

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Bratman on Identity over Time and Identification at a Time

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According to reductionists about agency, an agent's bringing something about is reducible to states and events (such as desires and beliefs) involving the agent bringing something about. Many have worried that reductionism cannot accommodate robust forms of agency, such as self-determination. One common reductionist answer to this worry (which I call 'identification reductionism') contends that self-determining agents are identified with certain states and events, and so these states and events causing a decision counts as the agent's *self*-determining the decision. In this paper, I discuss Michael Bratman's well-known identification reductionist theory and his general strategy of grounding an agent's identification at a time in the agent's identity over time. I develop two constraints that an adequate identification reductionist theory must satisfy, argue that Bratman's theory cannot satisfy both, and show that his general strategy for grounding an agent's identification at a time in the agent's identity over time is without merit.

**Keywords:** identification; self-determination; reductionism; causal theory of action; Bratman

#### 1. Reductionism and the Problem of Self-Determination

According to reductionists about agency, an agent's doing or bringing something about is reducible to states and events involving the agent doing or bringing something about. Reductionists maintain, for example, that Jones's intentionally retrieving a beer from the refrigerator is nothing over and above Jones's mental states and events (such as his desire for a beer and his belief that there is a beer in the refrigerator) jointly causing him to execute the behavioral movements that constitute his retrieving a beer (Davidson 1963, 1971, 1973; Goldman 1970; Brand 1984; Bishop 1989; Mele 1992; Enç 2003). Reductionists are not eliminativists about agential activity: rather they deny that an agent's doing or causing something is a fundamental or irreducible feature of reality. What is

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fundamental on the reductionist picture is not agential activity, but the causal activity of states and events.

Although reductionists may be able to account for minimal forms of agency—such as acting unwittingly or merely intentionally—they face serious challenges when attempting to capture more robust forms of agency, such as self-determination.<sup>1</sup> When we act unwittingly or automatically, it may well be that our activity as agents wholly consists in the activity of purposeful mental states and events bringing about such actions. But cases of self-determination seem different. In cases of self-determination, we seem to experience ourselves as sources of activity over and above the activity of our desires and beliefs. This experience is most vivid in the case of motivational conflict. Consider the classic case of conflict between duty and desire. I know I should be more attentive to my children, but I am so tired today. Duty pulls one way, desire another. Suppose that I make an effort to turn my attention to my children and succeed. In this case, it does not seem that my decision was merely a function of my desires and beliefs. These attitudes were in conflict, after all, and I myself had to decide how to resolve the conflict, or so it seems. It is this experience of myself as seeming to play a causal role over and above the causal role of my desires and beliefs that suggests that I exercised the power of *self*-determination. As Michael Bratman notes, “The image of the agent directing and governing is, in the first instance, an image of the agent herself standing back from her attitudes, and doing the directing and governing” (2005, 195–196; cf. Velleman 1992, 124, 137–139). Reductionists about self-determination are committed to reducing the agent’s role in determining or governing her activity to the causal activity of states and events. But is such a reduction possible?<sup>2</sup>

While reductionists can respond to this worry in a variety of ways, I want to focus on what I will call ‘identification reductionism about self-determination.’ According to identification reductionism, an agent’s involvement in his self-determined actions is reducible to the causal activity of mental states and events with which he is *identified*. Standard reductionist models of agency have a

difficult time accounting for self-determination because, so it is argued, their reductive base is too sparse, including only desires, beliefs, and intentions.<sup>3</sup> What is needed to account for self-determined action is an enrichment of the reductive base to include states with which an agent is identified. There are a variety of different species of identification reductionism, differentiated by the attitude or attitudes the account claims self-determining agents are identified with. There is desire-based identification reductionism, according to which we are identified with our higher-order desires (Frankfurt 1971); care-based identification reductionism, according to which we are identified with (a subset of) our cares (Frankfurt 1993, 1994; Shoemaker 2003; Jaworska 2007); good-based identification reductionism, according to which we are identified with our valuational system or judgments or perceptions of what is good or best (Watson 1975; Stump 1988; Ekstrom 1993; Mitchell-Yellin 2015); reason-based identification reductionism, according to which we are identified with our desire to make most sense of ourselves (Velleman 1992); and intention-based identification reductionism, according to which we are identified with our self-governing policies (Bratman 2000, 2002, 2005). These different accounts of identification do not stand or fall together, and thus an assessment of each view would require us to consider different questions about the nature of the attitude in question. An exhaustive assessment of identification reductionism would make for an exceedingly long paper. Therefore, I restrict my focus in the remainder of this paper to Bratman's theory.<sup>4</sup> Bratman not only develops one of the most sophisticated and powerful identification reductionist models, but also an innovative strategy for showing that an attitude has authority to speak for the agent. According to Bratman, an agent is identified with an attitude partly because that attitude has it as its function to constitute the agent's identity over time. This is a general strategy for defending an account of identification and is not wedded to Bratman's specific reductionist theory. That is, one might agree with Bratman that the attitudes that speak for an agent are the attitudes that

have it as a matter of function to ground the agent's identity over time, and yet reject Bratman's claim that it is self-governing policies that fulfill these roles.<sup>5</sup>

