

OUGHT TO in Middle English: a semi-grammaticalisation?

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In PDE:

⇒ 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?

Introduction: 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.

⇒ in Roméro (2005), v_{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.

AGAN in Old English: some syntactical facts

- lexical verb with DP complement,

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

- passivized,

(2) Ða 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)

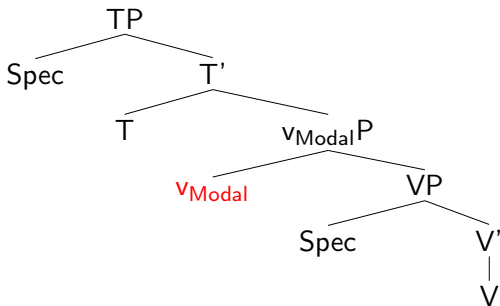
⇒ **no examples** displaying the structure AGAN + *infinitive* (in Pintzuk & al. (2000)), but

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

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

Preterite present structure in OE

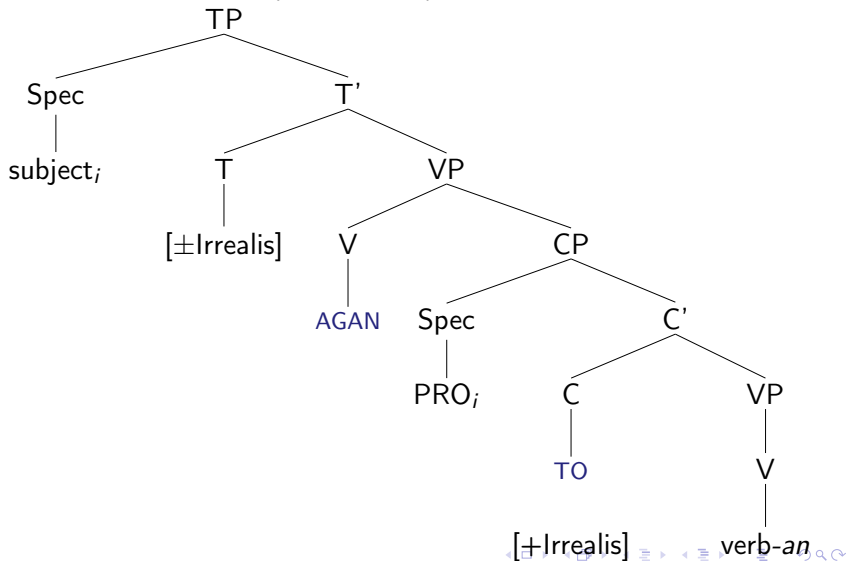
- Structure for a preterite present (semi-lexical)



(See Roméro (2005) for more details)

Structure for AGAN

- AGAN structure in OE (*control* verb)



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?

AGEN compared to other preterite present verbs

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

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

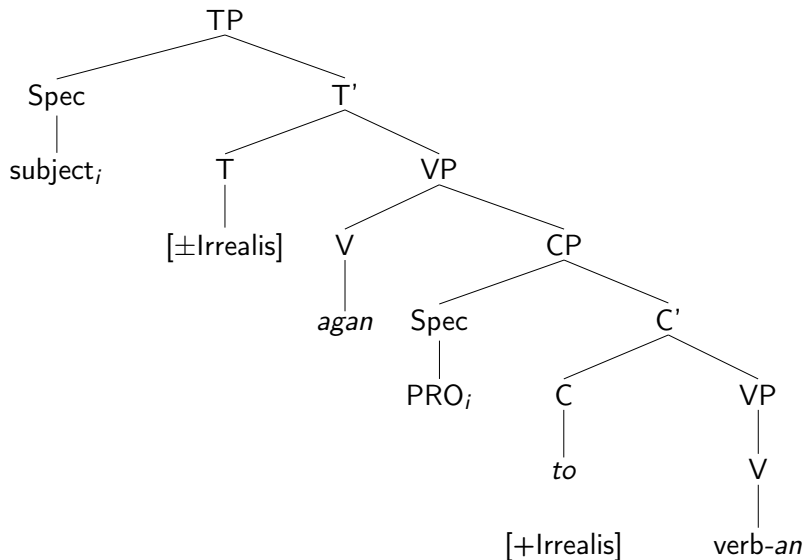
Interesting facts:

