

**OVER-DEMANDINGNESS OBJECTION IN KANT'S ETHICAL
PHILOSOPHY: CASE OF IMPERFECT AND PERFECT DUTIES /
L'OBJECTION D'EXIGENCE EXCESSIVE DANS LA
PHILOSOPHIE ÉTHIQUE DE KANT : LE CAS DES DEVOIRS
IMPARFAITS ET PARFAITS¹**

[10.5281/zenodo.14335695](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14335695)

Abstract : *In this contribution we will discuss the demandingness objection with regard to Kant's ethics. While in the literature there has been an emphasis on this issue with regard to imperfect duties, our main goal is to show Kantian ethics has resources to resort to in the case of the demandingness objection in the class of perfect duties. For doing this, first we will discuss the inherent difference between imperfect and perfect duties while the duty of rescuing being a case in-between the two classes of duties through linguistic proof. Furthermore, we consider different possible components of a moral theory, introduced by Scheffler, which can lead to demandingness: (i) a required process of decision making, (ii) overridingness and (iii) the stringent content of demands. While we concur with Kantian critics that the stringent content of Kantian ethics may be a source of demandingness, we will show that Kantian ethics has resources to respond to demandingness arisen from other components. For this purpose we discuss Kant's notion of "Vorsatz" (intention), accompanied by the device of Flouting, introduced by Grice in his Conversational Implicatures.*

Keywords: *Kant; demandingness objection; imperfect duty; perfect duty; implicature.*

Résumé : *Dans cette contribution, nous discuterons de l'objection d'exigence à l'égard de l'éthique kantienne. Alors que dans la littérature l'accent a été mis sur cette question à propos des devoirs imparfaits, notre objectif principal est de montrer que l'éthique kantienne dispose de ressources auxquelles recourir dans le cas de l'objection d'exigence dans la classe des devoirs parfaits. Pour ce faire, nous discuterons d'abord de la différence inhérente entre les devoirs imparfaits et parfaits, tandis que le devoir de sauvetage est un cas intermédiaire entre les deux classes de devoirs grâce à la preuve linguistique. Par ailleurs, nous considérons différentes composantes possibles d'une théorie morale, introduites par Scheffler, qui peuvent conduire à l'exigence : (i) un processus de prise de décision requis, (ii) le caractère prioritaire et (iii) le contenu strict des demandes. Tout en étant d'accord avec les critiques kantienne selon lesquelles le contenu rigoureux de l'éthique kantienne peut être une source d'exigence, nous montrerons que l'éthique kantienne dispose de ressources pour répondre aux exigences émanant d'autres composantes. À cette fin, nous discutons de la notion kantienne de « Vorsatz » (intention), accompagnée du dispositif du Flouting, introduit par Grice dans ses Implicatures conversationnelles.*

Mots-clés: *Kant ; objection d'exigence; devoir imparfait; devoir parfait; implicature.*

1. Introduction

According to Kant, perfect duties are to be given priority over imperfect duties. While some pinpoint that Kant does not seem to acknowledge that we can have a case of conflict of duties, the discussion of such conflicts in case of perfect and imperfect duties is even more acute. We are not obliged to act on every possible act token falling under an imperfect duty, foregoing one opportunity to comply with an imperfect duty for the sake of satisfying a strict requirement does not amount to a conflict of duties. However, the normative priority of perfect over imperfect duties seems to contradict some common moral intuitions. For instance, it seems absurd to think that one should not save persons from a burning house if doing so would require using the neighbor's garden hose without her permission, or that I should not save a drowning child because that will

¹ **Ramezanali FALLAHRAFIE**, Tarbiat Modares University, Iran, a.fallahrafie@modares.ac.ir ;
Rajdeep SINGH, Tarbiat Modares University, Iran, rajdeepm@gmail.com

