

**OUGHT TO in Middle English: a semi-grammaticalisation?**

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## General introduction

- OUGHT (TO) is considered as a semi-modal (like NEED and DARE): functions with TO.
- It has a past morphology, but a conditional meaning.
- the “black sheep” of modal verbs?

## 0.1 Introduction

### 0.1.1 V vs *v*

- V = **lexical** head,
  - *v* = **functional** (i.e. grammatical) head.
- ⇒ in Distributed Morphology (see Marantz (1999)), *v* has the following features:

1. it *creates* a verb,
2. it provides *event semantics*,
3. it provides *agentive semantics* for agentive constructions,
4. it *merges* with an external argument,
5. it has an *Agree relation* with the object.

### 0.1.2 *v* VS $v_{\text{Modal}}$

⇒ in Roméro (2005),  $v_{\text{Modal}}$  (i.e. a specific type of *v*) has features 1, 2 and 3:

- it creates the **preterite present** = semi-lexical,
- it provides event semantics,
- it might provide agentive semantics.

## 0.2 AGAN in Old English: some syntactical facts

- lexical verb with DP complement,

(1) Dryhten hælend, þu þe **ahst** doma geweald. *Lord Christ, who owns the power of justice.* (cocynew,86.723. 623)

- passivized,

(2) Pa cwæð se cyningc to his mannum siððan Apollonius **agan** wæs... *Then the king said to his men when he had had control over Apollonius...* (ApolT, ApT:14.1.250)

- infinitive with a preterite-present verb,

(3) Ac se ðe þa ecan **agan** wille soðan gesælða. *But who will obtain the eternal true blessing.* (comeboe,161.7.23. 52)

- same structure as auxiliary verbs,

(4) ... se þe **ah** lifes wyn gebiden in burgum. *...who ought to ask in town the gain of life.* (coexeter,144.27.133)

### 0.2.1 Striking point in OE

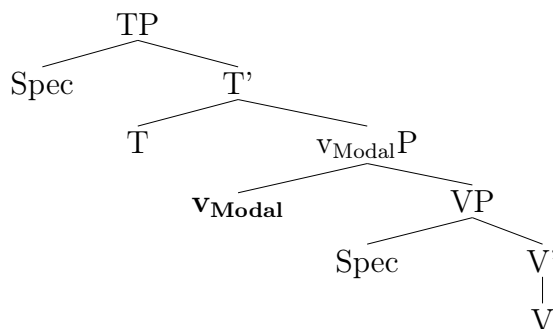
⇒ **no examples** displaying the structure AGAN + *infinitive* (in Pintzuk & al. (2000)), but

⇒ example of the structure AGAN + *to* + *infinitive*:

(5) & betæhte him æl þæt he **ahte** *TO* bewitenne. *É delivered to him all that he ought to keep.* (Heptateuch,Gen:39.4. 1564)

### 0.2.2 Preterite present structure in OE

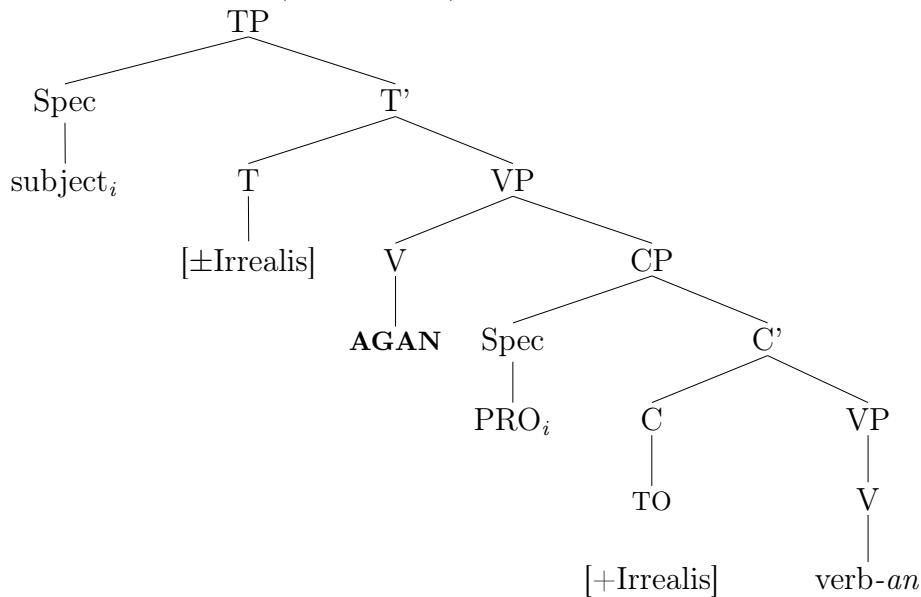
- Structure for a preterite present (semi-lexical)



