that *he* kisses Lucy, than that Tom, Jack, or Mary does.

Plausibly, an 'ought' sentence will satisfy Schroeder's five hallmarks for the deliberative 'ought' if (typically), and only if it is given a deliberative set reading, as follows. (i) *Deliberation*: as we've already observed, an agent deliberates to identify the best of all and only the courses of action that are within her power.[25] (ii) *Advice:* similarly, a cooperative advisor aims to inform an agent about which is best out of all and only those courses of action within her power. (iii) *Implies 'Can':* trivially, 'ought' implies 'can' if and only if it is relativized to a deliberative set, since we have defined this as a set of options within the agent's power. (iv) *Accountability:* plausibly, agents are accountable for choosing the best course of action within their power, and not accountable for what is not within their power. (v) *Obligation:* plausibly, an agent stands in a relationship with an action akin to obligation (e.g. having most reason) if and only if it is the best action in her power.

Contrastivism therefore offers a promising way to accommodate and explain a difference between evaluative and deliberative readings of 'ought' sentences without positing any semantic or logical ambiguity in 'ought' itself.

4. A Contrastivist Solution to the Overgeneration Problem

Can this contrastivist theory escape the Overgeneration problem, the central objection to the Uniformity Thesis? Schroeder diagnoses the problem as an inevitable result of locating the ambiguity in the prejacent instead of in 'ought'; since the contrastivist explanation locates it elsewhere might we thereby evade the objection? But the overgeneration data teaches a broader lesson: that the 'ought' sentences resisting deliberative readings (i.e. passive and nonagential sentences) are precisely those whose grammar dictates that they can only involve a raising 'ought' and not a control 'ought'. It makes no difference whether the uniformity theorist locates the ambiguity in the prejacent or somewhere else;

[25] This "best" in deliberation and advice seems to be information-relative, which raises significant philosophical issues that need not be addressed here. For discussion see Kolodny and MacFarlane ms, Björnsson and Finlay 2010.

either way he faces the challenge of giving an explanation of this correlation that is not *ad hoc*. Ambiguity theorists maintain that this challenge cannot be met, and therefore that the only feasible treatments of deliberative readings are those appealing to a distinct sense of 'ought' as a control verb.

At first glance, contrastivism about 'ought' seems to offer nothing that addresses the problem. If the ambiguity in 'ought' sentences arises neither from 'ought' itself nor from the prejacent sentence but rather from differences in a contextually salient set of alternatives, then it might reasonably be supposed that mere grammatical differences in how 'ought' and the prejacent sentence are composed shouldn't make any difference for the availability of particular readings. Deliberative-set readings should be no less available for nonagential sentences like 'It ought to be that Bill kisses Lucy' and passive sentences like 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill' than for agential 'ought' sentences like 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy'.

The contrastivist needs an explanation of why these grammatical differences would affect the availability of deliberative-set readings of 'ought' sentences. Ambiguity theorists dismiss the notion that mere grammatical differences could determine the semantic interpretation of 'ought' sentences as being evaluative or deliberative, but we think there is a plausible pragmatic story that the contrastivist can tell in support of the Uniformity Thesis. The Gricean principle that is sensitive to grammatical differences is the maxim of Manner (1989: 27), which concerns *how* things are said. Of particular relevance is the submaxim we will call *Efficiency:* "Avoid unnecessary prolixity". *Efficiency* implies that a speaker will use the shortest and simplest sentence she can, unless she has special reasons to do otherwise. The use of a longer, more awkward sentence will therefore pragmatically signal that the speaker has some special reason for not selecting the more efficient sentence. Consider for example the following pairs of sentences, borrowed from Levinson (2000):

(10a) It's possible that the plane will be late.
(10b) It's not impossible that the plane will be late.

(11a) Bill stopped the car.
(11b) Bill got the car to stop.