entail breaking a promise. Many instances of beneficence intuitively seem more pressing than certain instances of respect for private property or other perfect duties. These are cases when we would have a duty of rescue. Kant however does not seem able to derive duties of rescue from his contradiction in the will test. Our duty to help is an imperfect one: it comes with a latitude for choice which seems out of place in emergency situations, when another person's life is at stake. Kant seems either to have ignored duties of rescue or to have conflated them with duty of beneficence in general. Daniel Statman has argued that when our common intuition rules that a perfect duty is overridden by an imperfect duty, then the imperfect duty in question must be elevated to a perfect one. If saving persons from a fire requires us to use the neighbor's garden hose without her permission, the imperfect duty becomes the perfect one. What Statman leaves us then is that the characterization of a duty as perfect or imperfect is done ad hoc, establishing a basis of the weight of the conflicting duty, leaving out independent considerations concerning the nature of the duties at stake. In the continuation, First I show while that there is linguistic support to such division between perfect and imperfect duties, the duty to rescue appears to be a case in-between, though still an imperfect duty. Next, I will discuss the main components of demandingness according to Van Ackeren and Sticker and show that in fact Kantian ethics has a source to respond to demandingness objection through the Kantian notion of "intention" (Vorsatz) accompanied by the device of Flouting, introduced by Grice in his Conversational Implicatures.

1. Imperfect and perfect duties

In order to explain the differences between imperfect and perfect duties, will engage in a linguistic turn, by comparing a whole series of Gradable Absolute vs. Relative Adjectives, henceforth AAs and RAs. RAs like 'tall', 'large', 'long', and 'expensive', are characterized by an underlying degree of scale on which objects in the domain fall, and that they support the test of Sorites Paradox, for example in (1):

(1) Whatever height you are, one inch of height does not change whether you are tall or not.

Sorites Paradox is deeply related to vague terms; it is originated in an ancient puzzle that appears to be connected with vague terms which are blurred and similar to borderline cases, without any clear dividing lines as to where they are changed and stopped being themselves; 'Bald', 'heap', 'tall', 'old', and 'blue' are prime examples of vague terms as no clear line divides people who are bald from people who are not, or blue objects from green and so forth (Hyde, 2011).

Another way to test the relative vagueness of RAs is through maximizers; whether modifiers like 'completely', 'totally' and 'perfectly' can be used to pick out a maximal element. RAs fail the test as example (2) shows:

(2) The basketball player is completely tall. ⊗

Why it doesn't make sense to use (2)? Since tall is relative adjective and there is no clear cut-off point for such RAs. In other words, how tall should someone be in order to be called tall? There is simply no clear ceiling for RAs.

On the other hand, we have AAs. These adjectives can become naturally precise and they have a clear cut-off point as (3) shows:

(3) The cup is empty.

While we can have comparative setting for such adjectives as well, such as (4), we cannot point to a relatively AA as a true absolute adjective.

(4) The cup is emptier than the mug (in case truly cup has less stuff than the mug).

That's why (5) works, but (6) in case of AA does not make sense.

(5) Point to the tall one! (RA)

(6) Point to the empty one (in case there is no cup that is fully empty)! (AA) ⊗

Furthermore, AAs come in two forms, total and partial. Total AAs require the absence of a particular property as dry (without water) and straight (without bending) while Partial AAs require only that objects possess a minimal degree of the property described such as wet (having water molecules).

2. Process-Like vs. Instantaneous Picture-Like Adjectives

While Siscoe describes how absolute and relative adjectives differ, I would like to pinpoint to the interesting linguistic phenomenon that confirm Siscoe's interpretation. In some languages, such as Indian languages as well as Bantu languages in Africa, relative adjectives are in fact inherently relative and this can be observed in the syntax. Let's consider (7) and (8) in Hindi language.

(7) vo usse lambi hai
that.nom that.inst tall.fem is
She is taller than him/her.

(8) vo lambi hai
that.nom tall.fem is
She is tall.

As it is shown in the above examples, in Hindi the proposition "he is tall" has an inherent, oft dropped, underlying structure as "he is *than him/her* tall". Quite interestingly, it is a widely practiced phenomenon among languages as we observe the same pattern in African Bantu languages such as Swahili. Let's consider an RA in (9) and (10).

(9) *Mfuko wangu ni mpana kuliko mfuko wake*
bag.nom 1Pro.Poss is wide-Adj than bag.nom 3Pro.Poss
My bag is wider (bigger) than her bag.

(10) *Mfuko wangu ni mpana*
bag.nom 1Pro.Poss is wide-Adj
My bag is big (bigger than his/her).

