10
Ought without Ability

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The maxim 'Ought Implies Can' seems to state something fairly intuitive: for some action to be deemed a duty for one agent, such agent has to be able to perform it, where 'be able to' is understood to mean not only having the ability to perform that particular action, but also the opportunity to do so. If a child is drowning in a lake, it is not enough that I know how to swim; if I ought to save the child then it has to be the case that I have the opportunity to exert my swimming abilities. If I am tied to a pole, then I have the ability but not the opportunity to put this ability to use and, so it is believed, it is not the case that I ought to save the child.

This maxim (OIC from now on) plays a predominant role in many debates regarding free will and moral responsibility. It has often been used as a cornerstone in arguments against compatibilism. The main structure of some such arguments is as follows:

(1) If determinism is true, no one can do otherwise than one, in fact, does.[1]
(2) If one cannot do otherwise that one, in fact, does, then it is not the case that one ought to do otherwise than one, in fact, does.
(3) Therefore, if determinism is true, then no one ought to do otherwise than he or she, in fact, does.
(4) One acts wrongly only if one ought to do otherwise than one, in fact, does.
(5) Therefore, if determinism is true, then no one acts wrongly.[2]

This conclusion is frequently complemented by adding that, if one is blameworthy for something one does, then acting in that way must be wrong. It follows from here that, since no one acts wrongly, then no one is blameworthy for acting in the way he or she does.

I am not interested in defending either compatibilism or incompatibilism; if I mention these arguments here, it is just to show briefly the OIC maxim's weight and importance.

Although central to many debates like these, the truth of OIC is far from being a settled matter. OIC is true for some authors (Zimmerman 1996; Hare 1963; Haji 2014; to name a few), while others question it strongly (Sinnott-Armstrong 1984; Graham 2011; Stern 2004; Martin 2009; again, just to name a few). This dispute commonly involves identifying different senses of 'ought'; defenders of the truth of OIC can thus accept that there are uses of 'ought' that do not imply 'can', but immediately deny that the type of 'ought' in question is the one relevant for morally deontic assessments of permissibility, impermissibility, and obligation.

I am interested in how such debate can be tackled. I agree that there are different meanings and uses of 'ought' (this is fairly evident). However, I want to question the idea according to which the *relevant* 'ought' for morality is that which implies 'can'. I believe there is an 'ought', relevant for morality, which does not imply 'can', and I want to defend its possibility. Others have defended the existence of a type of moral 'ought' that does not imply 'can'. However, defenders of OIC tend to respond by saying this is a *non-binding* type of ought (Zimmerman 1996), – an *ideal* ought, a *situational* ought (as opposed to an *agent-implicating* ought; Humberstone 1971). The sense of 'ought' which I am interested in seems to me not to be captured by the ideal, situational or non-binding senses proposed by defenders of OIC. To be clear, I do not intend to deny that there is some important sense of 'ought' bearing an intimate relationship with 'can' and that it is fundamental for some aspects of our moral reasoning. My purpose is far more modest and simple; I just want to defend the notion that it makes sense to believe there is another 'ought', relevant to morality, which is not captured by the *ideal* sense (and its relatives), although its function is very different from that ascribed by defenders of OIC to 'ought'.

1   'Ought': its purpose and its relationship with 'can'

It would be very easy to settle the debate over the truth of OIC if one were dealing with a simple analytic judgment (*a la* Kant) in which 'can' is already contained within the concept of 'ought'. The question would then be to show that a contradiction follows from denying that ought implies can, as when one denies that a triangle has three sides; this is, in fact, how several authors have attempted to defend OIC. Alas, the matter is more complicated than that. The first question that comes to mind is 'How do you understand "ought"?' Even if one can show that there is some sort of contradiction or unsettling result when one denies that ought implies can, it is far from being evident or obvious that such 'contradiction' or unsettling result is due purely to the concept itself, instead of being produced by some practices related to the way in which the concept of 'ought' is being understood.[3]

So, the very first obstacle one finds in this endeavor is that there are many ways in which 'ought' can be (and is) understood. Many authors agree that there are several meanings of 'ought' and most of them have nothing to do with morality (Zimmerman 1996; Wedgewood 2006, 2013; to name a few). Nevertheless, different meanings of 'ought' may be distinguished, even within the realm of morality (again Zimmerman 1996; Humberstone 1971; Martin 2009; Pigden 1990; Stern 2004; to name just some). So, let us leave aside the non-moral senses of 'ought' (the political, the aesthetic, etc.) and focus on the moral ones. Even by restricting our subject matter to these few senses, things are still far from clear.[4]