(See Roméro (2005) for more details)

### 0.2.3 Structure for AGAN

- AGAN structure in OE (*control* verb)



## 0.3 Middle English

In ME, there are many linguistic changes. Among which

⇒ The preterite presents grammaticalized: appearance of **epistemic modals** in Late OE,

⇒ TO grammaticalized due to the **loss of the subjunctive ending** (see Roberts & Roussou (2003)): *TO changes meaning from purposive/directional content to a "bleached" meaning as an irrealis marker.*

**Question: What about AGEN? Does it follow the same (syntactic) path as the other preterite present verbs?**

### 0.3.1 AGEN compared to other preterite present verbs

In ME, we find two structures (12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> c.):

- modal + infinitive (unlike OE) vs modal + to + infinitive

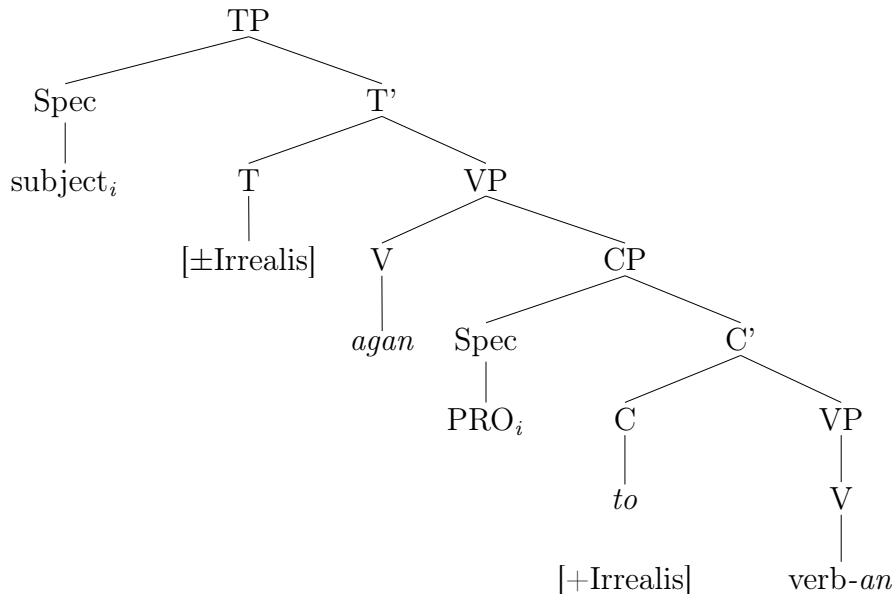
Interesting facts:

- both structures mainly display OWE (present form of AGEN), very few with AHTE,
- more OWE+(FOR)TO+verb structures than AHTE+TO+verb ones

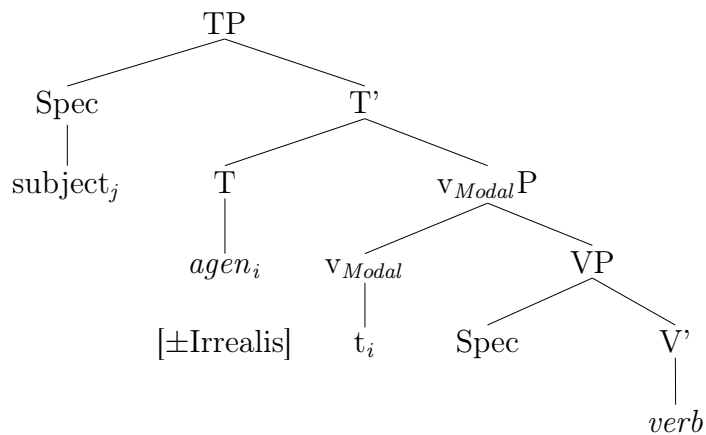
⇒ syntactic competition : *control* structure vs **modal** structure

⇒ semantic opposition between OWE “own, possess” and AHTE “ought, obligation” (Dekeyser (1998)).

