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‘OUGHT’, AGENTS AND AMBIGUITY THAT MATTERS¹

SUMMARY: According to a well-homed view in linguistic semantics, deontic logic and logic of agency, some ‘ought’ sentences, like ‘Kate ought to write the report’, are ambiguous between the so-called *agentive* sense as when Kate is the agent of writing the report, and the non-agentive, or evaluative sense as when, in the light of some norm or things being ideal, the proposition that Kate writes the report would come out true. Within this approach to the semantics of ‘ought’, the ambiguity in question is not due to any semantic ambiguity of the word ‘ought’, but the ambiguity traced to *Kate writes the report*. We may call the view in question, after Schroeder, the *agency-in-the-prejacent theory*, or APT for short. APT’s explanation of ambiguity has been put under heavy criticism by Mark Schroeder’s 2011 influential paper. Schroeder tried to undermine APT by exposing its central theoretical drawbacks, their being: (i) that APT badly overgeneralizes because if ambiguity is in *Kate writes the report*, then it should equally well be preserved under the non-agentive interpretation of ‘Kate ought to write the report’, but it is not, and (ii) that APT also undergeneralizes, since it ‘inscribes’ the same ambiguity as observed in ‘Kate ought to write the report’ to a sentence that lacks it, e.g. ‘Bill ought to

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kiss Lucy'. I argue that both the 'overgeneralization problem' and the 'undergeneralization problem' are harmless for the criticized view, since Schroeder's two central arguments against the respective problems are seriously defective. Also, the third problem identified by Schroeder, that APT cannot accommodate the deliberative sense of 'ought', is mistargeted. I argue that identifying the *salient* property of the deliberative ought is crucial for assessing whether APT is able to accommodate it or not, and that Schroeder failed to recognize this properly.

KEYWORDS: 'ought', deliberative 'ought', Schroeder, agency, authorship, sentential ambiguity

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a common view in linguistics that some noun-phrase-verb-phrase (NP-VP) sentences are *agential*, in the sense that they inform us that some agent *does* something, whereas others are merely *circumstantial*, in the sense that they simply say that something *happens* to someone. According to this view, a sentence such as 'Kate gets a sun hat' is ambiguous between a reading on which Kate is the agent of getting a sun hat and the reading on which Kate is merely a *patient*, or better an *experiencer* in the relation between Kate, the subject, and the getting of a sun hat. Many have thought that allowing for sentential ambiguity is *all* we need to successfully account for the ambiguity of troublesome '*ought*'-sentences, that is *some* sentences of the form 'S ought to φ ' such as 'Larry ought to win the lottery'.

Among adherents of this view are prominent philosophically-oriented logicians such as Nuel Belnap and John Horty. These authors hold that because some sentences (expressed in agential grammar² by default) such as 'Kate gets a sun hat' or 'Larry wins the lottery' are ambiguous as prejacents³ sentences, applying a deontic operator 'ought'

² 'Agential grammar' is my phrase, which I use as shorthand for the general syntactic structure that makes room for a subject-argument place. Briefly, I use 'agential' to mean agentive in grammar and 'agentive' when referring to the content of agential 'ought' sentences.

³ 'Prejacent' is a technical term in modal logic and modal semantics, and means the proposition embedded under a modal operator. In broader linguistic contexts, 'prejacent' is construed as the meaning of the sentence, or proposition. See von Stechow 2006.

to them makes the respective *ought*-sentences no less ambiguous. So far so good. If the sentence 'Larry wins the lottery' strikes us as being *grammatically* ambiguous with respect to whether Larry is the agent of winning, or the patient of a happy arrangement of things that render him the lottery winner, it is natural to predict further that the agential 'ought' sentence 'Larry ought to win the lottery' will preserve the very same ambiguity, because ambiguity is traceable to the *prejacent* and not to the meaning of the word 'ought' (Schroeder 2011, p. 9–10).

However, this quite natural explanation of the ambiguity found in 'ought' sentences of the considered sort has been forcefully put into doubt by some philosophers, recently most rigorously by Mark Schroeder (2011).⁴ Schroeder admits that there is good reason to admire the *agency-in-the-prejacent theory* (henceforth *APT* for short), as he calls it, for its simple and seemingly convincing explanation of the ambiguity observed in the respective 'ought' sentences. Nevertheless, he provides examples that are supposed to undermine the initial explanatory attractiveness of *APT*.

As I understand Schroeder's criticism, the main problem he sees with *APT* is that it is inadequate as a *theory*. We expect of an explanation that enjoys theoretic significance (i) that it should properly *generalize*, which is another way of saying that it works well for all sorts of cases it should account for, and, on the other hand, (ii) that it should not *undergenerate*, meaning that it does not leave unexplained any case that it should explain. According to Schroeder, *APT* fails on both counts. On the one hand, *APT* is guilty of overgenerating, since it ascribes the ambiguity observed in one type of 'ought'

⁴ Schroeder's paper enjoys the reputation of being an influential recap of the key problems with the orthodox explanation of ambiguity observable in some agential 'ought' sentences. The paper was originally published in *The Philosophical Review* in 2011 and next nominated and selected for inclusion in the 2011 *Philosopher's Annual*: a journal that publishes the ten best articles in philosophy of each year. Interestingly, some participants in the debate (e.g. Wedgwood, Broome) in the propositionalist camp found the criticism well-taken, and admitted that Schroeder accurately pinpointed the central weakness of the approach, on which 'ought' is a raising verb expressing a propositional operator. The weakness in question is that if 'ought' relates agents to propositions, then why not think that it relates agents to *arbitrary* propositions? Schroeder dubbed the problem the Basic Problem. I critically evaluate it in (MSb).

