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The so-called epistemic reading of *should* has traditionally (Horn, 1989) been treated as less-than-universal quantification over the speaker's epistemically accessible worlds. As shown in (1), it is weaker than epistemic *must*, which is taken to universally quantify over those worlds. While the continuation in (1a) is unacceptably redundant, the continuation in (1b) provides additional information. (Deontic readings of *should* are ignored throughout.)

- (1) a. #Xander must be there, in fact, he should be.
b. Xander should be there, in fact, he must be.

(1) is consistent with an analysis in which *must* and *should* both quantify over epistemically possible worlds, but *should* quantifies over fewer of them. However, the contrast in (2) seems to point away from an epistemic analysis of "epistemic" *should*. For if an utterance of *should* p really does assert p to be true on most of the speaker's epistemically accessible worlds, (2b) ought to be as contradictory as (2a). Yet it is not.

- (2) a. # Max must be there, but I have absolutely no idea whether he is.
b. Max should be there, but I have absolutely no idea whether he is.

(2b) seems instead to mean that if things proceed as they are supposed to, Max is there. So rather than quantifying over epistemic possible worlds, *should* apparently quantifies over inertially possible worlds (in the sense of Dowty, 1979). This idea might be modeled with an ordering source that picks out the best possible continuation worlds, i.e., those in which things proceed normally. The assertion is then that on those worlds, p.

On this story, an explanation for the contrast in (1) would depend on the set of inertia worlds being smaller than the set of epistemically accessible worlds. There is no reason for this to generally be so. However, another contrast, between *should* and *will*, suggests a different solution to the problem. *Will* also quantifies over inertial worlds; it also asserts that on all those worlds, p, but in addition presupposes that the actual future continuation is an inertial one (Copley, 2002) with respect to p. Note that *will* is also stronger than *should*:

- (3) a. # Zoe will win, in fact, she should win.
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- b. Zoe should win, in fact, she will win.

Unlike *will*, *should* apparently does not commit the speaker to the belief that the actual future continuation will be an inertial one. Instead, the speaker merely has an expectation that the actual future will be an inertial one. There might be a presupposition to this effect, or alternatively, the expectation might stem from a restriction to inertially well-behaved continuations, without assuming that the actual future is well-behaved. Either way, the weakness of *should* is in a presupposition or restriction rather than in the assertion. But this introduces enough weakness into the meaning of *should* to explain the contrast in (3), and plausibly also the contrast in (1).

Reference

- Copley, Bridget (2002) *The Semantics of the Future*, Ph.D dissertation, MIT. (To be published by Routledge, Outstanding Dissertations in Linguistics series).
- Dowty, David (1979) *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar: The Semantics of Verbs and Times in Generative Semantics and in Montague's PTQ*, Reidel, Dordrecht.
- Horn, Laurence (1989) *A Natural History of Negation* (2nd edition), University of Chicago Press, Chicago.