3. Absolute and Relative Adjectives as inherent forms (Verb vs. Adjective forms)

On the other hand, there is an even more interesting fact regarding relative and absolute adjectives in Swahili. It is almost the rule that absolute adjectives are expressed in verb forms (stative verbs) while relative adjectives are expressed in common adjective forms. For example, AAs such as empty (ku-mwaga), full (ku-jaa; ku-jaza) where ku- is the universal verb prefix. On the other hand, RAs are expressed in familiar adjective forms such as tall (-refu), short (-fupi). Big and large (-kubwa; here ku is not verb prefix) and small (-dogo). The only exception is dry (-kavu) relative form and (-kausha) absolute form which is in the verb form as expected (though prefix ku is dropped due to the phonetic consideration) where there is both forms. Let's consider the AAs empty and full in (11) and (12).

(11) imwaga
I mwaga
3pro-nom to empty-verb
It is empty (literally: it empties).

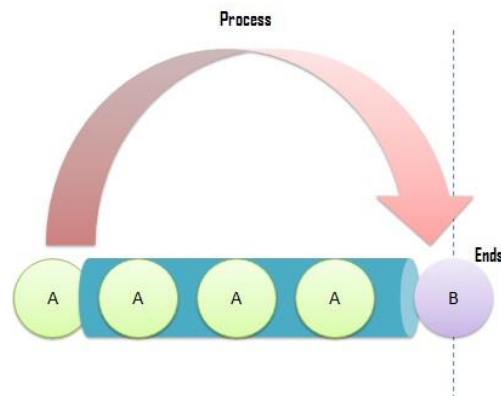
(12) imejaa
i me jaa
3pro.nom Pre-Part to fill-verb
It is full (it is filling up).

Therefore, it is clear that adjectives are syntactically divided based on their relativity aspect; AAs are verb forms while RAs are adjective forms.

This clearly exhibits what Siscoe was trying to show. Therefore, RAs such as tall, short, big, small relate to an often dropped inherently signified. Therefore, "he is taller than

her” has an older version which is he is tall compared to her” where compared to her” is simply dropped. However, we cannot use such an argument for AAs since “this cup is emptier than the other” would be reconstructed as “this cup is empty compared to the other” and it does not make sense if the cup is not empty in the first place. In fact, when someone hears the phrase “something is empty”, it would be quite unnatural to ask, “it is empty compared to what?”, or “it is emptier than what?” However, when someone hears the phrase, “he is tall”, it is quiet natural to ask “he is taller than whom?” Therefore, my linguistic analysis confirms and highlights the underlying gradable relateness in RAs, while it would be quiet unnatural for AAs to have relateness. Furthermore, AAs are of process type which means their contours are clear and precise. Figure 1 also illustrates the way AAs can be conceptualized as processes. In fact, we observe similar pattern in English, though less direct. While we have equivalent pairs of AAs (such as wet and dry) and verbs (to wet, to dry), finding such verb forms of RAs is mostly impossible (as tall and beautiful and nonsensical verbs to tall and to beautiful¹).

Figure 1. Absolute Adjectives as Processes



Source: Author(s)

In a process, such as to empty a cup, it is clear that it involves clear, precise and well understood ends. On the other hand, RAs are like instantaneous photos in which the only available information is the relativity of things as the process is not known. Therefore, we can talk of a universal division between process-like things and picture-like things. This shows itself in adjectives but also in beliefs. Just as Process-like adjectives are determinate, with clear ends in sight, some beliefs can be of this type. On the other hand, we have picture-like things such as adjectives or characters that are relative and contextualized. Therefore, we should have such beliefs as well, which we will call justified beliefs.

4. ‘Perfect duty’ as absolute gradable adjective: Image-like Instances

My contention is that ‘rational’ and ‘justified’ behave differently at the tops of their scales in Shooters Game because they are different classes of gradable adjective. In what follows, I will argue that ‘rational’ is an AA, while ‘justified’ is an RA, predicting that the meaning of ‘rational’ is tied to the uppermost element in its scale, while ‘justified’ is not. To begin with, ‘rational’ is clearly gradable. It functions felicitously both in comparatives and with degree modifiers:

- (13) Mary has not lied.
 (14) John has not killed the guy.

¹ We may find verbs such as to beautify for such adjectives. However, such verbs are modified forms and compound forms, e.g., of beauty + ficare (to make).

In (13) and (14), we have clear-cut targets which are truth and death. If May had lied, then there is a truth (point) that she did not say it or hide it, which is verifiable. If John had killed the guy, again we have a clear case for death which is verifiable through different means. Furthermore, both lying and killing are process-like verbs, similar to AAs. We can also use maximizers such as completely: completely lied or completely dead. We can also ask people to point to the deed:

(15) show me the dead one!