sentences – agential ‘ought’ sentences – to some other type of ‘ought’ sentences, i.e. ‘ought’ sentences expressed in non-agential grammar. If the sentence ‘Kate ought to get a sun hat’ is ambiguous between an agentive and non-agentive reading, then the sentence ‘It ought to be (the case) that Kate will get a sun hat’ should also be ambiguous in the very same way, since these two sentences have the same prejacent *that Kate will get a sun hat*. However, the sentence ‘It ought to be (the case) that Kate will get a sun hat’ does not give rise to an agentive reading, at least not in normal circumstances. Moreover and more importantly, as Schroeder’s objection goes, the stipulated extension of ambiguity, of the sort discussed above, generates unreliable predictions about the meaning of *some* agential ‘ought’ sentences, like ‘Larry ought to win the lottery’. According to *APT*, the sentence in question admits both agentive and non-agentive readings, whereas it looks like the agentive interpretation of the sentence in question is blocked, since it is not in Larry’s control to bring about that he wins the lottery. Therefore, *APT* does not deliver on its theoretical promise: it accounts for ambiguity observable in some agential ‘ought’ sentences, but not in all. And if *APT* is meant to explain ambiguity observable in *some* agential ‘ought’ sentences and not *all*, then we should be told what makes some agential ‘ought’ sentences such that *APT* applies to them and not to others. Otherwise, the explanatory value of *APT* is illusionary. We would like it to work for an arbitrary agential ‘ought’ sentence, or at least to know a principled way of figuring out the cases to which *APT* applies and those to which it does not. On the other hand, *APT* badly undergenerates since it ‘inscribes’ ambiguity into prejacentes that obviously lack any. Consider the sentence ‘Bill ought to kiss Lucy’. Now, if the sentence in question is ambiguous between agentive and circumstantial interpretations, as *APT* predicts, it has to be explained in terms of an ambiguity to be found in *Bill kisses Lucy*. But is it not too far-fetched to assign to the prejacent ‘Bill kisses Lucy’ the reading on which Bill is simply a patient in the relation between him and the kissing of Lucy?

Besides the two central problems that, on Schroeder’s diagnosis, *APT* shows vulnerability to, it falls short of satisfying a natural expectation coming from its promise to accommodate an agentive sense of ‘ought’. If *APT* is to make room for an agentive reading of sentences like ‘Kate ought to write the report’, then it should be able to capture

the deliberative sense of 'ought', especially as agentive 'ought' is often about what the subject of the 'ought' *ought to do*. We may call the corollary problem of *APT*, when interpreted as an account of the agentive sense of some agential 'ought' sentences, the *deliberative ought exposure problem* (or *DOEP* for short). *DOEP* arises because if the central hallmark of the deliberative 'ought' is settling the agent's practical issue about what *to do*, *APT* lacks resources to bring out that sense straightforwardly. The source of the problem is taken to reside in the limits of the propositional interpretation of 'ought' which poorly, if at all, captures the relation between agents and *actions*. Action interpreted as a property of an agent makes it explicit who is to be the doer of the required action and thence nicely represents the sort of relation that the deliberative ought is supposed to represent, whereas action couched in terms of a proposition does not. Consider again the sentence 'Kate ought to write the report'. If the sentence in question is to be read as relating Kate to the action-proposition that she will write the report, how is this interpretation to do justice to the possible interpretation of the 'ought' as being primary about what *Kate* ought *to do*? Crudely, in what way does stipulating that the meaning of the sentence is *it ought to be the case that Kate will bring about that she will write the report* capture the alleged sense of the sentence as settling *Kate's* deliberative problem regarding what to do? These three alleged defects lead Schroeder to conclude that *APT* is unrescuable. Consequently, he concludes that we should reject it and replace it with one that does better – viz., the naïve view that Schroeder himself advocates. The naïve view is simply that some 'ought' sentences indeed are ambiguous because the *word* 'ought' is ambiguous.

The naïve view has an obvious advantage over *APT* in that rejecting sentential ambiguity implies dismissing the trouble-making claim that there is *one* unifying syntactic pattern that serves well in expressing the content of *any* ought-sentence.⁵ However, I believe that Schroeder's

⁵ Schroeder's view stands in opposition to the unifying account, which is still the dominant position. According to the unifying account of the meaning of 'ought', 'ought' always expresses a propositional operator $O(p)$. Among adherents of the unifying account are Finlay and Snedegar 2014, Chrisman 2012a, 2012b, Finlay 2014, Cariani 2013 as well as Broome 2013 and Wedgwood 2006 (however these two philosophers propose certain improvements to the paradigmatic unifying account).

rebuttal of *APT* as offering no good explanation of ambiguity is too hasty. At the end of the day, it is *APT* that wins, although seeing this requires entertaining a *novel* interpretation of sentential ambiguity, different from the one considered in the literature. Or so I will argue.

2. THE MAP OF THE TERRAIN

This paper has two main objectives. First, to show that, Schroeder's bold declarations notwithstanding, the two objections he raises – that *APT* overgenerates and undergenerates – are in fact not damaging to the criticized view. In a nutshell, I will argue that the appeal to bad *overgeneralization* is unsuccessful for two reasons. First, because the examples analysed by Schroeder do not support his conviction that the *deliberative* 'ought' *cannot* be expressed in the syntax in which 'ought' relates agents to propositions and not agents to actions. Second, and relatedly, Schroeder's unfortunate choice of the illustration of the apparently *bad* overgeneralization that *APT* gives rise to is a mark of a more systematic error he commits. The error in question, I will argue, lies in failing to recognize (or else misconstruing) the genuine character of the ambiguity detectable in the salient agential 'ought' sentences. The ambiguity in question does not concern availability of the circumstantial and the agentive readings of the relevant sentence, but rather the availability of a reading on which the agent of 'ought' is the sole initiator and executor of that 'ought' and a reading on which she is not. In other words, I think that Schroeder quite rightly observes that the relevant ambiguity has to do with the *deliberative* sense of 'ought';⁶ however, in my view, he misinterprets what

⁶ More precisely, with what philosophers typically tend to refer to in terms of the "deliberative" 'ought' but which is a misnomer for the sort of 'ought' that is what I like to call a 'full-blown' *first-personal* 'ought', that is, 'ought' saying what the *deliberating* agent ought to do (herself). The label "deliberative ought" is often misleading since the notion "deliberative" is more capacious than the notion "first-personal ought". There can be deliberative 'oughts', i.e. oughts providing (good) answers to the question regarding what the deliberating agent ought to do, yet such that they are not delivered by the deliberating agent herself because, say, they are proposed by a trustworthy adviser. What is crucial in the case of such 'delivered' 'oughts if they are to fit well in the extension of the notion "deliberative ought" being at stake is that they have inscribed a requirement that the owner of the ought in question is, if possible, the sole producer of the required action.

this deliberative 'ought' is *really* about.⁷ It is not so much about settling the question of what is advisable for the deliberator to do so that she does it, but rather about settling the question of what is advisable for the deliberator to do *herself* without delegating the essential part of the action to another party or parties.