In the next section, I offer a more detailed characterization of identification reductionism and make clear that the success of such a theory requires it to satisfy two constraints. After then offering a brief overview of both Bratman's intention-based identification reductionism and his general strategy for showing that an agent is identified with an attitude, I argue that Bratman's account cannot satisfy both constraints on an adequate identification reductionism and that his general strategy for grounding the authority of an attitude is without merit.

## **2. Two Constraints on Identification Reductionism**

What is it to be identified with a mental state or event and which mental states and events are self-determined agents identified with? Identification reductionists usually attempt to address these questions by explaining identification's obverse, cases in which an agent is *alienated* from the states and events motivating his action. The most well-known case of alienation is that of Harry Frankfurt's unwilling addict (Frankfurt 1971). The unwilling addict is an addict because he has addictive desires. The unwilling addict is unwilling because he does not want his addictive desires to actually move him into action. When the unwilling addict acts to satisfy his addiction, he performs an action such that, although he desires it, he does not *really* want it. Frankfurt contended that in such a case "the unwilling addict may meaningfully make the analytically puzzling [statement] that the force moving him to take the drug is a force other than his own" (Frankfurt 1971, 18). At the heart of the addict's alienation is passivity with respect to his action: he is overcome by, and thus passive with respect to, the desire and the action it leads him to. The desire's leading the addict to action is more of an intrusion upon than expression of his agency. When we act from alienated

motives our agency is (to some degree) hijacked and thus the force moving us to act is a force other than our “own.”

The claim that an agent is alienated from his motives does not necessarily excuse him from moral responsibility—perhaps he should have exercised more self-control. Indeed, if agents genuinely act in cases of alienation, then clearly they must have exercised some degree of control. While alienation need not preclude either control or responsibility, it does preclude identification. In cases of identification, rather than the force leading to action being *other* than the agent’s own, the force leading to action is one that the agent is “fully behind” (Watson, 1987, 169).<sup>6</sup>

The case of the unwilling addict is meant to be theory neutral—it constitutes the data that rival theories of identification must analyze. But while suggestive, this case also seems puzzling: what does it mean to say that an agent acted from an alien force? While one might understandably think this notion remains obscure, I believe that the above analysis is sufficient for our purposes.<sup>7</sup> I will treat the case of the unwilling addict as a paradigm case of alienation, so that any account that entails that the unwilling addict is identified with his addictive desire is false. This minimal understanding of identification will be enough to generate the worries I raise below.

There are two constraints that an adequate identification reductionism must satisfy. The first constraint is the following:

**The alienation constraint:** if an agent  $S$  is identified with a mental state or event  $E$  at time  $t$ , then  $S$  is not alienated from  $E$  at  $t$ .

While it may be possible for an agent to be identified with an attitude from which he was once alienated, and possible for an agent to be alienated from an attitude with which he was once identified, it is impossible for an agent to be simultaneously identified and alienated with an attitude. We can test the adequacy of an analysis of identification by its extensional adequacy with respect to

clear cases of alienation. Any analysis of identification that entails that the unwilling addict is identified with his addictive desires is, for that reason, inadequate.

There is a second constraint that identification reductionism must satisfy:

**The scope constraint:** for each of the agent's self-determining actions, there must be a mental state or event among the causal antecedents of the action with which the agent is identified.<sup>8</sup>

Since identification reductionists are committed to reducing all acts of self-determination, an adequate theory must show that for *every* context in which an agent performs a self-determined action, there is some state or event with which he is identified and that brings about this action.

### 3. Bratman, Self-Governing Policies, and Lockean Ties

Bratman's (2000, 2002, 2005) account gives pride of place to self-governing policies. Policies contrast with both intentions to perform particular actions and plans for achieving particular goals. Unlike intentions, policies coordinate and organize various activities over time, and, unlike plans, policies concern recurrent situations rather than one-time events (Bratman 2000, 27). *Self-governing* policies are general commitments to the relevant functioning of certain desires on certain occasions: "One might have, say, a policy of developing and supporting a strong concern with honesty in writing ... or of never acting on or treating as providing a legitimate consideration in one's deliberation a desire for revenge or a desire to demean" (2000, 33). Unlike mere policies, which take actions as their object, self-governing policies take desires as their object, and so are higher-order attitudes. A self-governing policy endorses a desire, or better, the relevant functioning of a desire, just in case it is a policy "in favor of the agent's treatment of that desire as providing a justifying reason in motivationally efficacious practical reasoning" (Bratman 2000, 39). One might see a desire as a nuisance and decide that, rather than resist, it is better to indulge the desire as quickly as

possible in order to get rid of it. Such an attitude toward the desire would seem to amount to less than an endorsement of the desire. Bratman seeks to capture what is missing in this case by requiring that self-governing policies be policies for treating the desire as reason-giving.