In his book *Freedom and Reason* R. M. Hare starts his chapter on '"Ought" and "Can"' by admitting that there are different senses of 'ought', some of which do not imply 'can':

> [I]t is not universally true that 'ought' (let alone the moral words) imply 'can'; that is to say, there are many uses of 'ought' in which it is by no means inconsistent with 'cannot', this gives us another reason for distinguishing, as I have elsewhere and as I shall again below, between different kinds of uses of these words. (1963: 51–2)

Thus, Hare distinguishes between what he calls the *full force* ought and the *prima facie* ought. Only the former bears a strong relationship with the 'can' that is meant by the OIC maxim, although Hare admits this relationship is not that of logical entailment, but a weaker one.[5] By contrast, the *prima facie* ought is quickly defeated by the circumstances the agent finds himself in. So, it would merely seem as if an agent ought to do something; however, on closer inspection, he or she discovers that not being able to comply leaves them out of it:

> I prescribe, that is to say, for everyone in such and such situation, *except myself*....I am prescribing in general for cases like mine; I certainly think that a man in my situation ought, *if he can*, to do the act in question; but the prescription fails to apply in my case because

of the impossibility of acting on it. It is as if I said 'If I were able, it would be the case that I ought (full force); but since I am not able, that lets me out'. (1963: 53)

It is in this sense of 'ought' that Hare finds it plausible to say something like, 'I ought to but I cannot' without this being incoherent. It is in this weak, *prima facie* sense of 'ought' that the relationship with 'can' can be broken. I will come back to this sense of 'ought' in a moment. Let us focus on the *full force* ought and the way in which Hare understands it.

For Hare, the morally relevant sense of ought is essentially prescriptive: even more so, it has to be a *universal* prescription. This is one difference between the *prima facie* sense just explained and the *full force* one. The former, even though it is prescriptive, is not universal as it excludes the agent in question ('it applies to everyone but me'); the latter makes no exceptions.

Hare reverts to imperatives to explain the *full force* ought.[6] The relationship 'ought' has with 'can' is, for him, the same as an order has with its being obeyed or carried out by its recipient. It just makes no sense to give someone an order which it is impossible obey:

> If somebody said 'Fall down the stairs by accident' or 'Go to the wrong room by mistake', we should be at a loss to know what he was telling us to do, and should have to look for peculiar senses in which to take his words (as, e.g., by understanding 'by mistake' to mean '*pretending to have made a mistake*'). (1963: 60)

It is impossible for me to fall down the stairs by accident while obeying an order to do so at the same time, because falling accidentally is unintentional and obeying an order is intentional. So the request sums up to intentionally doing something unintentional. There is thus no way to obey or comply with such order and, for Hare, this means that the order makes no sense.

It seems that Hare has arrived at an important point for denial of OIC when 'ought' is used with *full force* seems to lead to some sort of contradiction or incoherence. As stated beforehand, things would be marvelous for the defenders of OIC if it were an analytic proposition whose negation leads to contradiction. However, as Martin has accurately pointed out:

> From the semantic component of Hare's argument we get the equivalence between ought-claims and imperatives. But in order to get

the conclusion that 'ought' implies 'can', Hare relies essentially on claims about the *function* or *point* in which a prescriptive speech is appropriate. This is not a result that is obtained by semantic analysis of 'ought' but by insight into the pragmatic context and contextual presuppositions at work in the issuing of commands. (2009: 115)

Such incoherence or contradiction is therefore not due to a logical relationship between the concept of 'ought' (understood as *full force*) and the concept of 'can', but to the pragmatic context and especially the expectations at play when a command or order is issued. If it is assumed that the function of an order or a command is to be obeyed, then it is true that it makes no sense to issue it when the recipient cannot perform the commanded action (and the issuer knows that the recipient cannot do so). Nevertheless, is this the only purpose for an order or command? Is it impossible to understand an order, prescription or command as serving a function or purpose other than that of being obeyed or complied with?

This is precisely what the discussion between Erasmus and Luther was based on.[7] It is thus no surprise that defendants of other senses of 'ought' which do not imply 'can' appeal to this debate (Pigden 1990; Martin 2009), for it is regarding this debate that the question about the intelligibility of a command not to be obeyed is posed. I am by no means an expert on the history of philosophy and it is not my intention at all to offer an exegesis of the exchange between Luther and Erasmus. I just want to use this debate briefly to question the assumption (made by Hare) that an impossible command makes no sense.