As for the second challenge raised by Schroeder, the objection that *APT* undergenerates because the very same ambiguities that we observe in the prejacents of certain 'ought' sentences of the form 'S ought to *phi*' do not arise for some other 'ought' sentences of the very same form, I will dismiss it as irrelevant. Schroeder's case against *APT* is built on a somewhat sophisticated observation that in standard cases it is enough to passivize the original agential 'ought' sentence to see that the explanation of ambiguity offered by *APT* does not work. Two reasons explain why the test for passivization may *seem* a reliable test for evaluating the explanatory virtue of *APT*. One points to the phenomenon I am inclined to call the *fleeting character of ambiguity* that *APT* seems vulnerable to, and the other is inspired by the lesson derived from the passivization of 'ought' sentences that express the so-called deliberative 'ought', and which I call the *vanishing ambiguity problem*. Both problems concern the *dynamic* character of the ambiguity that adherents of *APT* are forced to predict about problematic 'ought' sentences. Both problems pose real challenges to *APT* if Schroeder's criticism is on target. I shall consider them in the next section in order to demonstrate how big a challenge Schroeder's two objections have pressed upon adherents of *APT*.

⁷ Terminological confusion regarding the sense we are really after when we ask what the meaning of the deliberative 'ought' is has a long tradition. To my knowledge, Williams (Williams 1981) was the first author who used the term 'deliberative' as a cognate for my term 'truly agential' introduced in my book manuscript *Normativity that matters. On the meaning of practical 'ought' sentences* (MSa), and hence, because of the quite unfortunate choice of the label, he can be found guilty of misdirecting our attention to the properties that do not reflect the *agentive* essence of 'ought', i.e. the very property that makes it clear that the agent herself is required to *phi*. In my terminology this feature of 'ought' is referred to as 'authored'. More on this in section 5.

3. STRENGTHENING SCHROEDER'S CHALLENGE: AMBIGUITY AND DYNAMISM

The crux of the dynamic ambiguity problem, as I think of it, resides in its *dynamic*, and hence unstable character, which is very undesirable, if one's theory has an ambition to offer reliable predictions as to the character of the expected ambiguity. A good theoretical explanation of semantic ambiguity observed in sentences of the *same* type would be one that predicts *the same* ambiguity in 'Larry ought to win the lottery' as in 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy', or in 'Peter ought to feel the smell of sweet perfume in the room'. However, as Schroeder sensibly observes, whatever ambiguity we find in 'Larry ought to win the lottery' (if any at all),⁸ it cannot be found in 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy'. It strikes one as far-fetched, to say the least, to propose that 'Bill kisses Lucy', apart from the obvious agentive reading, admits the circumstantial reading, on which it is said that kissing Lucy simply happened to Bill as winning the lottery happened to Larry. Winning the lottery is a sheer fluke, something you cannot *plan* to achieve, but kissing someone is not the sort of thing over which you have no control (at least not in ordinary cases).

The dynamic ambiguity problem in fact amounts to the *fleeting* and *unprincipled* character of the posited ambiguity, since it turns out that *what* ambiguity a particular agentive 'ought' sentence exhibits cannot be easily explained by sentential ambiguity alone.⁹ We can grant that the sentences 'Larry wins the lottery' and 'Bill kisses Lucy' are ambiguous, but this alone is not informative as to *the sort* of ambiguity that these two sentences exhibit. However, had *APT* provided a good explanation of

⁸ Many philosophers, including Schroeder, tend to think that the agentive 'ought' sentence 'Larry ought to win the lottery' is not ambiguous at all because the prejacent 'Larry wins the lottery' is not ambiguous: it is only sensible to think of Larry as of the patient of the relation between Larry and the winning since it is not in Larry's capacity to make his lottery ticket win. If the central argument of this paper is not flawed, then even seemingly not agentive 'ought' sentences like the one about Larry suffer from some sort of ambiguity of normative significance regarding the proper bearer of responsibility for the ought in question.

⁹ In section 5 I will show that this objection is misguided, since ambiguity between the circumstantial and the agentive interpretations is *not* the only ambiguity that *is* to be observed in a sentence. See also my "'Ought', ownership and agentive ought. Remarks on the semantic meaning of 'indexed ought'", forthcoming.

ambiguity, our knowing that ambiguity is *in* the prejacent would at the same time be knowing the *character* of the respective *ambiguity*, namely that it admits the agential reading and the circumstantial reading. But this is not so, since whatever ambiguity we may detect in the sentence 'Larry ought to win the lottery' is not observable in the sentence 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy'. So whatever theoretical virtue we owe to *APT*, it is not the one we are really after: we expect of *APT* that it will *explain the* disturbing ambiguity in the interesting agential 'ought' sentences, and not that it will give rise to new ones! If the *dynamic ambiguity problem* is genuine, then *APT* offers no solution to it. Worse, it actually increases our epistemic frustration, since what we learn from it is what we know from the outset, namely that the ambiguity is *in* the prejacent. But much more important is that what we *cannot* learn from *APT*, as I showed, is what sort of ambiguity is (or what sorts of ambiguity are) traceable to prejacent.

This objection is not a petty one: the problem that it brings out is not that *APT* does not indicate and enumerate the *potential* ambiguities that can be discovered in the sentences of the form 'S ought to *phi*', but rather that it is hardly possible for *APT* to identify and enumerate *all* of the ambiguities that might be discovered in agential 'ought' sentences. If two NP-VP sentences randomly selected are ambiguous, and *APT* only manages to identify the ambiguity in one of these two sentences but not in the other, there is good reason to doubt that it offers a good explanation of the phenomenon in question.

In light of the *dynamic ambiguity problem*, Schroeder's objection is perfectly in order. Later on I will propose what I deem to be a promising rebuttal of this complaint, which shows that *APT* gives a *good* explanation of the observed ambiguity, but only once we revise our views on the character of the ambiguity that truly matters. If some NP-VP sentences are ambiguous in *more* than one way, as I think they are, and there is *a* way in which *any* of the considered 'ought' sentences are ambiguous, then Schroeder's objection loses much of its initial attractiveness.