Why think that an agent is identified with his self-governing policies?<sup>9</sup> Bratman's answer runs as follows:

[O]ur planning agency [e.g. a self-governing policy] constitutes and supports the cross-temporal organization of [our] temporally extended agency by way of Lockean connections and continuities—by way of Lockean ties. And this gives relevant plan-type attitudes a claim to speak for the temporally persisting agent. (2005, 208)

Bratman (2000, 29; cf. 2007a, 5) adopts a Lockean account of personal identity, on which a person  $S$  existing at time  $t$  is identical to person  $S^*$  existing at time  $t^*$  just in case certain kinds and quantities of psychological continuities and connections hold between  $S$  and  $S^*$  (cf. Parfit 1984, 205–206; Shoemaker 1984).<sup>10</sup> Psychological continuity is simply the persistence of a psychological state: for example, the agent's desiring at a time to  $\varphi$  and the agent's desiring at some later time to  $\varphi$  (Bratman 2000, 30).<sup>11</sup> Psychological connections between states involve, in addition to persistence, cross-temporal reference:

In the case of a prior intention and its later intentional execution, each includes something like a reference to the other: the earlier intention refers to a relevant type of action, one instance of which is the later intentional execution; and the later intentional execution is understood by the agent as an execution of that prior intention. (2000, 30)

Two mental states are psychologically connected just in case there is cross-temporal reference between the mental states (the reference may go in both or only one direction [Bratman 2000, 30 n. 29]).

To forestall misunderstanding, let us be clear that Bratman is not seeking a reduction of the agent, but of the agent's *role* in self-determination: “I do not say that the agent literally is those

attitudes that ensure or constitute her endorsement. I seek, rather, necessary and sufficient conditions, among the agent's attitudes, for the truth of claims of the form 'Agent *S* endorses desire *D*' (2000, 25 n. 12). The reason that self-governing policies are authoritative is not because they are identical to the agent, but rather because they help ground the agent's identity over time.<sup>12</sup>

According to Bratman, then, a self-governing policy's role in grounding the agent's identity over time gives it authority to speak for the agent.

#### **4. Bratman's Account and the Alienation Constraint**

The initial problem with Bratman's account of identification is that it is far too liberal: there are many attitudes whose function it is to support and constitute Lockean ties that are constitutive of our identity over time that clearly do not have authority to speak for us. Return to the unwilling addict who, let us suppose, has a desire to inhale cocaine. Let us suppose, moreover, that the content of the addict's desire, namely to inhale cocaine, is represented as a type of action. The unwilling addict's desire to inhale cocaine does not have authority to speak for the agent, and yet the desire still grounds, as a matter of function, psychological continuities and connections. The desire will persist for a time, usually until it is sated, and so, for that period of time, the attitude will ground psychological continuities. Moreover, we can assume that often when the addict performs the relevant token action (inhaling cocaine), he understands himself to be acting on the desire to inhale cocaine. There appears, then, to be cross-temporal reference between desire and action (cross-temporal reference that goes in both directions).<sup>13</sup> Finally, part of what makes a mental state a desire is its characteristic dispositions to bring about action.<sup>14</sup> The desire to inhale cocaine grounds these psychological continuities and connections as a matter of function because it is part of the function of this desire to cause the addict to inhale cocaine. Nevertheless, the unwilling addict is not

identified with the desire: indeed he is the paradigm of alienation. Lockean ties, therefore, are not sufficient to ground an attitude's authority to speak for an agent.<sup>15</sup>

That cross-temporal reference takes place between the addict's desire and action might have been obscured by the fact that the desire to inhale cocaine does not refer to the addict's actual action of inhaling cocaine and the action of his inhaling cocaine does not refer back to his desire to inhale cocaine. The desire to inhale cocaine makes reference to an action-type: inhaling cocaine. The addict's inhaling cocaine is not an action-type, but an action-token. Because of this one might conclude that the desire does not actually refer to the action. Moreover, the performance of the action certainly does not refer to the desire to inhale cocaine; at most, it is the agent's *understanding* of this action as motivated by his desire that makes reference to the desire. So again, one might conclude that no reference obtains between the desire and action. Given this failure of reference between desire and action-token, one might reject my claim that the desire to inhale cocaine, in addition to grounding psychological continuities, also grounds psychological connections.