Much like Hare, Erasmus believed that 'ought' was to be understood as an imperative, an order or command. Divine commandments were thus made to be obeyed, and it made no sense for those commandments to exist if men were unable to comply accordingly:

> What could be put more plainly? God shows what is good, what is evil, shows the different rewards of death and life, leaves man freedom to choose. It would be ridiculous to say, 'Choose', if the power of turning one way or the other were not present, as though one should say to a man standing at a crossroad: 'You see these two roads, take which you like'…when only one was open to him! (1524/1969: 54)

However, Luther, a defender of divine determinism, disagreed:

> Diatribe may pretend and pretend again, quibble and quibble again, as much as she likes, but if God foreknew that Judas would be

a traitor, Judas necessarily became a traitor, and it was not in the power of Judas or any creature to do differently or to change his will. (1525/1969: 240)

Due to God's foreknowledge, all actions occur due to necessity and no one can do otherwise than he or she in fact does. Recall for a moment the argument for wrongness incompatibilism at the very beginning of this text. If 'ought' implies 'can', then it should follow that no one ought to behave differently in Luther's deterministic world. But for Luther being unable to act differently does not imply one ought not to act differently:

> Why is room given for repentance if no part of repentance depends on the will but everything is done by necessity? I reply: You can say the same with regard to all the commandments of God, and ask why he gives commandments if everything is done by necessity. He gives commandments in order to instruct and admonish men as to what they ought to do, so that they may be humbled by the knowledge of their wickedness and attain to grace. (1525/1969: 266)

> The commandments are not, however, either inappropriate or purposeless, but are given in order that blind, self-confident man may through them come to know his own diseased state of impotence if he attempts to do what is commanded. (1525/1969: 191)

It is clear for Luther, even though no one can do otherwise than he or she does, that it does not follow that commandments (instructing what ought to be done) are purposeless or senseless. There is a sense in which agents are still under the prescription of an 'ought', even though they are unable to comply with it. This is not senseless: the purpose of commandments is other than to obey or comply with what is commanded; their purpose is to teach a lesson of humbleness, or impotence.

Luther gives another example of a command whose purpose is other than being complied with and that has nothing to do with divine foreknowledge or determinism:

> How often does a good doctor order a self-confident patient to do or stop doing things that are either impossible or painful to him, so as to bring him through his own experience to an awareness of his illness or weakness, to which he could not lead him by any other means? (1525/1969: 184)

The purpose of an order is not to be obeyed. The doctor who issues it knows the patient cannot comply, but that does not render the command incoherent or senseless. It has a perfectly intelligible purpose, which is to make the patient aware of the severity of his disease and the limitations it imposes on him.

A possible reply to Luther's suggestion could be that there are at least two types of 'ought', one active and one inactive; so, in order to defend OIC, it could be said that Luther's suggestion deals with the inactive sense of 'ought', while OIC applies only to the active sense. The problem with such response is that it seems to be haunted by the ghost of circularity (see Pigden 1990: 13), because the difference between the two types of 'ought' lies in the applicability or inapplicability of OIC; inactive ought is thus the one where OIC does not apply and the active one is that in which OIC applies. To use such difference in support of the truth of OIC would beg the question.[8]

I believe Pigden missed a step and jumped to the accusation of circularity a bit too quickly. Even though I think he is right regarding the main point, the circularity accusation works only if there is no other way to distinguish the two types or senses of 'ought' than by appealing to OIC. And there seems to be just that other way available. So before jumping to the accusation of circularity, one must first see if this other way works or fails.

The distinction can be made, according to Zimmerman (1996) and Schroeder (2011), by appealing to a difference between both senses regarding the possibility of its transformability to passive sentences. Zimmerman distinguishes the binding from the non-binding sense of 'ought', and Schroeder does the same when he distinguishes the deliberative from the non-deliberative 'ought'.

Let us start with Zimmerman, who uses an example from Williams as a starting point:

(i)   Someone ought to help that old lady.
(ii) Jones is the only person who can help her.
(iii) Therefore, Jones ought to help her.

There is, says Zimmerman, a big difference between (i) and (iii), because (i) is 'passive-transformable' and (iii) is not. That is: (i) Someone ought to help that old lady, can be transformed to a passive mode in this way,

(i*) That old lady ought to be helped by someone.

The same does not apply to (iii), for, 'Jones ought to help that old lady', cannot be transformed to (iii*), 'That old Lady ought to be helped by Jones'. Why not? 'For it is Jones who has the obligation, not the old lady' (Zimmerman 1996: 5).