Semantically each member of these pairs of sentences does not have significantly different truth conditions. But the lesser efficiency of the second member of each pair indicates that a speaker who uses it has some special reason for selecting it over the alternative. For (10b), perhaps the speaker intends to signal that this particular plane is less likely to be late than is typical, or that the possibility it will be late is too negligible to merit comment. For (11b), the speaker may intend to signal that Bill had to stop the car in an unusual way because the brakes failed.[26]

We shall now argue that a uniform contrastivist semantics for 'ought' can explain the overgeneration data by appealing to *Efficiency*. Consider first the case of a passive 'ought' sentence like 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill'. This sentence is less efficient than its active counterpart 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy', and so *Efficiency* tells us to expect a special reason for its use. Hence, the ambiguity theorists' claim that the choice of active or passive voice makes no difference to our interpretation of a sentence is simply mistaken. Grammarians standardly counsel writers to choose between active and passive voice depending on how they wish to place *focus*. Here's an example of such lay online advice, from "Grammar Girl":

> Depending on the context, it might make more sense to write, 'The cookies were stolen', instead of 'Somebody stole the cookies'… If you want to put the focus on the cookies, use passive voice. Alternatively, if you want to put the focus on the unknown thief, use active voice.[27]

More precisely, passive voice appears to provide a means of de-emphasizing the agent by eliminating reference to her or him, as in 'The cookies were stolen'.[28] This cannot be done with the active voice because of the requirement that every sentence have a grammatical subject, which in active-voice sentences must be the agent-noun.

We have already observed that shifting focus is a natural way of controlling the salience of different contrast sets. A natural hypothesis is therefore that passive 'ought' sentences resist deliberative readings because the use of passive voice has the effect of placing focus on the prejacent in a way that strongly raises the salience of nondeliberative

---

[26] Consider also Levinson's *M Heuristic*: "What's said in an abnormal way isn't normal" (2000: 38-9).

[27] Accessed on 3-8-12 at http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/active-voice-versus-passive-voice.aspx.

[28] Google 'passive voice' for further confirmation; the first result (on 3-8-12) is advice from the Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill (http://writingcenter.unc.edu/resources/handouts-demos/citation/passive-voice). We are told to use the passive voice when we intend to emphasize the patient or de-emphasize the agent, as in case the agent is irrelevant or unknown.

contrast sets. So, for example, 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill' places focus on the prejacent in a way that suggests an evaluative contrast set like {Tom kisses Lucy, Jack kisses Lucy, Mary kisses Lucy…}, rather than a deliberative contrast class like {Bill kisses Mary, Bill kisses Jill, Bill kisses Tom…}. This hypothesis receives support if we consider which readings are natural when a contrast is made explicit. For example, 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill rather than *J*' is more naturally read as meaning that Bill rather than *J* ought to kiss Lucy, and not as meaning that Bill ought to kiss Lucy rather than kiss *J*. We can increase the salience of the latter contrast set by adding intonational focus; e.g. '*Lucy* ought to be kissed by Bill rather than *J*'.

Can the use of passive sentences be predicted to have this effect on the basis of the contrastivist account of the deliberative/evaluative ambiguity? We argued in the last section that focus determines the dimension of contrast; e.g. that putting the focus on the agent (e.g. '*Bill* ought to kiss Lucy') suggests an evaluative set in which the alternatives differ by agent, like {Tom kisses Lucy, Jack kisses Lucy, …}, while putting the focus on the patient (e.g. 'Bill ought to kiss *Lucy*') can suggest a deliberative set in which the alternatives differ by patient, like {Bill kisses Lucy, Bill kisses Mary, …}. What we need to explain is that passive 'ought' sentences suggest an evaluative set. So we should expect to find that passive sentences place focus on the *agent* rather than on the patient or elsewhere. This looks like a problem: haven't we found that passive voice functions rather to shift focus *away* from the agent? This problem is easily solved, however. We observed above that the passive voice has this function because it allows elimination of any reference to an agent. The corresponding passivization of (5a) is therefore 'Lucy ought to be kissed'.[29] But significantly, the passive 'ought' sentences like (5b) we are considering are more verbose: 'Lucy ought to be kissed *by Bill*' (compare 'The cookies were stolen by somebody'). Here the speaker has gone to the extra length of attaching a complement clause ('by Bill') that is not grammatically required, in order to explicitly refer to the agent. *Efficiency* tells us she must have a special reason for doing so. Any special reason for referring to an agent will place focus on that agent. Hence passivization can also be a device for putting extra focus on the agent-noun moved out of subject position. By contrast, explicit reference to an agent in an active voice sentence like

[29] This sentence isn't naturally read as deliberative either, which can easily be explained. Suppressing any reference to an agent naturally suggests that the identity of the agent is irrelevant—what is relevant is that Lucy gets kissed, no matter by whom—which will generally block a deliberative set reading for any particular agent.

an agential 'ought' sentence cannot by itself place focus on the agent, since for the active voice this reference is necessary to supply a grammatical subject.