The problem with this objection is that self-governing policies fare no better in securing cross-temporal reference than desires of this kind. Consider again Bratman's example of cross-temporal reference:

In the case of a prior intention and its later intentional execution, each includes something like a reference to the other: the earlier intention refers to a relevant type of action, one instance of which is the later intentional execution; and the later intentional execution is understood by the agent as an execution of that prior intention. (2000, 30)

Bratman only claims that there is "something like" cross-temporal reference here, and for good reason, as there does not in fact appear to be cross-temporal reference between plans and later intentional executions of plans. The prior intention makes reference to an action-type (e.g. 'I will take the metro to work tomorrow'), but the later intentional execution is an action-token, not an action-type. Furthermore, the intentional execution does not make any reference back to the plan.

Rather, it is the agent's *understanding* of the action as an execution of the plan that refers back to the plan; and, of course, the agent's understanding of the intentional execution is distinct from the intentional execution. Hence, there also is no reference from the intentional action back to the plan. There is, in fact, no reference either way, and thus Bratman was correct to claim that there is only "something like" reference. It follows that if self-governing policies are to ground psychological connections, then these connections must only require something like cross-temporal reference, rather than actual cross-temporal reference. But this opens the door for addictive desires that agents are alienated from as well, since these attitudes also include something like cross-temporal reference to other attitudes and actions.<sup>16</sup>

One might try to defend Bratman's account against my objection by arguing that he could, following Taylor (2009), contend that the unwilling addict is actually acting on a self-governing policy that favors the satisfaction of those desires that lead him to act to avoid pain. In this case, then, when the addict acts to take cocaine, he does not act to satisfy the desire to take cocaine, but the desire to avoid pain (e.g. the pangs of withdrawal), a desire with which he is identified. Moreover, in this case the desire to inhale cocaine may not seem to ground psychological connections since, at the time of action, the unwilling addict will not understand his inhaling cocaine as being motivated by his desire to inhale cocaine, but rather by his desire to avoid the pangs of withdrawal.<sup>17</sup>

I have two response. First, even if we suppose that the unwilling addict has a self-governing policy that favors the satisfaction of those desires that lead him to act to avoid pain, and even if we stipulate that when he inhales cocaine, he understands himself to be acting to satisfy the desire to avoid pain (rather than the desire to inhale cocaine), it is nonetheless true that the desire to inhale cocaine grounds Lockean ties and it is nonetheless true that the unwilling addict is alienated from this desire. Even if the unwilling addict does not understand his inhaling cocaine to be motivated by

his desire to inhale cocaine, the desire to inhale cocaine still grounds psychological continuities and connections. Recall that on Bratman's account two mental states are psychologically connected just in case there is cross-temporal reference between the mental states, and that the reference may go in both or *only one direction* (Bratman 2000, 30 n. 29). While stipulating that the addict does not understand his inhaling cocaine to be motivated even in part by his desire to inhale cocaine would make it the case that there is no cross-temporal reference from the agent's understanding of his inhaling cocaine to the desire to inhale cocaine, there remains something like cross-temporal reference from the desire to inhale cocaine to the addict's inhaling cocaine, and that is enough to establish the cross-temporal reference constitutive of psychological connections. Finally, the self-governing policy that favors the satisfaction of those desires that lead him to act to avoid pain does nothing to suggest that the unwilling addict is identified with his desire to inhale cocaine, and thus, I contend, we still have a case of an agent who is alienated from an attitude that grounds Lockean ties.

But I need not insist on this. As philosophical cases are always underdescribed, it is possible to fill-in the case about the unwilling addict by making him have a self-governing policy that favors the satisfaction of those desires that lead him to act to avoid pain, and to stipulate that when he takes cocaine, he acts to satisfy the desire to avoid pain. But this is not enough to vindicate Bratman's account. I have claimed that an attitude's grounding Lockean ties is not sufficient for the attitude's having authority to speak for the agent. To show this, I need only produce one coherent example. While one possible case is that the addict has a self-governing policy that supports desires to avoid pain and that the addict acts to satisfy this desire, another possible case is one in which the addict has no such self-governing policy, and that when he acts, he understands himself to be acting on his desire to inhale cocaine. To vindicate Bratman's account, it is not enough to show that there are other possible cases: one must show that my case is not possible, that there is some implicit contradiction in it. Hence, I maintain that the case of the unwilling addict I present above shows

that Lockean ties are not sufficient to ground identification: it is possible to be alienated from attitudes that ground Lockean ties.