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

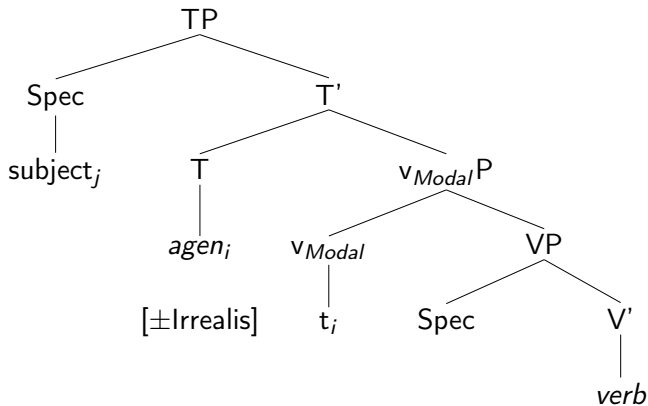
⇒ syntactic competition : **control** structure vs **modal** structure

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

Syntactic structure: control (same as OE)



Syntactic structure: modal



Some examples

- (6) þt euch mon **ahte** hersumin & herien in eorðe. ... *that each one ought to obey & praise on earth.* (CMKATH,23.75)
- (7) first, we **owen** vndirstonde it bi the lettre. *we first ought to understand it word by word.* (CMPURVEY,1,52.2123)
- (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.* (CMBRUT3,81.2468)

Some more examples

- (10) þogh ȝe mow wyth glosyng wordys desayne me and say ȝe
ben yn full charyte as ȝe **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)

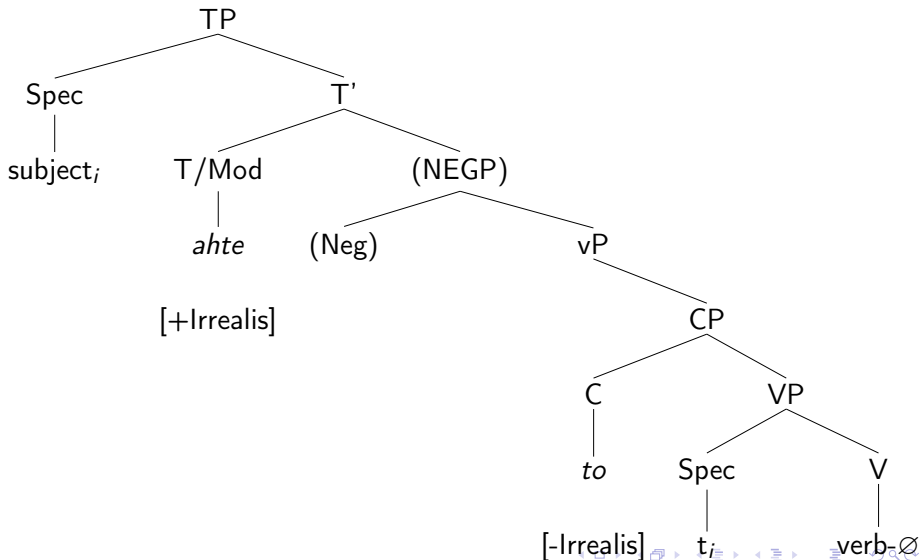
When ye wyl aske any þing at a ryche man in erthtt, ye aske
ful mekelike yure erande wyd mekil mare deuociun **ahte** ye
þanne AT pray to god, of whaim þat al ȝude cumis. *When
you ask anything to a rich man, you will fully ask your
request with much more devotion, should you then pray to
God, from whom all good comes.* (CMBENRUL,19.667)

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,



- 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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