5. 'imperfect duty' as a relative gradable adjective: close-ended process

Like 'rational', 'justified' is a gradable adjective, permitting comparatives and accepting degree modifiers:

(16) Mary has been helping the guy.

(17) John has been developing his skills.

In (16) and (17), we have no clear-cut end which are being helpful and developing skills. Just as helpful and developed are semantically AAs, so also there are imperfect duties. They are inherently ongoing, lacking a clear known end. Let's consider (18) and (19):

(18) show me the helpful guy! ✓

(19) show me the dead one (in case there is no dead in the room). ⊗

Clearly, we almost always can find someone helpful, depending on the degree of helpfulness, but the dead or liar has a clear definition. Even if someone has lied partly, still we cannot say he is truthful. He has lied, though partly. It doesn't change the clear case of someone lying to us. Besides, we can use maximizers to support our claim; we can say: he has completely lied but we cannot say he has completely helped him. One would always seek to find a more helpful person. There is really no limit being charitable or helpful. Another way to test this is through verb-making example: we cannot say someone charitables! Nor can we say someone skills. But we can say someone kills and someone lies. Therefore, perfect duties are process-like with a clear end while imperfect duties are image-like instances. Nonetheless, we can still recognize a certain aspect of degree among imperfect duties. It seems beneficence is closest to the perfect duties and thereby it has a more fixed nature. There is a clear linguistic evidence for this in case of rescuing (a type of beneficence) as the following:

(20) show me the rescuer! (in case there is no rescuer in the room) ⊗

(21) I rescued him. ✓

(22) he has completely rescued him ⊗

As the above examples show, with the exception of (22), rescuing passes partly the linguistic aspects of perfect duties, though still not one. Therefore, the use of gradable adjectives confirms that indeed we have two different categories of perfect and imperfect duties. However, it also shows that imperfect duties have different degrees and beneficence is the closest, among imperfect duties, to the perfect duties.

6. Grice' Conversational implicature and Kantian Duties

As in the prior section was mentioned, there is an inherent difference between the two types of adjectives. What about the duo, imperfect and perfect duties? It seems Kantian imperfect and perfect duties also follow the inherent division of adjectives in the RA and AA grouping respectively. This would mean imperfect duties differ inherently from perfect duties. Interestingly, Kant also uses *Vollkommen* (coming to end) for perfect duties and *unvollkommen* (not coming to end) for imperfect duties.

With regard to demandingness objection, according to Samuel Scheffler (1992), an ethical theory can lead to demandingness if the theory: (i) requires that an agent has to reach his decisions to intend or perform certain acts (or to refrain from certain acts) via certain complex and/or intellectually challenging procedures that exclude more common

and simpler procedures; (ii) claims that it is most rational to do what morality demands, i.e. claim of overridingness; (iii) makes demands with a stringent content where such demands are insensitive or even opposed to the interests of an agent, and hence it is likely or even certain that they conflict with an agent's interests.

Before we begin analyzing perfect and imperfect duties with regard to Scheffler's demandingness criteria, it would be appropriate to introduce the moral implicature by applying natural language philosophy and the notion of Grice's conversational implicature. Grice considered conversation, one type of human social interaction, as an essentially collaborative or cooperative process. The nature of conversation was summed up by Grice in a supposed injunction to speakers, a 'rough general principle' which in fact remained Grice's only formulation and therefore the canonical version of 'the Cooperative Principle': 'Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged' (Chapman, 2013). The cooperative principle (CP), relating to hold a conversation properly, is divided into Grice's four maxims of conversation—quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These four maxims describe specific rational principles observed by people who follow the cooperative principle in pursuit of effective communication".

What we are looking for, though, are the cases in which the maxims are not being straightforwardly observed in some way or another. In his second lecture Grice introduced the term 'implicature' to describe those elements of speaker meaning that go beyond or differ from literal meaning. He translated the question of the relationship between general meaning and particular meaning into a question of the relationship between 'what is said' and 'what is implicated'. To begin with, speakers may not attend to the maxims at all. They may simply 'violate' them, as in the case of lying when the speaker ignores the maxims of Quality. In such cases the speaker is intent on misleading the hearer. More overtly, speakers may 'opt out' of the requirements of cooperation, explicitly indicating their unwillingness or inability to behave cooperatively, and thereby revealing an awareness of what the conversational norms are. The two ways of violating CP are violating and flouting. The latter is used in positive politeness (strategy) while the former is outright wrong and stops the conversation.