It is at this juncture that an important addition to Bratman's theory surfaces: he only claims that attitudes that have it as a matter of function to ground psychological continuities and connections have a *presumptive*, albeit defeasible, authority to speak for the agent (Bratman 2005, 210). Little is said about how this proposal is to be developed, but presumably it goes something like this: although the case of the unwilling addict shows that not all attitudes that ground Lockean ties have authority to speak for an agent, it does not show that all attitudes that ground Lockean ties fail to have presumptive authority. In the addict's case, this presumption is defeated because the addict is not *satisfied* with his desire. Only a subset of self-governing policies speak for the agent—namely those with which the agent is satisfied (Bratman 2000, 34–35). Bratman borrows the idea of satisfaction from Frankfurt (1992), though he offers a different analysis. According to Bratman, an agent is satisfied with a self-governing policy *P* if and only if that policy is not *challenged* by another self-governing policy *P\**, where *P\** challenges *P* just in case *P\** is in conflict with *P* and the presence of *P\** tends to undermine the role of *P* (2000, 35). An example of this kind of conflict would be where *P\** is a policy for excluding a desire to smoke from being a justifying consideration in motivationally efficacious practical reasoning and *P* is a policy for treating the desire to smoke as setting a justifying end (Bratman 2000, 35). Bratman points to two features of what it is for *P\** to tend to undermine *P*: (i) *P\** disposes the agent to change *P*, and (ii) *P\** “blocks the central organizing and coordinating roles” of *P* in deliberation and action (2000, 35).<sup>18</sup> If *P\** tends to undermine the role of *P*, preventing the agent from treating such a desire as reason-giving, then the agent is not satisfied with *P*. Pulling these strands together, we can say that on Bratman's theory an agent's decision is self-determined just in case it is caused by a desire *D* and the agent has a self-governing

policy with which he is satisfied that treats *D* as reason-giving in motivationally efficacious practical reasoning.<sup>19</sup>

Armed with the notion of satisfaction, Bratman now seems able to explain why the addict is not identified with his desire to inhale cocaine. Since this desire, as a matter of function, supports psychological continuities and connections, it has a presumptive authority to speak for him. But, since he is not satisfied with the desire, this presumptive authority is defeated. Admittedly, Bratman's definition of satisfaction needs to be expanded so that it applies not only to self-governing policies, but also to desires. Perhaps Bratman was unconcerned with such an extension since he did not realize how many psychological states other than self-governing policies have presumptive authority to speak for the agent. While this leaves Bratman's account incomplete, I am willing, for the sake of argument, to stipulate that Bratman's notion of satisfaction can be extended to all other psychological states that have presumptive authority to speak for the agent.

## **5. Bratman's Account and the Scope Constraint**

My objection lies in a different direction. At first glance, Bratman's account seemed to violate the alienation constraint since many states that support Lockean ties are states from which the agent is alienated. In order to avoid this untoward implication, Bratman requires that in addition to supporting Lockean ties, a state that speaks for the agent must be one with which he is satisfied. However, this condition raises worries about scope: are all self-determined actions invariably motivated by attitudes with which we are satisfied? By requiring that an agent be satisfied with the states that he is identified with, Bratman effectively precludes the possibility of performing a self-determined action in certain cases of motivational conflict. In the cases of motivational conflict I have in mind, the agent's motivations will tend to undermine conflicting motivations and in turn tend to be undermined by those conflicting motivations. It does not matter whether the conflict is

between desires, cares, intentions, policies, plans, etc.—such conflict will preclude the agent’s being satisfied with any of the rival motivations. The presence of this conflict entails the absence of satisfaction.<sup>20</sup>

To appreciate this, consider the case of Kevin. Suppose Kevin, an agent just like us, is deliberating about whether to take the summer off to deepen and nurture his relationship with his wife and children, or to engage in a rather ambitious research agenda that promises significantly to further his career aspirations. He is struck by his increasing distance from his family, how fast his kids are growing up, and his decreasing intimacy with his wife. He enjoys time with his family and believes that he will regret allowing this unique time in their lives to pass him by. But he sincerely enjoys philosophy, feeling exhilarated and proud to study and write on these perennial questions, and values making a significant contribution to his field. Kevin cares deeply about improving himself as a philosopher, but he also cares deeply about the well-being of his family. Realizing that his presence is integral to his family’s well-being, he recognizes that he has not just conflicting desires about what to do this summer, but conflicting desires concerning which general plans and policies to adopt concerning how to spend his attention and time. Suppose that Kevin has not only a conflict between his care for work and his care for family, but also a conflict between a self-governing policy that supports his desire to devote his summer to philosophy and a self-governing policy that supports his desire to devote his summer to his family. The desire to devote his summer to his family is a desire to engage in a wide array of activities. The crucial feature of these activities is that they will be activities that take Kevin away from philosophy. They will include vacations, special trips to the zoo and beach, late morning breakfasts, etc. The desire to devote his summer to philosophy is also a desire to engage in a wide array of activities. The crucial feature of these activities for us is that they will be activities that take Kevin away from his family. They will include working on Saturday mornings, always being in the office by seven a.m., etc. For each desire Kevin