We therefore have a pragmatic explanation for why passive sentences but not agential sentences will resist deliberative readings if a uniform contrastivist semantics for 'ought' is correct. Passive sentences like (5b) place focus on the agent by virtue of the inefficiency of their reference to the agent, thereby indicating an evaluative contrast set. By contrast, because agential sentences like (5a) 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy' are maximally efficient, their grammar does not itself place focus on any word, permitting both evaluative- and deliberative-set readings.

This solution for passive 'ought' sentences does not directly extend to the other half of the Overgeneration problem, involving nonagential sentences like 'It ought to be that Bill kisses Lucy'. Here grammar does not seem to place focus on any particular part of the prejacent 'Bill kisses Lucy', so we do not yet have an explanation why nonagential sentences would resist deliberative readings if contrastivism is correct. However, these sentences are significantly more verbose and awkward than their agential counterparts, so *Efficiency* can be applied here too. When interpreting the use of a nonagential sentence, we can assume that the speaker has a special reason for using the less efficient sentence. Why doesn't she rather exploit the ability of 'ought' to raise a subject from the prejacent? While the solution to this seems less obvious to us than in the case of passive sentences, there are some plausible answers we can explore.

An obvious reason for using the nonagential sentence would be that the speaker intends to prevent a reading that would be salient if she used the most efficient, agential sentence instead (this is to invoke Grice's submaxim to "avoid ambiguity"). Since nonagential sentences clearly resist deliberative readings while (active voice) agential sentences at least often encourage deliberative readings (as evidenced by our ability to set up the contrast between evaluative and deliberative readings in section 1 by presenting examples of these two sentence kinds), this suggests that use of an inefficient nonagential sentence must indicate that the speaker intends a nondeliberative set reading. Since the agential sentence is more efficient, speakers can be expected to use it for merely evaluative 'ought' claims so long as there are enough other cues to make the intended evaluative contrast set

overridingly salient; for example if the proposition expressed by the prejacent isn't a deliberative option for the agent. This is what we find with (1a), 'Every election ought to be free and fair', and (2a), 'Larry ought to win the lottery', which strongly encourage an evaluative reading due to the nature of their content. Use of a nonagential sentence would therefore be warranted just in case a deliberative reading would otherwise be salient.

This tendency of nonagential sentences to indicate evaluative readings is something that contrastivism needs to explain, however, and not something it can simply help itself to. Since agential sentences are ambiguous between deliberative and evaluative readings an explanation is needed of why nonagential sentences would be used to block one kind of reading and not the other. We propose two different but complementary answers, one based on characteristics of agential sentences, the other on characteristics of nonagential sentences.

First, we hypothesize that use of agential sentences carries a default presumption of relativization to a deliberative set. This could be a generalized conversational implicature based on the normal use of 'ought' for practical purposes like giving advice, expressing reproach, and concluding deliberation.[30] Or perhaps raising an agent-noun to subject-position functions to place focus on the action, generating a deliberative set for the agent like {(Bill) kisses Mary, (Bill) hugs Lucy, (Bill) greets Tom, …}. Or alternatively, perhaps raising an agent-noun is simply a semi-conventionalized communicative device for indicating a deliberative set for that agent. This cue would of course be highly defeasible, given how easily we can use agential sentences to express evaluative claims, especially by use of focus. But in situations where it is not defeated, such a presumption would provide a reason to use a less efficient nonagential sentence if an evaluative set is intended instead. These situations may include cases where the prejacent sentence naturally lends itself to a deliberative reading (e.g. 'It ought to be that Bill kisses Lucy'), or where focus is more difficult to utilize, as in written communication (since italics allow much less nuance than intonation).