Zimmerman uses this non-binding ought, which can be transformed into the passive form, to answer an objection usually raised against defenders of the truth of OIC. When confronted with examples of 'ought' which do not seem to be incoherent, even when the agent cannot perform the commanded action, the defenders of OIC quickly say that this 'ought' is an ideal one – a non-binding 'ought' – which must not confused with the binding sense to which OIC applies:

> This response is frequently ridiculed. White, for example, says that 'it offers no reason, other than its alleged ability to explain failing to feel what one ought, for supposing there is a second sense of "ought"'. Sinnott-Armstrong similarly complains that the response is question-begging. ...I grant that if no independent reason for distinguishing two senses of 'ought' were given...then this would constitute a begging of the question [However] the fact is that, despite what White and Sinnott-Armstrong say, such independent reason is forthcoming..., certain 'ought' statements (those which express the non-binding sense of 'ought') are what I called 'passive-transformable', whereas others (those which express a binding sense of 'ought', that is, obligation) are not. (1996: 91)

Zimmerman then recalls the example of the old lady and shows, as we have just seen, how (i) is passive-transformable whereas (iii) is not.

This seems to work as a reply to the accusation of circularity made by Pigden; however, things quickly fall apart for Zimmerman, as the distinction seems to work with this example, but not with others. Right after the explanation that follows the last quote, Zimmerman presents another example, but this time he does not attempt to transform it into the passive form: 'Smith ought to give up smoking'. Zimmerman thinks that this example, when Smith is truly unable to quit smoking, is just another case of the non-binding or ideal sense of 'ought' (1996: 92). The problem is that I cannot see how this is passive-transformable.

Certainly,

(a) Smith ought to give up smoking,

cannot be transformed into

(a*) Smoking ought to be given up by Smith.

This just does not make any sense.

Something similar happens with Schroeder's proposal of distinguishing between a deliberative and a non-deliberative sense of 'ought'. For Schroeder, sentences including the non-deliberative sense of 'ought' admit active/passive synonymy, whereas sentences having the deliberative sense do not. For Schroeder, the deliberative sense matters directly for advice (2011: 9) and the non-deliberative one does not. Taking again the already used example, a sentence like,

(i)   Someone ought to help that old lady,

is passive synonymous with

(i*) That old lady ought to be helped by someone.

Nonetheless, it does not seem to be an appropriate sentence for giving advice to someone.
  By contrast, something like,

(iv) You ought to take care of your mother

does not seem to be passive transformable but clearly has to do directly with giving advice.

However, such a distinction seems to collapse when one takes other examples into account, just as Chrisman has done (2012).

There are a number of passive form sentences that seem to be perfectly appropriate for giving advice. Here are some of Chrisman's examples:

(v) Invitations ought to go out by post.
(vi) Rump roast ought to cook slowly (2102: 443).

Chrisman's idea is that what makes sentences appropriate for giving advice is not their syntactic structure but the context in which they are used: 'If, for example, I've called my mother for advice about how to cook rump roast, and she asserts [vi], knowing it to be true, then surely this settles the question of what is advisable for me to do regarding the rump roast' (2012: 443).

These are not conclusive arguments, but they do their modest job very well: that is, they call into question the idea according to which there is a clear method for distinguishing binding and not binding (real and ideal, deliberative and non-deliberative) senses of 'ought'. So, when someone like me says, 'I ought to but I can't' it is far from obvious that I am using an ideal or non-binding sense of ought.

While discussing Hare's proposal I left aside the *prima facie* sense of 'ought' and said I was going to get back to it later. So, let us return. As we saw, Hare distinguishes the *full force* sense of 'ought' from the *prima facie* by saying that the former, but not the latter, is universal. The *prima facie* is a type of rule from which I exclude myself because my current situation makes it impossible for me to comply with it. Something similar can be said of the non-binding or ideal sense of 'ought'. It describes a state of affairs one wishes was true, but in no way applies to my current situation; it states what should be the case, were I in a different situation. It applies (if something like this can be said) to an other-world-me (or me where I in a world very close to the real one) but not to the real me, not to me right here right now. The same can be said of Humberstone's distinction between a 'situational' ought and an 'agent-implicating' ought (1971: 8).

