

2.

Daniel Currie Hall - *University of Toronto*
A subject must scope

danhall@chass.utoronto.ca

Wurmbrand (1998) proposes that the semantic contrast between subject-directed (henceforth simply **directed**) and non-subject-directed (**non-directed**) deontic modals, illustrated in (1), derives from the scope-taking position of the subject.

- (1) a. Students must submit their application forms by next week. (directed)
b. The application forms must arrive by next week. (non-directed)

In (1a), *must* indicates obligation on the part of the students; in (1b), the modal is still deontic, but the obligation is not assigned to its syntactic subject. According to Wurmbrand (1998: 275), “if the subject is interpreted in the surface position [SpecIP] (in terms of scope), we get the directed root interpretation. If the subject is interpreted in its base position, it is in the scope of the modal verb and we get the non-directed root interpretation.” The relevant structures are in (2).

- (2) a. Directed: SUBJECT > MODAL b. Non-directed: MODAL > SUBJECT



The predicted correlation between scope and directedness is found in sentences like (3).

- (3) Most of the students must pass the exam...
a. ... in order to pass the course. (directed)
b. ... or else the instructor will be disciplined. (non-directed)

(3a) can be paraphrased as ‘For most *s*, *s* a student, *s* is obliged to pass the exam.’ The subject takes wide scope and bears the obligation indicated by the modal. (3b) means ‘It is required that for most *s*, *s* a student, *s* passes the exam.’ The subject

takes narrow scope, and the modal is non-directed.

However, counterexamples to Wurmbrand's prediction exist:

- (4)
- a. *Most of the students must pass the exam* because their parents are major donors to the university, but there are a few whom the instructor may safely flunk.
 - b. On the journey from Radom to Bialystok, *three rivers must be crossed*, namely the Vistula, the Bug, and the Narew.
 - c. *One squib in this issue can exceed the length limit* because its author has special permission.
 - d. [...] the judge has no choice, *A singer must die* for the lie in his voice. (Cohen 1974)

In (4a), *most of the students* refers to a specific set; however, the deontic *must* is non-directed: 'For most *s*, *s* a student, it is required (of the instructor) that *s* pass the exam'. In (4b), the three rivers can be listed, and in (4c), there is one specific squib whose author has permission to be verbose; in these examples, the inanimate subjects preclude directed readings. Finally, there is a reading of (4d) in which *a singer* is specific, but the obligation belongs to the judge. These data indicate that subjects must be able to take scope independently of whatever structural configuration encodes the difference between directed and non-directed modality.

Works cited

- Cohen, L. (1974) "A Singer Must Die", in *New Skin for the Old Ceremony*. Audio recording. Sony Music Canada CK 80207. (Lyrics available online at <http://www.leonardcohen.com/lyrics/asinger.html>).
- Wurmbrand, S. (1998) *Infinitives*, Ph.D. dissertation, MIT.