**Syntactic structure: control (same as OE)**



**Syntactic structure: modal**



**0.3.2 Examples**

- (6) þt each mon **ahte** *hersumin & herien* in eorðe. ... *that each one ought to obey & praise on earth.* (CMKATH,23.75)
- (7) first, we **owen** *undirstonde* it bi the lettre. *we first ought to understand it word by word.* (CMPURVEY,I,52.2123)
- (8) þus **ahte** ech of us him seluen **to cnowen**. *thus, each of us ought to know himself.* (CMTRINIT,123.1649)
- (9) (Arthure) **owen** al þe worlde **to deme**. *Arthur ought to deem all the world.* (CM-BRUT3,81.2468)

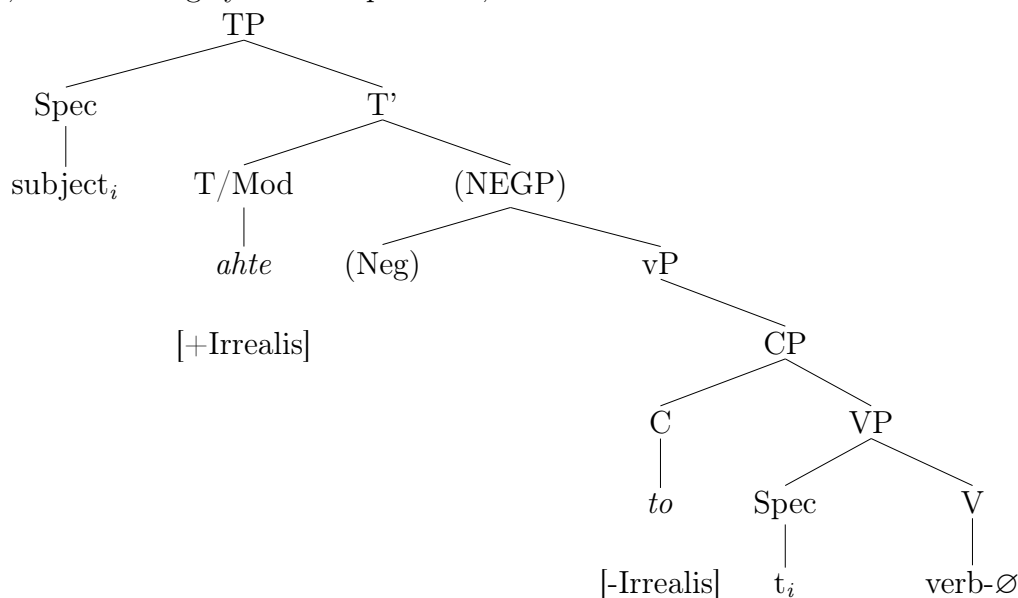
- (10) þogh ʒe mow wyth glosyng wordys desayve me and say ʒe ben yn full charyte as ʒe **owen** FORTO be, ... *although you may deceive me with glosing words and say you are indulgent as you should be, ...* (CMMIRK,130.3483)
- (11) and heruth God seruyce as cristen men **owen** FORTO do; *and hear God service as Christian men ought to;* (CMMIRK,138.3674)
- (12) & [þe eorl] benam him al ðat he **ahte** TO hauen. *The earl took from him all that he should have had.* (CMPETERB, 58.529)
- (13) When ye wyl aske any þing at a ryche man in erthtt, ye aske ful mekelike yure erande wyd mekil mare deuociun **ahte** ye þanne AT pray to god, of whaim þat al ʒude cumis. *When you ask anything to a rich man, you will fully ask your request with much more devotion, should you then pray to God, from whom all good comes.* (CMBENRUL,19.667)

### 0.3.3 Attempt at analyzing

- in (10) and (11), TO has been reanalyzed, not OWE.
- in (12) and (13), AHTE has been reanalyzed, so has TO.
- by the end of the ME period, OWE “own, possess” is to be used more as a lexical verb, and AHTE “ought, obligation” as a modal one (Dekeyser (1998)).
- standardization of “past” morphology : conditional meaning (like could, would, should, might).
- semantic shift: past → conditional triggers syntactic change: control → raising verb

#### Structure by IME

Hence, the following syntactic equivalent,



## Conclusion

- still on their ways to grammaticalisation : “problem” with the two grammatical items functioning together.
  - OUGHT has syntactically, and to some extent semantically, grammaticalised.
  - TO has also grammaticalised.
  - they grammaticalised in parallel, but this time the parallels did cross.
- in PDE, we’ve got interesting facts :
  - “GRAMMATICALISATION”: *You oughta know more about that than me.*
  - “DE-GRAMMATICALISATION”: *he didn’t ought to have gone. or he hadn’t ought to have gone.*

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