Let us now consider the second worry that Schroeder's objections towards *APT*, were they successful, would give rise to. This is what I call *the vanishing ambiguity problem* (*VAP* for short). *VAP* is the reverse of the *dynamic ambiguity problem*, since if we assume that the relevant ambiguity is a dynamic phenomenon, then it might be

that an ambiguity originally detected in some sentence in a certain context will simply disappear into thin air in a different context. Now, it is necessary to emphasize that not *every* ‘disappearance’ of previously observed ambiguity is going to raise a worry for the friend of *APT*. Specifically, no harm to the explanatory value of *APT* is done if the ambiguity in question is removed by the context of interpretation. Let us grant that the prejacant ‘Bill kisses Lucy’ admits both the agential interpretation and the circumstantial interpretation (which we have assumed it *ordinarily* does not). Suppose next that the context dismisses the agential interpretation as inapplicable to the case at hand. Imagine that you are a friend of Bill who knows of Bill that at the moment in which he kissed Lucy he was under the influence of drugs. There is no doubt that whatever one is doing when one is ‘stoned’, one is not exercising one’s agency in the proper way. So it is not the *disambiguation* that *APT* cannot account for but the literal *disappearance* of the previously observed ambiguity. This serious defect is what the test from passivization purports to uncover. In the rest of the paper I shall be arguing that, despite appearances, the *dynamic ambiguity problem* is not a problem for a proponent of *APT*.

4. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE OBJECTION FROM OVERGENERATION?

As I said, many participants in the debate over what explains the ambiguity of (some) sentences of the form ‘*S* ought to φ ’, where *S* is the subject and φ stands for action, subscribe to *APT*. Many, but not all. Schroeder remains unpersuaded by it. He has two general problems with *APT*. The first, and more minor, is that *APT* includes some, but not all, of the hallmarks of deliberative uses of agential ‘ought’ sentences. Second, and more major, is that among those hallmarks that are left out is the crucial one, precisely the one which stands behind the name of the considered use of agential ‘ought’ sentences, and which is directly important for advice in the sense of settling the deliberator’s question of what to do. If ‘ought’ sentences that are claimed to express the deliberative ‘ought’ do not fulfil the promise, it is bad. So let us now see *how* badly *APT* fares when it comes to accommodating the deliberative sense of ‘ought’.

Consider the following pair of ‘ought’ sentences (Schroeder 2011):

- (A) 'Larry ought to win the lottery'
 (B) 'It ought to be that Larry wins the lottery'.

The sentences presented in (A) and (B) have the same prejacent, which is 'Larry wins the lottery', however they seem to differ essentially in their meanings.¹⁰ The linguistic explanation of our intuitions regarding the semantic difference between the two sentences is that, normally, the subject position is semantically significant. Oversimplifying, if a sentence has a subject argument place occupied, our first reaction is to interpret it as saying something about the agent. If the syntax is semantically illuminating, then consequently, whatever ambiguity, if any, is detectable in the sentence expressed in (A) should not be present in the sentence expressed in (B). But that conflicts with the prediction made by *APT* that the same prejacent ensure the same meanings. Given that the sentence in (A) has a clear agentive, or deliberative meaning (in Schroeder's terminology), (B) should also have it. However, in light of the constraints Schroeder places on the deliberative 'ought', the deliberative reading of the sentence presented in (B) is unavailable.

The argument that Schroeder supplies for his claim is simple: if the essence of the deliberative 'ought' resides in its direct relevance to the decision-making of the deliberator about *what to do*, then the agent's pondering over what *ought to be* is completely useless. Many states of affairs ought to be and ought not to be. The planet ought to be inhabited by happy animals, and it ought not to be destroyed by careless human global policy. It ought to be the case that Luckless Larry wins the lottery, and certainly it ought not to be that Larry's lucky lottery ticket disappears. But how can asking oneself the question about what ought to be the case bring the deliberator closer to settling what *she ought to do*? In Schroeder's view it cannot, so he concludes that 'ought' expressed in the sentence presented under (B) is not a deliberative sense of 'ought'.

¹⁰ As it should be clear these days "meaning" is the philosophical term of art. It can mean various things to various philosophers in various contexts. Here I work with two assumptions that seem uncontroversial across the board, namely that sentential 'meaning' can be construed either in terms of the sentence's truth-conditions or as a proposition, or propositions expressed (if you are pluralist about the content as I am).

Schroeder's argument is simple, and appears to be intuitive; nevertheless, I am unconvinced. I think that in providing a negative answer to the question about whether the deliberative 'ought', as he characterizes it, can be expressed by a sentence evoking the raising syntax with the expletive 'it', he confuses two things that should not be conflated: one is formal and quite unimportant and the other is substantive and significant. It is also my view that once we identify the source of the confusion, we will see that Schroeder's objection is toothless.

So let us separate the important from the unimportant. The *unimportant* issue concerns the grammatical form in which the deliberative question is typically couched, and the *important* issue concerns whether a particular syntax allows transmission of the intended *deliberative* content. Let me begin by explaining why the question regarding the grammatical translation of the deliberative 'ought', when properly construed, is irrelevant.

Consider the case of a twin brother of Luckless Larry,¹¹ Fearful Leo. Leo knows of himself that he is a lazy and fearful sort of person who does not like to exercise his capacity for agency. Being an agent implies bearing responsibility for the consequences of one's actions and this is exactly what Leo detests. Specifically, he hates making any decisions, no matter what particular area of human concerns the decision is supposed to have an impact on. Leo systematically avoids taking responsibility for his life as most people try to avoid snakes. He prefers to go with the flow of things: whatever will be, will be – that is his credo. However, there is one thing in his attitude that Leo is really tired of; it is his repugnance to decision-making *inasmuch* as it makes living with Leo very difficult for the ones he loves. For that reason, Leo finally decides to consult a specialist and go through psychotherapy. The therapist advises Leo, as a part of the therapy programme, that he should use a certain linguistic gimmick when he is about to ponder what to do. The recommended trick serves to ward off the demons of autonomy. Here it is: whenever Leo is about to deliberate over what he ought to do in order not to be overwhelmed by the frustrating feeling of responsibility for how his life will go, he should consider his potential courses of actions, not under the guise of performances done by him, but rather impersonally, under the guise of the states

¹¹ Luckless Larry is the protagonist of Schroeder's example targeted at demonstrating that there are uses of agential 'ought' sentences, such as 'Larry ought to win the lottery', whose surface logical form is deeply misleading: it suggests that the sentence is about *Larry* the agent who stands under the deliberative 'ought to do' relation with respect to winning, though such an interpretation is unavailable – it is not in Larry's capacity to bring it about that he wins. See Schroeder 2011, p. 8.

of affairs that should be effectuated. So, for instance, instead of asking himself whether he ought to exercise regularly to maintain a slim figure and good health, he is supposed to rephrase the question in more friendly (to his ears) terms by asking himself whether it ought to be that he exercises on a regular basis. This slight change in grammar would cause a great change in Leo's feelings, the psychotherapist told Leo, and after several attempts at deliberating in accordance with the recommended method, Leo now must admit that his doctor was absolutely right. He can come to decisions without having this unbearable feeling of having made one!