It should be clear by now that I am trying to defend the possibility of a binding, agent-implicating, sense of 'ought' that does not imply 'can'. Even though none of the arguments sketched here are knock-down or conclusive, it seems to me the way towards such possibility slowly opens up. It is no longer that easy to say that such a type of ought is nonsense, a logical or conceptual contradiction, or meaningless. Actually, although I am not interested at all in religious matters, I think what Luther was defending is precisely some sort of binding sense of 'ought' that does not imply 'can'.

Before talking briefly about why I am interested in this sense of ought, let me briefly address a final concern.

I can imagine an objection being raised in the following way. The distinction between the binding and non-binding senses of 'ought', according to which the former, but not the latter, implies 'can', has the advantage of not being unfair. The binding sense of ought is tied to our judgments regarding moral responsibility and this is why it makes sense that an agent ought to do something (in this binding sense) only if he or she is actually able to do it; otherwise, you would end up with agents who are morally blameworthy for not complying with what they ought to but could not do. In summary, this is why the ought which does not imply can is non-binding: what you are looking for is grossly unfair.

The objection is based on what I mentioned at the very beginning of this text as a commonly used complement to the wrongness incompatibilism argument: one is blameworthy for something one does, if such action involves the violation of a certain obligation.

My reply to this objection is that this connection between blameworthiness and obligation, although widely assumed, is not that evident and can be called into question. The always stimulating John Fischer, when talking about the OIC maxim (which he believes to be false, but also acknowledges that he has no compelling arguments against), admits the possibility of something like the conclusion of the wrongness incompatibilism argument: that is, if no one can do otherwise than he or she actually does, then no one acts wrongly nor ought to act differently. Nevertheless, this, he says, does not mean we also have to give up moral responsibility:

> Perhaps (on the assumption that the ought-implies-can maxim is valid) one will have to bite the bullet and accept that the interconnected circle of judgments of deontic morality is inapplicable in a causally deterministic world. Note, however, that this still leaves room for robust moral responsibility. ... We can make the judgment in a particular context (even in a causally deterministic world) that an individual has sufficient reason to do X. It does not seem to me that this judgment entails that he *can* do X. ... Thus, even in a world in which causal determinism is true, presumably we can make judgments about what agents have sufficient reason to do, and we can criticize them for failing to do what they have sufficient reason to do. (2006: 221)[9]

My point is then that the objection is far from being conclusive because it assumes that blameworthiness depends on the violation of a duty or ought, and that is something that can be seriously questioned. It is thus possible to have a binding sense of 'ought' which does not imply 'can', and does not make the agent blameworthy for not complying with what he or she ought to do but cannot do so.[10]

2   Why?

I want to finish with a brief explanation of why I am interested in this binding sense of ought which does not imply can. As I said before, I think the non-binding, the ideal, the situational, the *prima facie* senses are all too detached from the agent and do not capture what happens in

situations like those described by Luther. I also said that I am not interested in religious arguments about impotence and how the realization of one's limitations leads one to seek grace; that said, my interest has to do with something very similar. In a country overwhelmed by violence and war for as long as mine has been (Colombia), one finds people, admirable people, who can neither forgive nor forget, but who, nevertheless, strongly believe and are deeply convinced, without a doubt, that they ought to do so; and not just forgive and forget, they also believe they ought to help those who are gone, those who are suffering but alas they cannot help in any way whatsoever. If you ask them, they will tell you that they ought to do what they know they cannot do. This just makes me wonder whether they are right. I find it disrespectful to reach a quick, easy answer and say that they are wrong: that their beliefs are false, that they are mistaken or that they are just speaking of an ideal ought. Far from it, they feel that the weight of that 'ought' is not something from which they detach or exclude themselves (as in Hare's *prima facie* 'ought'); on the contrary, they feel deeply bound by it.

Since they know they cannot do what they ought to do, while, at the same time, it seems to me unfair to say that this makes no sense, I find it possible to ask whether perhaps there is more to the concept of moral 'ought' than what is implied by OIC.

A long time ago, I was reading something John Fischer wrote against the incompatibilist strong source requirement for moral responsibility, 'But total control is a total fantasy – metaphysical megalomania, if anything is' (Fischer 2007: 67). The situation I tried to describe made me wonder whether attaching the binding sense of ought to control so deeply is not something like this megalomania. I do not intend to deny that there is an essential, important sense of 'ought' to which 'can' is deeply related. However, if the preceding considerations are on the right track, the moral 'ought' does not always imply 'can', and OIC is not universally valid.