We flout as positive politeness when "Direct speech acts, swearing and flouting Grice's maxims can be considered aspects of positive politeness because: 1) they show an awareness that the relationship is strong enough to cope with what would normally be considered impolite (in the popular understanding of the term); 2) they articulate an awareness of the other person's values, which fulfills the person's desire to be accepted" (Wilson et al., 1991). We identify the following traits of conversational vs. conventional implicature: (i) conversational implicatures are all cancelable, while element of conventional meaning cannot be cancelled without a sense of inconsistency or contradiction; (ii) Secondly, re-expressing what is said in different words does not alter what is Implicated, i.e. non-detachability; (iii) all conversational implicatures are also what has become known as 'calculable', i.e. they result from working out, drawing on information from both conventional meaning and the maxims of conversation.

Grice developed thereby an account of meaning in 'Logic and Conversation' where 'what is said' is translated to "what is meant". Not only should meaning ultimately be explicable in terms of speaker's communicative intentions but speaker's intention is still prior to conventional meaning, by introducing the specific notion of 'M-intentions'. The latter are a specific type of intentions that are constrained by the linguistic rules of the language that speakers are using to communicate. In other words, Grice's contention is that timeless meaning (dictionary entry) must always follow from the meaning as meant by the Speaker (Chapman, 2013). By extension, only this 'primary intention' can be seen as relevant to questions of what the expression uttered means timelessly.

Looking at imperfect duties and Scheffler's demandingness criteria, it seems clear that Kant's imperfect duties do not pose demandingness objection. Since imperfect duties only follow maxims in general way and with latitude, it does not require certain complex and/or intellectually challenging procedures. Furthermore, since there is latitude in performing imperfect duties and moral users are allowed to follow their own personal projects and they have obligation to their parents, friends and loved ones, there is hardly any conflict with an agent's interests.

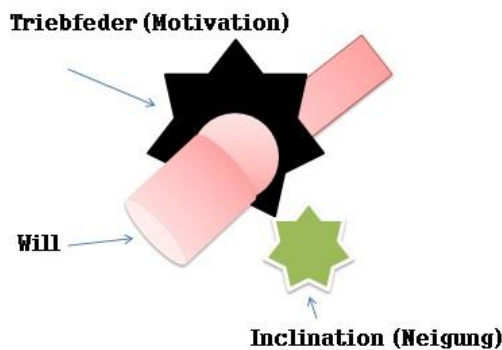
The claim of over-ridingness does not apply to imperfect duties either as there is an important notion of Spielraum or latitude in application of moral maxims. For example in the case of beneficence, users of Kantian ethics are committed to help others sometimes and to some extent. Overall, moral implicature can help with the notion of flouting and moral implicature.

It seems we have these two types of violation in imperfect duties as one results in lack of merit (flouting) and the other in vice. Since in moral implicature, we acknowledge an awareness of the other person's value as the humanity in him, we forgo one occasion while still we are committed to moral maxims. On the other hand, in violation proper (strong violation) Kant says "it is when an *intentional transgression has become a principle* (vorsatz) that it is called vice" (TL, 390, my emphasis). Making the transgressing a principle (vorsatz werden) is the violation proper. In flouting, we are well aware (bewusstsein) of the moral principle and have no intention (vorsatz) to make our violation a law, and our omission plays the implicature role. A point should be made about the German word Vorsatz translated as intention. Vorsatz derived from vor+satz means essentially premeditated and is the opposite of the immediacy. In the case of violation proper such as vice or wrongdoing, we just simply violate the very principle of being moral without implicating any personal project or other duties. It seems the same logic can operate in the perfect duties. For example, in the case of saving someone from a burning house, we flout neighbor's right using the garden hose without her permission: here the moral user acknowledges and is well aware of the other person's right. In this case, moral user committed lack of regard for someone's right, while asking to be excused for his/her deed. Now, let's consider the theft. Here, not only the thief is undermining someone's rights, he has the intention of ignoring and bringing under question the very essence of such right, i.e. he is making of such a violation a principle and it's the violation proper. While in the narrow duties, it is rare to flout due to the strict quality of actions (precise). However in case one flouts a perfect duty, one is blameful and has to ask to be excused, still it is less severe a violation than when one has the intention to violate perfect duty by making it a law. Kant says in the Groundwork that a perfect duty is "one which allows no exception (ausnahme) in the interests of inclination" (G, 42.2). Therefore, flouting is only possible when it is not guided by inclinations. While flouting of imperfect duties allows inclinations to be mixed as these duties are wide and allow for latitude (spielraum), perfect duties do not. Thus, we can conclude the following from the discussion so far: i) flouting in imperfect duties does allow for admixture of inclination; ii) flouting in perfect duties does not allow any admixture of inclinations; iii) moral user who flouts a perfect duty still remains blameful. This would result in an extremely limited possibility for flouting in perfect duties. Just as we had in our example, saving someone's life while flouting someone's right not out of inclination but the imperfect duty (moral principle) would be possible. In fact, the more imperfect a duty is, the wider it is as Kant says "the wider (weiter) the duty, therefore, the more imperfect (unvollkommener) is a man's obligation (verbindung) to action; as he, nevertheless, brings closer to narrow duty the maxim of complying with wide duty (in his disposition), so much the more perfect is his virtuous action (tugendhandlung)" (TL, 390).