Does the fact that Leo hides the truly deliberative character of the question posed to himself, expressing it in non-agential grammar, make any difference when evaluating whether the 'ought' that Leo actually considers is directly relevant to Leo's settling the question about what *Leo* ought to do? Obviously, it does not. Whether a question does or does not have a particular character cannot be reliably read from the grammar alone. By itself, syntax lacks *intrinsic*, substantive meaning.

5. WHAT IS THE DELIBERATIVE 'OUGHT' ALL ABOUT?

If, as the example with Fearful Leo suggests, the deliberative 'ought' can be expressed in non-agential grammar, the thing that requires investigation is what makes a particular syntax well-suited to transmit the intended *deliberative* content. Now, to answer that question, we first need to establish what this *deliberative* 'ought' is. Once we have done this, we can move on to a more formal and sophisticated problem regarding the most appropriate logical form and grammatical interpretation of that 'ought'.

Schroeder enlists five hallmarks of the deliberative ought, of which three seem to be crucial, to my mind, when it comes to revealing the very nature of the *deliberative* 'ought' as he understands it. These are the following:

- (i) direct relevance to advice, where what is meant by 'direct relevance' is that the 'ought' in question genuinely answers one's query regarding what to do;
- (ii) close connection to the notion of accountability; and
- (iii) tight connection to the notion of obligation.

Having in mind these three substantive features of the deliberative 'ought', we can appreciate the worry underlying Schroeder's

scepticism that non-agential grammar constructions are unable to convey the truly agential, or deliberative content.

If the evaluative ‘ought’ is used in contexts in which we are interested in what *state of affairs* it is desirable to obtain, it seems warranted to worry that a syntax that serves to express one kind of normative content may prove ineffective in expressing some other, especially if that other content is of a completely different normative character. The question I want to address now is whether the raising syntax typical of the evaluative and non-agential use of ‘ought’ is suitable as the bearer of the deliberative content in the above-presented sense. More precisely, I will explore whether the raising syntax allows us to exhibit the three listed *substantive* hallmarks of the deliberative ‘ought’. Schroeder considers this task to be unfeasible. I disagree. I think that we can express what is called the deliberative ‘ought’ in the raising syntax once we properly interpret the sense of the term ‘deliberative’ that is *really* at stake, which in my view is to be achieved once we are *explicit* about what makes the deliberative ‘ought’ *different* from the evaluative ‘ought’, and at the same time closely related to the ‘ought’ of obligation. What makes the so-called deliberative ‘ought’ special does not have much to do with the fact that ‘ought’ is truly useful for advice, because it is not very clear what is actually meant by ‘usefulness’ or ‘relevance to advice’,¹² but rather it is tightly connected with the *first-person perspective*, and particularly with the requirement that the owner of ought (to use a nice phrase borrowed from Broome) be also the producer of the demanded action. Since misidentifying the very essence of the deliberative ‘ought’ is quite naturally to be followed by a *formal* misrepresentation of the true character of the ‘ought’ in question, Schroeder’s mistaken idea as to what this deliberative ‘ought’ consists in quite naturally led him to raise mistaken objections about the formal *misrepresentation* of this sort of ‘ought’.

In what follows I am going to argue that *APT* sustains Schroeder’s criticism once we decipher the relevant meaning of the deliberative ‘ought’ which, surprisingly, does justice to Schroeder’s own view

¹² In my book manuscript (MSa) I argued that the notion of advice is ambiguous with respect to its practical character. This view on the ambiguity of advisability places me in opposition to the dominant view, which is the unambiguous account of advisability put forward by Schroeder 2011, Chrisman 2012a; 2012b, and Finlay 2014.

on the nature of this sort of 'ought'. Moreover, if my explanation of the ambiguity proves defensible, then it nicely, yet, perhaps, surprisingly, generalizes to *any* ought-sentence, irrespective of whether it expresses normative, epistemic or any other content. Most importantly, however, it undermines Schroeder's challenge against *APT*. If I am correct, then it is not true that the ambiguity observed in agential 'ought' sentences cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of sentential ambiguity.

5.1 THE AMBIGUITY THAT MATTERS

To give a preview of my idea, think of a paradigmatic non-agential, non-normative 'ought' sentence like 'The sun ought to rise early tomorrow'. Evidently, the 'ought' in the considered sentence has been used in the epistemic sense, meaning something to the effect that the state of affairs including the sun's early rising tomorrow is likely to be the case. The considered 'ought' claim evokes the raising syntax, which is the proper syntax to express the epistemic sense of 'ought'. Now, even the epistemic 'ought' claim warrants the stipulated authored interpretation that I take to be a mark of the deliberative use of 'ought' when this sort of 'ought' is properly construed. That is, the preajcent sentence 'sun rises' 'hides'¹³ ambiguity with respect to whether the sun rises 'out of itself' (that is, in the *authored* fashion in my terminology), so to speak, or rather is *made* to rise by some external forces. I further explain the proposed ambiguity by alluding to the intrinsic feature of the *preajcent proposition*,¹⁴ which is coarse-graininess that does not allow us to recognize immediately the *relevant* meaning of *p*:¹⁵ whether *p* is

¹³ I assume, perhaps controversially, that semantic ambiguity is not to be restricted only to the sort of ambiguity that is something that strikes us from the very first encounter with the sentence, since very few ambiguities are detectable in this way. *Seeing* and *not seeing* ambiguity is a matter of training in recovering the admissible (in the light of a linguistic theory and everyday pragmatics) senses of the sentence. If the idea of ambiguity (explicit ambiguity by default) makes sense, then its reverse must also make sense. *Implicit* ambiguity is the ambiguity we have got used to disregarding as bringing out the sense of the sentence that is completely irrelevant for our successfully grasping the relevant message conveyed by the sentence.

¹⁴ 'Preajcent proposition' is the proposition denoted by the sentence.