has a self-governing policy to treat it as reason-giving in motivationally efficacious practical reasoning. However, Kevin's self-governing policy that supports his desire to devote his summer to philosophy, we can suppose, tends to undermine his self-governing policy that supports his desire to devote his summer to his family. As the summer approaches and he becomes aware of family-friendly outings and events, he tends to exclude them from relevance for deliberation since, after all, they will interrupt his philosophical agenda. In this way, the self-governing policy that supports his desire to devote his summer to philosophy disposes him to change his self-governing policy that supports his desire to devote his summer to his family. This is only a tendency and so sometimes he allows his desire to devote his summer to his family deliberative relevance. But, nevertheless, his desire to devote his summer to his family tends to be excluded from relevance and the central organizing and coordinating roles of this self-governing policy are blocked by his rival self-governing policy. Consequently, Kevin is not satisfied with his self-governing policy that supports his desire to devote his summer to his family.<sup>21</sup> Finally, let us suppose that Kevin decides to devote his summer to his family.

Could Kevin's decision, nevertheless, be self-determined? I see no reason to deny it. Kevin is not passive with respect to his decision. He is not overwhelmed by desire or blinded by emotion. We can imagine Kevin watching *Citizen Kane* or reading *Anna Karenina* and coming to recognize clearly (perhaps for the first time) the deep conflict between his self-governing policies and decides that enough is enough: it is time to give his family the priority they deserve. He evaluates his various motivations, weighs them carefully, and decides to give his family priority. Surely there is nothing about this case that *forces* us to deny that Kevin's action is self-determined.<sup>22</sup> I conclude, therefore, that Bratman's account violates the scope constraint: the mere fact that Kevin is not satisfied with his self-governing policy does not preclude Kevin's decision to make his family the priority from being self-determined.<sup>23</sup>

Bratman's identification reductionism is untenable because it is unable to satisfy both the alienation and scope constraints. On the one hand, if Bratman claims that we are identified with all our states that ground our identity over time, then while his account may satisfy the scope constraint, it will violate the alienation constraint: for it is possible to be alienated from some of the states that (simultaneously) ground our identity over time (as shown by the case of the unwilling addict). On the other hand, if he tries to avoid this problem by supplementing the original account with an appeal to satisfaction, then while his account may be able to satisfy the alienation constraint, it violates the scope constraint: for it is possible to perform self-determined actions even when we are not satisfied with the motives leading to action (as illustrated by the case of Kevin).

## **6. Lockean Ties and Identification**

These problems count heavily against Bratman's general strategy of grounding an agent's identification in the agent's identity over time. Appeal to Lockean ties is insufficient to ground authority since the attitudes that have it as a matter of function to support psychological continuities and connections are legion. We are identified with fewer states than ground our identity over time. Moreover, there is no obvious route for solving this problem in a way that *builds* on Bratman's appeal to Lockean ties. Bratman's attempt to solve the problem does not look to Lockean accounts of personal identity for further resources, but rather imports the foreign notion of satisfaction. So far from being a development of Bratman's original appeal to Lockean ties, this move seems to be an abandonment of the theory: the appeal to satisfaction seems to supplant rather than supplement the appeal to Lockean ties. If an agent is satisfied with an attitude, that alone would seem to allow the attitude to speak for the agent. How can an agent be alienated from an attitude with which he is satisfied? Appeal to Lockean ties seems simply to drop out. I conclude that Bratman's general strategy for grounding claims of identification is without merit: the appeal to Lockean ties is

insufficient to ground identification and the introduction of further necessary conditions for being identified render the original appeal to Lockean ties otiose.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I think it is clear that reductionist accounts have an easier time accounting for these minimal forms of agency, although it is not clear that they can in fact adequately analyze them (cf. Steward 2012). My aim in this essay, however, is to argue that an important variety of reductionism cannot account for self-determination. We can assume, then, for the sake of argument, that reductionists can unproblematically account for minimal forms of agency.