Second, we can look at the intrinsic grammatical features of nonagential sentences themselves. One significant feature is that they provide the only natural way of forming an 'ought' sentence that keeps its prejacent sentence grammatically intact; i.e. 'Bill kisses Lucy'

[30] See Copp 2001 and Strandberg 2012 for hypotheses of this kind.

appears intact in 'It ought to be that Bill kisses Lucy' (nonagential), but not in 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy' (agential) or in 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill' (passive). We can therefore reason from the speaker's choice to use an inefficient nonagential sentence rather than grammatically split the prejacent, to her having a special reason for keeping the prejacent together. This places focus on the prejacent sentence as a whole rather than on any proper part of it, which makes nonagential sentences uniquely well suited for indicating evaluative contrast sets where the whole prejacent rather than any proper part is the dimension of contrast. Neither passivization nor intonational emphasis can generate this kind of evaluative contrast class. For example, suppose two playwrights are discussing what event should occur next in their new play, and the salient set of mutually exclusive options is {Tom shoots Jack, there is an earthquake, Bill kisses Lucy}. Here the nonagential sentence 'It ought to be that Bill kisses Lucy' seems a more natural choice than 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy' (with any kind of emphasis), or 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill'.[31]

We conclude that by adopting a contrastivist semantics the champion of the Uniformity Thesis can provide a pragmatic explanation of the difficulty of obtaining deliberative readings of nonagential and passive 'ought' sentences, resolving the Overgeneration problem. However, here we have only shown that such an explanation is possible, not that it is correct. How can we tell which is superior: our contrastivist and pragmatic explanation on behalf of the Uniformity Thesis, or the control verb theory of the Ambiguity Thesis? The two theories do generate some different predictions. According to the Ambiguity Thesis, the difference between evaluative and deliberative readings is fully determined by the semantics—two different meanings for the word 'ought'—and therefore deliberative readings of nonagential and passive 'ought' sentences will be not merely difficult to obtain, but impossible. But on our contrastivist supplement to the Uniformity Thesis the difference is partly pragmatic, and therefore depends upon particular circumstances of use. It therefore predicts that in some atypical circumstances it should be possible to get

[31] As this account predicts, nonagential sentences also seem particularly appropriate for signaling a simple contrast set like {*p*, not-*p*}. This presents a puzzle. While these sentences resist deliberative readings, in many cases a set like {*p*, not-*p*} will satisfy our definition of a *deliberative* set since both *p* and not-*p* may be in an agent's power. (Bill might ponder, 'To kiss Lucy or not to kiss Lucy? That is the question!') However, we claimed merely that a deliberative set is *necessary* for a deliberative reading, not that it is sufficient. And we've just provided one explanation why nonagential sentences would resist deliberative readings: that those readings are favored by agential sentences. (We also speculate that in weighing options in deliberation, it is more natural to focus on the actions than on the whole propositions, so that any focus that includes the agent tends toward an evaluative reading; 'Bill ought to *kiss Lucy*' seems to us to prefer a deliberative reading more strongly than '*Bill* ought to *kiss Lucy*'.)

deliberative readings of nonagential and passive 'ought' sentences. If Schroeder's claims about the data are correct it would favor the Ambiguity Thesis over the Uniformity Thesis. However, if our challenge to these claims at the end of section 2 was correct (the dating game show case, for example[32]), this would give an advantage to the Uniformity Thesis. In our judgment the Uniformity Thesis fares better than the Ambiguity Thesis here.

5. Concluding Thoughts

We have argued here that the central objection that ambiguity theorists have raised against the Uniformity Thesis—that it overgenerates by making false predictions about the availability of deliberative readings of 'ought' sentences—fails. The alleged evidence can be accommodated and explained by appeal to intuitive and well-established pragmatic principles if we adopt a uniform contrastivist semantics for 'ought' that is already popular and independently well-motivated. The failure of one objection does not, of course, prove that the Uniformity Thesis is correct or that 'ought' does not have a control sense. But parsimony requires that senses of a word not be multiplied beyond necessity, so the burden is on the ambiguity theorists to provide other, better arguments for a control sense of 'ought'. (Considerations of parsimony weigh more heavily here than might be appreciated, since the deliberative/ evaluative distinction is plausibly to be found not merely with 'ought' sentences, but with the entire class of deontic modals including 'must', 'have to', 'may', 'can', etc. If the distinction is to be attributed to a semantic and logical ambiguity between raising and control senses, then it must be systematic across this class of words.[33]) We do not believe this burden is met. If we are also right in our suggestion above that the linguistic evidence more strongly supports the pragmatic, contrastivist explanation of the deliberative/ evaluative distinction than the hypothesis of a distinct control sense of 'ought', and that the control hypothesis is also subject to significant linguistic objections (as argued in Chrisman

---

[32] In this context the speaker's special reason for using a passive or nonagential sentence is his desire to create suspense.