Furthermore Kant says “considered in its complete perfection, virtue is therefore represented not as if man possesses virtue but rather as if virtue possesses man; for in the former case it would look as if man still had a choice (wahl) (for which he would need yet another virtue in order to choose virtue in preference to any other goods offered him). To think of several virtues (as one unavoidably does) is nothing other than to think of the various moral objects (gegenstand) to which the will (wille) is led by the one principle of virtue, and so too with regard to the contrary vices (laster)” (TL, 406). Thus, imperfect duties are not about a competition among virtues but regard for moral law. In a sense, inclinations (neigungen) do not exist on themselves (an sich); however, if we remove inclinations, what is left is free will that is exposed to pure reason (vernunft) and the free will is guided by the moral law, without restriction and resistance (uneingeschränkt); duty then is obligated (verbindet) by the will in order to set it free, to be connected to the noumenal world.

So free will only has meaning when we are moral. This means the only motivation for perfect duty is the moral one, and inclinations are not to decide (verurteilen) the course of action. The motivation is the translated word for the German word *Triebfeder* (mainspring in clock) in 16th and 17th century Germany: thus, it would be good to consider it in the light of such likening to the clock. From the common knowledge, the inner end of the mainspring (arbor) is fixed over the shaft of the mechanism, with the outer end being attached to the barrel. The arbor is turned to wind up the spring. It releases energy when allowed to uncoil. Not having distinct identities, we only have one moral principle (mainspring), likewise we have one abstract form of inclinations (second spring or barrel), though felt in the phenomenal world as distinct identities of inclinations. The vice arises when the inclination not only moves with the will which is obligated (verbindet) by the *Triebfeder* but resisting it so as to push it in the opposite direction (becoming vice or laster), i.e. it becomes unnatural (see Figure2). Having moral principle as the only motivation is confirmed multiple times directly by Kant, when for example he says "what is essential in the moral worth of actions is that the **moral law** should **directly determine the will**. If the determination of the will occurs in accordance with the moral law but only by means of a feeling of any kind whatsoever, which must be presupposed in order that the law may become a determining ground of the will, and if the action thus occurs not for the sake of the law, it has legality but not morality" (PrR: 71, my emphasis).

Figure2. Motivation in Kantian ethics



Source: (TL, 446)

Gesinnung is further translated as attitude, while the German word is derived from *gesinnen* and *sinnen* with meanings such as to think but also to desire (synonym: *verlangen*). Therefore, *gesinnung* would mean more than attitude. It is one that somehow has traces of desires as well after being interacted with the reason (*vernunft*). Furthermore, we can identify judgement (*urteilkraft*) with a mathematical function where if we rely on inclinations then the result is *ad hoc*, every time one answer. However, if we have inclinations as input to the function, then the result will be systematic and morally worth only as Kant emphasizes. The judgement (*urteilkraft*) function is as follows:

$$U(x) = \frac{1}{x^n}$$

n is sufficiently big number; x = inclinations (*neigungen*)