¹⁵ What I have in mind is best illustrated by an example. To avoid complexity by beginning with non-agential propositions, take a sentence expressed in

about the state of affairs that obtains, or about the state of affairs that obtains due to agential contribution. But if p truly means ‘ A made p be the case’, the next question that immediately arises is whether p truly means ‘ A made p be the case *herself*’ or p rather means ‘ A made p be the case *due* to the contribution of B ’. But if p can be read as meaning ‘ A made p be the case *due* to the contribution of B ’, it remains further unclear whether things are such that the relevant meaning of p is ‘ A made p be the case due to the contribution of B herself’, or rather the relevant meaning is ‘ A made p be the case due to B ’s making it the case that C finally brought it about that p is the case’. If this view of mine is tenable, then it turns out that the grammatical translation of propositional ‘ought’ through an ‘ought that’ construction introduces endless sentential ambiguity regarding who the *truly* normatively relevant owner of ‘ought’ is – the person responsible for performing the ‘ought to do’ in question. I contend that *this* is a serious problem that any interpretation of the so-called ‘deliberative’ ‘ought’ in *terms of* propositional ‘ought’ faces; it seems unable to block the regress of

agential grammar such as ‘Larry wins the lottery’. Now, my claim is that ‘Larry wins the lottery’ is essentially ambiguous in a twofold way: (i) it is unclear in the way *APT* predicts: we do not know whether what is said is that *Larry* is the agent of winning, or rather what is said is that winning falls upon Larry, as something that happens to him; and (2) it is unclear whether what the sentence says is that it is Larry *himself* that makes it the case that he wins, or rather what the sentence says is that Larry *wins*, which in turn admits the interpretation that Larry wins due to the contribution of Betty, or some other person the sentence is silent about. Note that the sort of ambiguity that I ascribe to the prejacant sentence is much more troubling than the sort of ambiguity that *APT* posits, because the ambiguity between the agential and the circumstantial interpretation itself is unambiguous, that is, it does not prompt further inquiry regarding the proper meaning of each of the available readings, whereas the sort of ambiguity that I associate with the grammatical interpretation of the proposition itself is seriously worrisome for two reasons. One is that the ambiguity in question generates endless ambiguity, and the second is that it has a metaphysical underpinning: it is in the nature of the grammatical translation of *any* proposition that we cannot tell from it whether the sentence is true because the subject of the verb *himself* made it true, or rather the sentence is true due to the contribution of other factors, agential as well as non-agential. I introduced the problem of the regress of ambiguity observable in the propositionalist interpretation of ‘ought’ in the context of a discussion over what is the very thing that makes interpretation of ‘ought’ in terms of propositional ‘ought’ a challenging enterprise. See my book manuscript (MSa) and Klimczyk 2018, forthcoming.

ambiguity regarding the proper owner of normative 'ought'. Offering a solution to that problem is, in my view, equivalent to a successful defence of the idea that the deliberative 'ought' can be expressed via the relation between an agent and a proposition.

But now, let me return to the suggested and controversial idea that even non-agential sentences like 'The sun ought to rise early tomorrow' or 'The ball ought to be in the pocket' are ambiguous in the same way in which 'Larry ought to win the lottery' or 'Peter ought to brush his teeth' are, though in ordinary circumstances we tend to ignore the sort of ambiguity in question. And we lose it out of sight for the obvious reason that what I dub the 'authored' aspect of 'ought' is *beside the point*. When I utter a prediction about the expected hour of tomorrow's sunrise, I am interested in the potential consequences of the early sunrise for my practical purposes: assume that I plan an all-day trip to the woods. Similarly, when I spell out the prediction that the ball ought to be in the pocket, I produce the judgment with a particular intention in mind, specifically with the intention of establishing the current state of the billiard game. If in the two sorts of circumstances that my examples illustrate, there is no place for the question of whether the sun is going to rise early tomorrow *out of itself*, and analogously for the question of whether the ball *itself* makes it the case that it has landed in the pocket; this finds explanation not in the unintelligibility of the questions posed but rather in their contextual inadmissibility. The fact that we do not normally notice the considered sort of ambiguity in non-agential sentences like the above-considered ones is not a mark that the proposal is mistaken, but rather that the context of interpretation renders the suggested readings unavailable or spurious.

If I am right and the question regarding the *authored* or *non-authored* character is in principle an intelligible question that applies to most uses of 'ought', this is very good news for a proponent of *APT* because it delivers the most desired evidence that *APT* *properly* generalizes. What I mean by stipulating that "*APT* *properly* generalizes" is that it provides a *global* explanation of the phenomenon of ambiguity observable in almost all, if not all, 'ought' sentences to the following effect: if an 'ought' sentence is ambiguous, it is ambiguous in the proposed sense. The "global" character of the advocated explanation is due to the intrinsic ambiguity of the grammatical interpretation of

the *proposition* ‘that $S \varphi$ -s’¹⁶ from which *alone*, barred from the context in which it occurs, we cannot directly glean whether the *authored* or *non-authored* reading is the relevant one. I conclude with the bold conditional claim in favour of *APT*: *if* ambiguity possibly detectable in a prejacent sentence is reducible to ambiguity *in* the propositional interpretation of the prejacent sentence in question, in which case the ambiguity becomes in the important sense *fundamental*, then *APT* offers a truly powerful explanation of it. This is so because the controversial ambiguity turns out to be a more global and more primitive phenomenon than has been initially assumed. It is global because it is predictable of any arbitrary ‘ought’ sentence whatsoever, and it is primitive because it is essentially connected with how a proposition gets grammatically translated, which makes the ambiguity under consideration more a *syntactical* phenomenon than a semantic one. If I am right, then sentences as diverse as ‘Larry ought to win the lottery’, ‘Bill ought to kiss Lucy’, ‘Ann ought to brush her teeth’ are equally ambiguous because their prejacent *are* ambiguous with respect to *who* is the agent that bears responsibility for making these ‘oughts’ be the case. And prejacent of the considered sentences are ambiguous because it is in the nature of such propositions to be vague with respect to the authored character of the expressed action.

6. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE UNDERGENERATION ARGUMENT?

Let me now examine the second challenge posed by Schroeder, which is that *APT* badly undergenerates. The undergeneration argument, as I call it for short, is based on the idea that the test for passivization reveals something important about what readings of a particular prejacent are available, and for that reason is conclusive with respect to whether the prejacent is or is not ambiguous.