<sup>2</sup> The notion of self-determination I am after differs from the one recently discussed by Buss (2012). She gives a functional definition of self-determination or autonomy: “An agent stands in the self-governing self-relation that interests me here if and only if the roles she plays in forming her intention is such that if she has the general capacity to appreciate the force of moral requirements and if she has adequate opportunity to discern the moral significance of what she is doing, she is blameworthy if her action is morally wrong and praiseworthy if it is morally admirable” (2012, 649). As I understand the literature on identification, the notion of self-determination at play there is not as intimately connected to moral accountability as Buss’s notion. For example, Velleman is explicit that one can be morally accountable for an action even if one does not self-determine it. For Velleman, moral accountability requires the capacity for self-determination, not its exercise (1992, 127 n. 13). For this reason some of Buss’s objections to these accounts of self-determination miss their target (cf. Mitchell-Yellin 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Bishop (1989) is an example of a reductionist model that restricts the reductive base of states and events to desires, beliefs, and intentions, even when seeking to account for self-determination.

<sup>4</sup> See Lippert-Rasmussen (2003) for an insightful critical discussion of all species of identification reductionism except care-based accounts. See Franklin (2015, n.d.) for objections to reason-based and care-based accounts. It seems to me that Watson (1987) himself has raised the most pressing problem for his earlier good-based account (Watson 1975), but see Mitchell-Yellin (2015) for a recent defense of good-based identification reductionism.

<sup>5</sup> Jaworska (2007) does just this. She agrees with Bratman’s strategy for defending claims of identification and yet contends that it is an agent’s cares that he is identified with. Part of Jaworska’s aim is to defend an account of identification that allows for the possibility of marginal agents being identified with their attitudes, agents such as small children and Alzheimer’s patients, who may not yet have or have lost various higher-order cognitive capacities. Note also that Bratman (2000, 44 n. 60) contends that his account of identification entails that an agent is identified with his cares as defined by Frankfurt (1993, 1994). I raise a number of objections to Frankfurt and Jaworska’s (as well as Shoemaker’s) care-based identification reductionist theory in Franklin (n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> Other offered glosses for mental states and events with which an agent is identified include: they “constitute one’s standpoint” (Watson 1975, 26), they have “authority to speak for the agent” (Bratman 2007a, 4), and they are “fully the agent’s own” (Jaworska 2007, 537).

<sup>7</sup> The skeptic might be inclined to complain that he has no clear sense of what all this identification-talk is about. While I find the notion of identification intelligible and important in its own right, any skepticism about its intelligibility simply casts further doubt on the tenability of identification reductionism.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note the order of the quantifiers in the scope constraint, the existential quantifier being within the scope of the universal. This principle does not entail that for every self-determined action there is the *same* state that the agent is identified with, but only that for every self-determined action, there is *some* state or other that the agent is identified with.

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<sup>9</sup> While Bratman usually tends to prefer the language of “agential authority” to the language of “identification” (cf. 2000, 24; 2005, 202; 2007a, 4), I will interpret him as offering an account of identification. Bratman claims that solving the problem of agential authority requires the specification of a relationship between the agent and attitude that confers authority on the attitude to speak for the agent. This suggests that in trying to solve the problem of agential authority Bratman can plausibly be interpreted as defending an account of identification. Moreover, see Bratman (2002, 82–85), where he does frame his theory as account of identification. Thanks to an anonymous referee for bringing this reference to my attention.

<sup>10</sup> Bratman’s account, therefore, requires the truth of a psychological continuity account of personal identity. This may strike one as a cost since this account of personal identity (while it has its share of able defenders) faces serious objections (see, e.g., Olson [2007]). Basing a controversial account of identification on a controversial account of personal identity seems a precarious route to defending identification reductionism. However, my objections to Bratman’s theory will, for sake of argument, assume the truth of the psychological continuity account of personal identity.

<sup>11</sup> Bratman’s conception of psychological continuities differs from Parfit’s (Parfit 1984, 206).

<sup>12</sup> Olson (2007, chapter 6) has argued that adopting a psychological continuity account of personal identity *commits* one to reducing the person to a set of states and events. If Olson is right, then Bratman is committed to reducing the person. Whether or not this is so, Bratman denies trying to do any such thing.

<sup>13</sup> Not all desires will ground psychological connections. For example, the desire that it rain tomorrow is about an extramental event, and thus there is no psychological connection between these items. Only when the content of the desire is about other mental features of the agent can it ground psychological connections.

<sup>14</sup> This will be true by definition if one endorses a functionalist theory of the mental. But even if one is inclined to reject functionalism, it is hard to deny that part of what makes a mental state a desire is its characteristic dispositions to bring about action.

<sup>15</sup> Given the holistic structure of the mental, the desire to inhale cocaine will be connected to other desires, beliefs, and intentions. Although the atomistic desire to inhale cocaine may not speak for the agent, one might argue that the holistic structure of the addict’s mental life does speak authoritatively for the agent. In response, it is not clear what it means to say ‘the holistic structure speaks authoritatively for the agent’? On Bratman’s account, it is *attitudes* that speak for the agent, but a holistic structure is not an attitude, so how can it speak for the agent? But even supposing we can make sense of the idea of the holistic structure speaking for the agent, this point is of no help for Bratman. Bratman contends that an attitude’s grounding Lockean ties is sufficient for the agent’s being identified with the attitude. The above example of the unwilling addict shows that this is a mistake: the unwilling addict is alienated from his addictive desire even though this desire grounds Lockean ties. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising this worry.