[33] This raises a question for us of whether contrastivist semantics should be posited for all these other words. One of us (JS) inclines toward that view, but the other (SF) is reluctant. If contrastivism is the right explanation of the ambiguity in sentences involving 'ought', of course, then there is a presumption that it would also be the right explanation for these other words. However, our sense is that the ambiguity is perhaps not as clearly marked by the grammar in these other cases as it is for 'ought'. For example, saying 'Lucy may be kissed' sounds to our ears like a perfectly natural way of giving (permissive) advice to Bill. Since our explanation of deliberative readings is fundamentally pragmatic, we can hypothesize that factors other than the composition of contrast classes control the availability of these readings.

forthcoming), then it would be safe to conclude that the alleged control sense of 'ought' representing a relation between an agent and an action is one 'ought' too many.

Mark Schroeder has suggested that this debate over the semantics and logical form of 'ought' has important bearing for normative branches of philosophy. While we agree that there may be important philosophical lessons to be learned from the correct analysis of 'ought', we are skeptical that any such lesson follows directly from settling whether or not 'ought' has a control sense representing a relation between agents and actions in addition to its raising sense representing a propositional operator. Much depends on the details of the semantic and logical analyses provided for these senses. Even if the Uniformity Thesis is correct 'ought' sentences may still harbour significant ambiguities, including an ambiguity between deliberative and merely evaluative readings, as we've demonstrated. These different readings may also be indicated by grammatical differences, so that there is no license to pass from 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy' (as naturally interpreted in a particular context) to 'It ought to be that Bill kisses Lucy' or 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill' (as naturally interpreted in the same context), or vice versa. And despite our skepticism about a control sense of 'ought' we agree with ambiguity theorists that on a deliberative reading, the utterance of 'ought' sentences communicate that the agent stands in a special normative relation with the action, roughly the relation of *having most reason to perform it*. On our view this is simply because this is how agents are related to the action φ such that it is better[34] that they φ than that they do any relevant alternative in their power. Hence, this relation need not be semantically represented in order to be communicated by an 'ought' claim. (Just as, for example, telling someone that they ought to φ communicates that they have the ability to φ without that being part of what is said.)

What if the Ambiguity Thesis were correct, despite our arguments here? Schroeder suggests that this would place certain metaethical theories about the nature of normativity—such as the *end-relational theory* advanced elsewhere by one of us—in jeopardy. But we think that this may overlook the *plasticity* of natural language and the ease with which words of one syntactic category can be transformed into related words of a different category. For example, many deontic modals including 'ought'—whether we analyze them as now raising

[34] Perhaps in an appropriately agent-relative sense; see note 24 above.

verbs or control verbs—were originally ordinary verbs of neither category with the meaning *to own*. The creation of new verbs out of nouns (and vice versa) has a simple template, for example. If there is a noun 'N', and there is also some behavior of φ-ing that is saliently characteristic of Ns, then a verb 'to N' can naturally come into use as meaning *to φ* (e.g. 'to snake', 'to hammer'). Similarly, if there is a raising verb/sentential operator '$V_{raising}$', and also some relation *R* that is characteristically found between an agent *S* and an action of φ-ing when 'It is $V_{raising}$ that *S* φs' is true, then a cognate control verb '$V_{control}$' can naturally come into use as representing the relation *R*.[35] As we just observed, there is such a characteristic relation closely associated at least with agential 'ought' sentences. So although this paper challenges the alleged evidence that a control sense of 'ought' exists in ordinary use, it seems to us it would be mistaken to maintain that this couldn't happen, or that anything of much philosophical importance would depend on whether it did.

References

Belnap, N. and Horty, J. (1996) 'The Deliberative Stit: A Study of Action, Omission, Ability, and Obligation', *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 24: 583-644.

Björnsson, G. and Finlay, S. (2010) 'Metaethical Contextualism Defended', *Ethics* 121: 7-36.

Broome, J. (1999) 'Normative Requirements', *Ratio* 12: 398-419.

Cariani, F. (2009) '*Ought* and the Unity of Modal Discourse', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

Cariani, F. (forthcoming) '*Ought* and Resolution Semantics', *Noûs*.