Several open questions remain, the more pressing of which are, firstly: if what I said is roughly correct, and the purpose or function of this ought is not to be complied with, then what is its real function? Perhaps the purpose of this sense of 'ought' has to do with learning to develop certain feelings about the other's suffering and to learn to recognize the other as someone towards whom I have obligations; but I'll leave this just as a suggestion. Secondly, how can we distinguish between the binding sense of 'ought' implying 'can' from the one that does not? To attempt to answer this question would go beyond the purpose of this text and, I have to say, that I have no definite answer as yet.[11]

Notes

1. There is a compatibilist sense of 'can' that invalidates this premise. Arguing against it goes beyond the scope of this text. Suffice it to say whenever I write 'can' I am making reference to the incompatibilist sense of 'can' (thanks to Ish Haji and Carlos Moya for this suggestion).

2. I am closely following a formalization of Graham's argument for Wrongness Incompatibilism (2011: 338); however, as Graham clearly states, this is by far not the only type of argument in which OIC has been used. For the role of OIC in arguments against the possibility of moral dilemmas, or to derive the Principle of Alternative Possibilities, see pp. 337–8.

3. Wayne Martin (2009) pursues this line of thought to defend what he calls *infinite moral consciousness*. I believe Martin and I are on the same page. Although I am not entirely sure what the limits and function of this infinite moral consciousness are; it is, however, a different way to understand moral 'ought' seeming to be very close to what I want to defend. Also, for a very interesting and illuminating analysis of whether 'ought' conceptually implies 'can', see Kühler (2003: chap. 5).

4. I will confine myself to the meanings of 'ought' and avoid the other problems which OIC faces that are more abstract. For example, the relationship of OIC with Hume's Rule, according to which one cannot derive an evaluative sentence from a purely descriptive one (Pigden 1990 says this is some sort of unsolvable antinomy regarding Hare's proposal; for an even earlier analysis of OIC regarding Hume's Rule, see Collingridge 1977). Even for some who defend the idea that the relationship between ought and can is a bit less strong than that of implication and suggest that 'ought' *presupposes* can, there is the problem for the contrapositive form (*modus tollens*) of OIC. If 'ought' presupposes 'can', then 'can' is a condition of bivalence for 'ought' (van Fraassen 1968). In the contrapositive form, since 'can' is false, the condition of bivalence is absent and therefore the result is that both 'ought' and 'ought not' fail to apply, instead of it being true that the agent 'ought not' to perform certain action he or she can't perform (Sinnott-Armstrong 1984).

5. Hare says it is a relationship which is analogous to the one that Strawson claims exists between the statement that the King of France is wise, and the statement that there is a King of France: 'If there is no King of France, then the question whether the King of France is wise does not arise' (Hare 1963: 54). The relationship, thus, seems to be that of presupposition as explained in note 3 above, and therefore susceptible to the problem with its previously mentioned contrapositive form.

6. 'It must be noticed that imperatives also imply "can" in the same way as "ought" when used with its full force' (Hare 1963: 54).

7. I do not mean to say this is the only discussion between them and, of course, more elements were present in their original exchange (divine determination, divine foreknowledge, free will, etc.). I just want to emphasize that part of their exchange in which they debated whether divine commandments were meant to be obeyed, as we shall see briefly.

8. I believe the same can be said of a different possible reply: namely, that an order or command given when one knows the recipient cannot comply with it is not sincere or honest. Here a difference between honest and dishonest (or

sincere and insincere) commands is being made; but then again, it seems the honest/sincere ones would just be those where OIC applies.

9. Very recently Ishtiyaque Haji (2014) has developed a strong argument attempting to show that what he calls Blameworthiness Requires Impermissibility (BRI) is false. I believe this is the most elaborate and strongest argument to date regarding such purpose; however, explaining it goes well beyond the scope of this text. For him, blameworthiness is not related with what is objectively permissible for an agent, but with what an agent non-culpably believes to be permissible.

10. In correspondence, Carlos Moya pointed out that it is not evident that this sense of 'ought' that is binding and does not imply 'can' excludes moral responsibility. This is an interesting point. However, even if I am mistaken and one is morally responsible for not complying with this sense of 'ought', I would like to defend that this type of responsibility has to be different from the one someone bears when he or she can act in some way he or she ought to, but doesn't.

11. A draft of this text was presented on June 2014 at the *Phronesis* seminar held at Universidad de Valencia. Many thanks to those who attended the session for their valuable comments, especially Josep Corbí, Tobies Grimaltos, Pablo Rychter and Jordi Valor. Very special thanks are due to Ishtiyaque Haji and Carlos Moya for their detailed remarks and suggestions made regarding a later version.