<sup>16</sup> Jaworska seems to be led astray on this point. She writes: “For example, a prior policy and the subsequent execution of the policy are so connected”, where by ‘connected’ she means “a reference-based link between mental states occurring at different times in a temporally extended life” (2007, 550). Bratman never claims this, but only that the agent’s understanding the execution *as an execution of the policy* refers back to the policy. Jaworska further weakens the idea of referential connection between attitudes by introducing the idea of an “indirect” referential connection: “two mental states are referentially connected because they both refer (in a consistent way) to the same object” (2007, 553). I do not see how there is *any* kind of referential connection between two attitudes simply in virtue of each attitude referring to, or being about, the same object (even in a consistent way). I believe that the Lakers will be the next NBA champions and I desire that the Lakers will be the next NBA champions. Each attitude refers to the same object, but neither does the belief refer (not even indirectly) to the desire nor the desire to the belief. Jaworska’s notion of “indirect reference” is, I submit, not a notion of reference at all.

<sup>17</sup> I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising this worry.

<sup>18</sup> While Bratman suggests that conditions (i) and (ii) are jointly sufficient for one policy’s undermining another policy, he does not say whether or not they are individually necessary or individually sufficient.

<sup>19</sup> In fact, Bratman only offers this as a “preliminary proposal” of self-determination (2000, 35). He later qualifies it to include quasi-policies. On this extended account, an agent’s decision is self-determined just in case it is caused by a desire *D* and the agent has either a self-governing policy or quasi-policy with which he is satisfied that treats *D* as reasoning in motivationally efficacious practical reasoning. Quasi-policies bear a “special relation to our temporally extended agency” and for this reason can also have authority to speak for the agent (Bratman 2000, 42). An example of a quasi-policy would be an agent’s ideal of citizenship. Such an ideal would resemble self-governing policies in that it would accord weight to desires that promote the ideal and discount desires that tend to violate it (Bratman 2000, 42). Quasi-policies, Bratman imagines, are unlike self-governing policies in that they do not involve *intentions* to do certain things or treat desires in certain ways, and so acting against a quasi-policy will not, like acting against a self-governing policy, involve a strong kind of inconsistency (Bratman 2000, 43). I will ignore this complication since it has no bearing on my criticism of Bratman’s theory.

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<sup>20</sup> The same problem besets Frankfurt's own analysis of satisfaction. According to Frankfurt, when an agent is satisfied there is "an absence of restlessness or resistance" (1992, 103). While such an analysis of satisfaction may allow his account to satisfy the alienation constraint, it does so at the expense of violating the scope constraint: we can perform self-determined actions in the presence of restlessness or resistance. We can act self-determinedly even when we are dissatisfied.

<sup>21</sup> The desire here is not a desire to spend time with his family or a desire for his family's well-being, but rather a desire concerning a specific way to care for his family: namely by devoting his summer to them. I am not imagining that Kevin is in conflict about whether to care for philosophy or his family, but in conflict about how to spend his summer.

<sup>22</sup> Two worries might spring to mind here. First, one might worry that Kevin's decision is not self-determined because this is a case of weakness of will. To avoid this worry, we can stipulate that Kevin's moment of awakening first causes him to judge that it is, all-things-considered, best to devote his summer to his family, and that he then makes the decision to devote his summer to his family on the basis of this judgment. Second, one might worry that in making the decision to devote his summer to his family, Kevin is "decisively identifying" with his desire to devote his summer to his family (cf. Frankfurt 1987, 168). The problem with appealing to decisions as decisive identifications is that they do not help further the reductionist project. The identification reductionist is committed to there being, for all self-determined decisions, a *prior* motivation that causally contributed to the decision and with which the agent is identified. Even if Kevin's decision thereby makes him identified with his desire to devote his summer to his family, Bratman cannot exploit this since he needs to show that Kevin was *already* (i.e. before he made the decision) identified with his desire to devote his summer to his family. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising these worries.

<sup>23</sup> Another counterexample would be a case in which Kevin performs a self-determined action and yet this action is not motivated by *any* self-governing policy, let alone a self-governing policy with which he is satisfied. This strikes me as possible. However, some have told me in conversation that it does not seem possible to them. I thus offer the more complex counterexample above for those who think that all self-determined actions are motivated in part by self-governing policies.

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