if $x=0 \longrightarrow U(x) = \text{Highest Good (hochste gut)}$

Judgment function would approach highest good if and only if inclinations are dropped to zero. As Kant says this may only happen if the subject was immortal like God. On the other hand, the function, just like time, is open ended and it seems there is no end, other than the approximate Highest Good. Though some scholars develop concepts such as hybrid motivation, it seems a great many of scholars agree on the importance of the moral law alone as the prime condition for an act to be moral. Marcia Baron says “I will scarcely be able to maintain the belief that moral considerations always trump any competing considerations. For insofar as I adopt a policy of seeking assistance from the inclinations, I in effect allow that moral considerations are not fully compelling, motivationally; but if they are not fully compelling motivationally, presumably they are not fully compelling, period” (Baron, 155). Furthermore, we should also take into consideration the character as Kant stresses the importance of the building of self (*bildung der person*) and moral progress (*sittliche besserung*). To act morally, therefore, means to have free will so that it is guided by the moral law alone and for this people need training and exercises of will in order to gain strength (*kraft*) against desires that resist. With regard to Scheffler’s demandingness criteria, perfect duties are simple and straight forward, mostly framed in negative terms and do not require certain complex and/or intellectually challenging procedures. Furthermore, we are allowed to flout perfect duties in special cases, with no regard for desires, but with moral implicature of saving someone. Though still we are still blameful for flouting perfect duties, it is less severe a blame compared to violating perfect duties. Thus, *vorsatz* or intention of implicating a noble imperfect duty without any self-interest would result in the possibility of flouting perfect duty. Therefore, there is a weak over-ridingness in case of perfect duties. However, it is important to note that such a weak over-ridingness is to guarantee that moral users themselves do not face violation of perfect duties which amount to become just a means for someone else’s interests and desires. Therefore, moral users’ long term interest is in safeguarding perfect duties. What we are proposing is that from the short term perspective, perfect duties may conflict with moral agent’s interests. However, viewed from a long term perspective, it is in moral agent’s interests that perfect duties are kept in place. Despite this, still in case of an important and noble imperfect duty, flouting perfect duty is possible. Though, still one needs to be excused.

Conclusion

In this contribution we discussed the demandingness objection with regard to Kant’s ethics. For doing this, first we provided linguistic evidence for inherent difference between imperfect and perfect duties while the duty of rescuing being a case in-between the two classes of duties. To assess Kantian ethics with regard to the demandingness objection, we drew on Scheffler’s demandingness objection criteria. In order to explain the violation of imperfect duties, for the first time we used the notion of Grice’s

conversational implicature and flouting. The results indicate that since flouting imperfect duties is possible, the demandingness objection does not apply to Kant's imperfect duties. However, in case of flouting perfect duties, though still possible under stringent conditions, where there is no inclination, the moral agent remains blameful for the action, though with a much weaker blame than he had violated the perfect duty. Thus, by introducing the notion of moral implicature and flouting, we are able to concur with Kant's notion of "Vorsatz" (intention) and the notion of degree in narrow and wide duties. In case of perfect duties, thanks to the limited options possible to flout, we face a weak demandingness objection. However, regarding the conflict with agent's interests, we proposed a two-way view of the action. From the short term perspective, perfect duties may conflict with moral agent's interests. However, viewed from a long term perspective, it is in moral agent's interests that perfect duties are kept in place.

References

- Baron, M. W. (2018). *Kantian ethics almost without apology*. Cornell University Press.
- Chapman, S. (2013). Grice, conversational implicature and philosophy. In *Perspectives on pragmatics and philosophy* (pp. 153-188). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Kant, I. (2017). *Kant: The metaphysics of morals*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, I., & Gregor, M. (1964). *The doctrine of virtue* (Vol. 6, pp. 460-61).
- Kant, I. (2012). *Kant: Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*. Cambridge University Press.
- Siscoe, R. W. (2021). Belief, rational and justified. *Mind*, 130(517), 59-83.
- Wilson, S. R., Kim, M. S., & Meischke, H. (1991). Evaluating Brown and Levinson's politeness theory: A revised analysis of directives and face. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 25(1-4), 215-252.
- Walla, A. P. (2015). Kant's moral theory and demandingness. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 18, 731-743.

Ramezanali FALLAHRAFIE - Department of Philosophy and Logic; Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Humanities; Tarbiat Modares University; Tehran; Iran; ORCID: 0009-0004-4992-181X; E-mail: a.fallahrafie@modares.ac.ir

Rajdeep SINGH - Department of Philosophy and Logic; Master of Arts (M.A.) at the Faculty of Humanities; Tarbiat Modares University; Tehran; Iran; ORCID: 0000-0003-1218-134X; E-mail: rajdeepm@gmail.com

Received: July 9, 2024 | Revised: October 19, 2024 | Accepted: November 27, 2024 | Published: December 15, 2024