I think that the argument that builds upon passivization, as it stands, is toothless. I consider it to be toothless because it is irrelevant, and it is irrelevant because it is difficult to imagine what important information *about* semantic ambiguity we can infer from the trivial

¹⁶ S stands for subject in general: agential (me, your boss, teacher) and non-agential (tree, ball, sun). S is the default subject of the verb, which is grammatically absent.

information that some 'ought' sentences are subject to passivization and others are not.

Recall what *the* allegedly bad thing that, according to Schroeder, the passivization test reveals is: the 'ought' sentence that originally had *explicitly* agential *meaning* like 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy' in consequence of a petty transformation in grammar to the effect of 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill' acquires a vivid *non-agential* meaning. The original sentence was saying something about what *Bill* AGENT ought to do, but the sentence that went through passivization no longer says what Bill AGENT ought to do. This objection seems to be decisive to many as it is based on an unquestionable platitude in linguistics that active and passive constructions do not differ as to the truth conditions of the propositions expressed. On a natural reading, as Schroeder stresses, the proposition *that Bill kisses Lucy* is true if and only if the proposition *that Lucy is kissed by Bill* is true too.

I have no quarrel with such a description of the case. What I disagree with, however, are the consequences derived from this obvious observation, that propositions expressed in active and passive form have the same truth conditions; namely I oppose the idea that active and passive constructions express the *very same* thought. According to my view, the thought is not so much the *uttered sentence* but the *uttered sentence properly logically interpreted*¹⁷. Having said that, this implies that, on my interpretation, whether sentences like 'Bill kisses Lucy' and 'Lucy is kissed by Bill' express the same thought or not depends on the accepted logical interpretation of the prejacent proposition. Differently put, on the stipulated view it is not the prejacent proposition denoted by the sentence that is the bearer of truth conditions *but* the relevant logical interpretation of it. And if, in uncovering the thought expressed by a sentence, the focus is put on the most discourse-apt logical¹⁸ interpretation of the prejacent proposition, because on my view the discourse-apt logical form of the sentence is the bearer of the sentence's meaning, then it seems obvious that the proposition *that Billy kisses Lucy* and the proposition *that Lucy is kissed by Bill* have different truth conditions. On the most natural reading, truth

¹⁷ Thanks to the referee for pressing me to clarify my view.

¹⁸ In *Normativity that matters* I explain the meaning of normative 'ought' sentences in terms of their discourse-apt logical form.

conditions for the former are given by the state of affairs including Bill's sole involvement in the kissing, whereas truth conditions for the latter are given by a general state of affairs in which Lucy is the patient of Bill's action. Since in the passivized sentence the emphasis is put on the obtaining of the relevant states of affairs, the scope of Bill's agency involved in making that state of affairs obtain is not clear. If we tend to interpret the sentence 'Lucy is kissed by Bill' as having a default meaning equivalent to the meaning given by the sentence 'Bill kisses Lucy', this seems to be so because we assume that the most natural context of utterance of the sentence 'Bill kisses Lucy' is one in which in kissing her, Bill exercises his agency *to the full*. Be that as it may, it is worth bearing in mind that the putative equivalence of propositions is not what comes out directly from the respective sentences, but rather is something that follows from a theory of meaning that one subscribes to. If you believe that sentences express some minimal proposition that remains unaffected by the context in which the sentence is uttered, then nothing in the proposition *that Lucy is kissed by Bill* itself gives rise to the stipulation that it necessarily has the same truth conditions as the proposition *that Bill kisses Lucy*. The uttered sentence 'Bill kisses Lucy' *may or may not* express the same proposition as 'Lucy is kissed by Bill'. The point I am making here is that the proposition *that Bill kisses Lucy* is true when the proposition *that Lucy is kissed by Bill* is true, but this is so *not* because these two propositions have the same truth conditions, but because their truth conditions happily overlap when the truth conditions of the former are given by such distinct propositions as *that Lucy is kissed by Bill AGENT* and by *that Lucy is kissed by Bill as a result of Bill's being manipulated to do the kissing without knowing what he is doing*. To sum up, my suggestion is that in order to establish whether sentences using active and passive constructions express or do not express the same thought, we need to get to the *proper* logical interpretation of the proposition expressed. The significance of my doubts should not be underestimated, since if 'Bill kisses Lucy' and 'Lucy is kissed by Bill' do not express the same thought, the key motivation behind helping oneself to the passivization test in the role of a powerful argument for the unaccommodated intuition that there is no *real* difference in meaning between the passivized sentence and its non-passivized original is undermined. Moreover, and in a sense more importantly – at least more importantly from the point of view of the

dialectics of Schroeder's criticism¹⁹ – if he errs in his claim that 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy' and 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill' express the same content, passivization is completely ineffective in further undermining *APT*'s capacity to capture the interesting sense of ambiguity. It would make sense to resort to passivization if it was crystal clear in the first place that the prejacent 'Bill kisses Lucy' and 'Lucy is kissed by Bill' do have the same *content*, which is something I doubt.

Now, in order to establish whether a passivized sentence and its non-passivized counterpart express or do not express the same thought, we must settle what is understood by 'thought'. I assume that 'thought' in general is a term interchangeable with the term 'content', and 'content' is typically denoted by a multitude of propositions from which the particular proposition that is the most accurate expression of a thought hangs on the details of the context in which the thought occurs.²⁰ Differently put, the thought is the proposition expressed by a sentence *and given* by the logical interpretation that best matches the speaker's understanding of the situation that gave rise to the thought in question. This means that if we consider a sentence like 'Bill kisses Lucy', then according to the proposed approach, the thought expressed is given by the logical interpretation of the proposition 'that Bill kisses Lucy' that best corresponds to the speaker's grasp of the situation. Crudely, if the logical interpretation that best expresses what the speaker thinks is the proposition *that Bill is such that Bill kisses Lucy*, then the thought expressed by the sentence 'Bill kisses Lucy' is that BILL²¹ kisses Lucy. I also take it that the proper logical interpretation of the uttered sentence is *what is said*

¹⁹ Schroeder's charge is tricky because if the passivization test is apt, then it might be that *APT* fails *not* necessarily because the predicted ambiguity in 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy' is not to be found in 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill' but perhaps because 'Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill' *remains* ambiguous in the way 'Bill ought to kiss Lucy' is but *APT* misidentifies its nature in the first place.

