

On the desirability of Latin deontic adjectives: Modality between evaluation and qualification of States of Affairs

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Deontic modality has traditionally been linked to the notions of permission and obligation (Lyons 1977: 823–841, Kratzer 1978: 111, Palmer 1986: 96–115, and van der Auwera and Plungian 1998: 81). However, new perspectives and definitions have come to the fore in recent years.

Some scholars exclude directive modals as illocutionary devices and consider deontic modality as an attitudinal category pertaining to the conceptual system of qualifications of States of Affairs, centering on their degree of desirability (Verstraete 2005: 1405–1406) and including moral acceptability (Nuyts 2005: 9). Within this framework, Byloo and Nuyts (2014) revisit the deontic meanings conveyed by *kunnen* ‘can’, *mogen* ‘may’, and *moeten* ‘must’ in Dutch, while Van Linden and Verstraete (2011) extend the investigation beyond modal verbs, to examine deontic adjectival predicates that qualify an embedded proposition in English constructions such as [*it is essential...*] or [*it is appropriate...*]; Portner and Rubinstein (2016) also treat modal deontic operators in terms of gradable concepts, comparing the behaviour of certain adjectives to that of modal verbs (*must : should* vs *crucial : important*).

One of the challenges presented by these novel approaches concerns the means by which languages encode the scalar concepts of desirability and (moral) acceptability. Furthermore, deontic adjectival constructions outside the Germanic family are still unexplored. Hence, our talk will deal with these constructions in Latin. A preliminary survey based on the PHI 5 Latin corpus has enabled us to identify constructions analogous to those already investigated in English.

Our research questions focus on the following points:

- i) the semantic variation - within and outside the modal domain - of predicative constructions featuring the adjectives *aequus* ‘right, just’, *honestus* ‘honest, fair’, *necessarius* ‘necessary, essential’, and *utilis* ‘useful, fitting’;
- ii) the syntactic behaviour of the above-mentioned constructions with regard to complementation (Acl, simple infinitive) and the presence/absence of a beneficiary;
- iii) the use of alternative linguistic means (e.g., nouns such as *fas* ‘law, right’ or impersonal verbs such as *oportet* ‘it is necessary, it is proper’) to convey deontic assessments.

We will address these questions through a refined qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data gathered from the *Antiquitas* section in the LLT database.

The results will clarify relevant features of the encoding of deontic assessments in Latin and contribute fresh insights to the cross-linguistic mapping of the deontic domain.

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