Chisholm, R. (1964) 'The Ethics of Requirement'', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1: 147-153.

Chrisman, M. (forthcoming) '"Ought" and Control', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*.

[35] Consider for example 'seem's (or 'appears'), one of Schroeder's exemplars of a raising verb, as in (1) 'It seems that John is flying'. Arguably, in (2) 'John seems to fly', 'seems' can be interpreted rather as a control verb, while in 'John seems sad' it is arguably neither a raising nor a control verb. While (1) would be natural to use in communicating one's uncertainty about another's report that John is flying, (2) seems appropriate rather to communicate one's uncertainty about whether John is as he appears (to the speaker). Of course, we shouldn't rule out the possibility that there may be an explanation of this that is compatible with a single raising semantics, paralleling our explanation here for the different readings of 'ought' sentences.

Copp, D. (2001) 'Realist Expressivism: A Neglected Option for Moral Realism," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 18: 1-43.

Finlay, S. (2009) 'Oughts and Ends', *Philosophical Studies* 143: 315-340.

Finlay, S. (ms) *Confusion of Tongues*.

Geach, P. T. (1982) 'Whatever Happened to Deontic Logic?' *Philosophia* 11: 1-12.

Harman, G. (1973) 'Review of *The Significance of Sense*', *Philosophical Review* 82: 235-239.

Horty, J. F. (2001) *Agency and Deontic Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Humberstone, L. (1971) 'Two Sorts of "Ought"s', *Analysis* 32: 8-11.

Jackson, F. (1985) 'On the Semantics and Logic of Obligation', *Mind* 94: 177-195.

Kolodny, N. and MacFarlane, J. (ms) 'Ought: Between Objective and Subjective'.

Kratzer, A. (1977) 'What "Must" and "Can" Must and Can Mean', *Linguistics and Philosophy* 1: 337-355.

Kratzer, A. (1981) 'The Notional Category of Modality', in H. J. Eikmeyer and H. Rieser, *Words, Worlds, and Contexts*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Levinson, S. (2000) *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Moore, G. E. (1922) *Philosophical Studies*. London: Kegan Paul.

Price, A. W. (2008) *Contextuality in Practical Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pritchard, H. (1912) 'Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?' *Mind* 21: 21-37.

Rooth, M. (1992) 'A Theory of Focus Interpretation', *Natural Language Semantics* 1: 75-116.

Ross, J. (2010) 'The Irreducibility of Personal Obligation', *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 39: 307-23.

Ross, J. (ms) 'Conditional Analyses of Personal Obligation'.

Schaffer, J. (2004) 'From Contextualism to Contrastivism', *Philosophical Studies* 119: 73-104.

Schaffer, J. (2008) 'The Contrast-Sensitivity of Knowledge Ascriptions', *Social Epistemology* 22: 235-245.

Schroeder, M. (2004) 'The Scope of Instrumental Reason', *Philosophical Perspectives* 18 (Ethics): 337-64.

Schroeder, M. (2011) '*Ought*, Agents, and Actions', *Philosophical Review* 120: 1-41.

Sloman, A. (1970) '"Ought" and Better', *Mind* 79: 385-394.

Snedegar, J. (forthcoming) 'Contrastive Semantics for Deontic Modals', in Martijn Blaauw (ed.), *Contrastivism in Philosophy*. Routledge.

Strandberg, C. (2012) 'A Dual Aspect Account of Moral Language', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 84: 87-122.

Vermazen, B. (1977) 'The Logic of Practical "Ought" Sentences", *Philosophical Studies* 32: 1-71.

Wedgwood, R. (2006) 'The Meaning of "Ought"', in Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 127-160.

Wedgwood, R. (2007) *The Nature of Normativity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wertheimer, R. (1972) *The Significance of Sense: Meaning, Modality, and Morality*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Wheeler III, S. (1974) 'Inference and the Logical "Ought"', *Noûs* 8: 233-58.

Williams, B. (1981a) '*Ought* and Moral Obligation', in *Moral Luck*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 114-123.

Williams, B. (1981b) 'Practical Necessity', in *Moral Luck*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 124-31.

Yalcin, S. (2011) 'Nonfactualism about Epistemic Modality', in A. Egan and B. Weatherson (eds.), *Epistemic Modality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.