²⁰ I assume that in general each possible propositional representation of a particular thought is complete, that is, is truth-evaluable, yet neither of the individual propositions on their own that expresses the thought, expresses it completely. In other words, I am of the opinion that only a conjunction of propositions making up the contextually salient content of thought is almost successful in representing *the* content of one thought.

²¹ Here I use capital letters to indicate a peculiar form of agency as when the agent of some action is to be the sole producer of it.

by the token of an utterance under consideration. Now, it strikes me as not question-begging that the thought expressed by the sentence ‘Bill ought to kiss Lucy’, irrespective of the *precise* character of what it is *all* about, is primarily about *Bill*. Similarly, it is my strong conviction that the thought expressed by the sentence ‘Lucy ought to be kissed by Bill’, again quite irrespective of the *precise* character of what it is *all* about, is primarily about *Lucy*. The non-passivized sentence says something about what Bill ought to *do* and its passivized counterpart says something about *to whom* Bill ought to do the thing in question. If the content of these two sentences differs with respect to the general subject matter, how can it be that they, in principle, express the same thought? And if they do not express the same thought, because at some general level they are concerned with different objects, how can it be that the claim about the ambiguity regarding their senses arises in the first place as *a* relevant issue?

We do not tend to suspect semantic ambiguity whenever we encounter a pair of sentences expressing different propositions with the same truth conditions. The sentence ‘Hesperus is the personificated name for the planet Venus’ and the sentence ‘Phosphorus is the personificated name for the planet Venus’ have the same truth conditions, but we do not predict any sentential ambiguity about them. A similar observation strikes me as true for an arbitrary sentence in English. Take the sentence ‘Susan is drinking white liquid from the glass, the liquid which is one of the main ingredients for baking chocolate cakes’ which is obviously true if and only if the sentence ‘Susan is drinking milk from the glass, the liquid which is one of the main ingredients for baking chocolate cakes’ is true. Does the fact that these two sentences *say* different things while referring to the same state of affairs warrant the worry about the ambiguity that is to be discovered in the proposition presented under one description but which is missing when we propose an alternative description of the same state of affairs? I think not.

However, I expect that to this suggestion of mine Schroeder would reply by saying that the point of his critical note is not so much that the two ‘ought’ sentences telling us about an event from the lives of some film protagonists Bill and Lucy *strictly speaking* express the same proposition because they actually have *different* prejacent, but rather the idea is that we, *the interpreters*, “naturally” *understand* these two sentences as expressing the same thought, because we have in

mind the *relevant* scenario, namely, in the example at hand, the idealistic scenario in which “two lovable but romantically ill-fated characters ought to get together” (Schroeder 2011, p. 12). If that were the line of his reply, then I suppose that the general and quite correct lesson he wants to teach us is as follows: when considered against the background of a specific narrative, or in the light of a determined context of interpretation, the passivized sentence and the non-passivized original *tend to be given the same* meaning, where what is meant by “meaning” is what is said, or what is asserted by the respective sentences, and not their truth conditions.

Again, that strikes me as perfectly right as a thesis about how we come to understand the meaning of a sentence *from within* a story. When we are gripped by the narrative, we follow the plot with the general intention of getting the depicted *facts* right, which typically implies no eye on the interpretational subtleties. This means that although from the point of view of the communicative intention of the producer of the statement ‘Bill ought to kiss Lucy’ the grammatical construction used to build the sentence he utters may be important, as it serves to put emphasis on that it is *Bill* and not, say, Ricky or Mark who ought to kiss Lucy, it is not so important from the perspective of the interpreter who wants to get an overview of what is going on. I assume that getting the general idea of what is going on is the basic intention governing one’s watching a film.

However, and here is my objection to Schroeder’s argument, the pragmatic reasons that speak for attributing the same content to sentences expressing literally *distinct* propositions in the context of *learning* a story (where learning a story consists in arranging all the available and relevant information in order that it provides us with an *intelligible* outlook on what this all is about) do not belong to *the sort* of reasons speaking for a general thesis in philosophical semantics saying that prejacent that differ with respect to their subject-matter have the same content.

To conclude: from the fact that a pair of sentences that have the same truth conditions *say* different things, nothing follows about these sentences being ambiguous in a *different* way, which is what Schroeder’s argument from undergeneration assumes to be the case. In fact, nothing directly follows about the potential ambiguity in what is said. Even more, there is nothing in what the test for passivization

reveals that would justify our interest in the unambiguous character of these sentences in the first place. Schroeder's argument is ill-advised because he takes the test for passivization to settle what the sentence *means*, whereas in fact it can only be helpful in uncovering the plural content of what *is said*. For that reason I find it difficult to see in what way the passivization could be instructive in deciding whether the *explanation* of ambiguity given by *APT* is any good.²²

7. CONCLUSION

In this paper I set myself two kinds of objectives: critical and constructive. In the critical part these objectives were three in particular: (1) to show that Schroeder's criticism targeted at the theory, according to which ambiguity observable in some 'ought' sentences resides in the sentence, and not in the meaning of the word 'ought', is not as powerful as it is thought to be; (2) to justify the claim that Schroeder's arguments against treating the deliberative 'ought' in terms of the propositional ought is, overall, unsuccessful, and finally (3) to show that the reason for which Schroeder's challenge towards *APT* is mis-targeted is that he underestimates the possibility that there might be more than one ambiguity observable in the preadjacent sentence. On the constructive side, I wanted to render attractive the two-tier conditional claim, saying the following: *if* there is an interesting ambiguity to be observed in agential 'ought' sentences, it concerns the issue of *who* is to be the essential executor of it, and thence the bearer of responsibility for making the relevant 'ought' proposition true, and *if* the *right* kind of ambiguity concerns authorship of the required action, then that very ambiguity should be recoverable from *any* 'ought' sentence whatsoever. Even if you, the reader, think that these tasks have not been successfully completed, I hope that you will grant as much that a new and interesting perspective in the philosophical study on the meaning of 'ought' has been brought to further examination.

²² The confusion arises because the phrase 'sentential meaning' can mean different things: for some and in some contexts it is synonymous with 'truth conditions of the sentence', and for others and in some contexts it can mean 'content', or 'the proposition expressed'. Now, what passivization shows is that we should not identify the truth conditions of the propositions expressed by a passivized sentence and its non-passivized originals with the content expressed by these sentences.

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