

## A Planning Theory of Self-Governance: Reply to Franklin

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Before considering Christopher Evan Franklin's essay, "Bratman on Identity over Time and Identification at a Time," (Franklin 2016) let me set the stage.<sup>1</sup> My question is: what is it for an agent to be self-governing, and is such self-governance as much a part of the natural, causal order as other aspects of human psychological functioning? Here I focus on self-governance at a time (or during a short temporal interval), and put aside complexities about self-governance over an extended period of time.<sup>2</sup> In a tempting image, a "self" steps back from, and reflects on, her system of attitudes – a system of beliefs, desires, intentions, evaluations, and the like – and moves the levers of action. But, taken literally, this homuncular model of self-governance is unavailable to a broadly naturalistic philosophy of action. Instead, what we want is a model of the functioning of the system of attitudes such that when these attitudes so function the agent governs. Such self-governance would consist in—to borrow from Harry Frankfurt -- the relevant "operation ... of the systems we are." (Frankfurt 1988b, 74)

What is crucial here is the provision of naturalistically embeddable sufficient conditions for relevant self-governance.<sup>3</sup> We can allow for the possibility of multiple such sufficient conditions, since that would not block our claim that self-governance can be embedded within a broadly naturalistic view of ourselves. And we can allow that a somewhat weaker version of the sufficient conditions we do provide might also constitute a kind of self-governance.

With an eye to providing such sufficient conditions, a broadly Frankfurtian strategy would be to suppose that the agent has a relevant practical standpoint, one that consists of attitudes that help constitute where she stands on certain practical issues. (Frankfurt 1988c) When this standpoint appropriately guides, the agent governs.

But what constitutes the agent's practical standpoint and its appropriate guidance? As I see it, we need two ideas here. (1) First: certain attitudes play roles in the agent's psychic economy such that their guidance constitutes the *agent's* direction of action. (2) Second: this guidance involves practical thinking and deliberation in a way that qualifies this agential direction of action as, in particular, a form of agential

governance. There is self-governance when both these conditions are, in a coordinated way, satisfied in the etiology of action. (Bratman 2007b 4-5; Bratman 2007c 209)

Beginning in 2000 I published a series of essays that explored these two ideas and their relation to the planning theory of our agency.<sup>4</sup> A central proposal was that we specify the roles in (1) by appeal to attitudes that, as a matter of function, help constitute and support the web of continuities and referential connections highlighted in broadly Lockean theories of personal identity over time. (Bratman 2007b 5) So what is needed to satisfy both (1) and (2) are structures of attitudes that play, as a matter of function and in a coordinated way, both Lockean diachronic roles and central roles in relevant deliberation and practical reasoning. And my proposal was that relevant plan states satisfy these dual “design” specifications.

Plan states have it as a characteristic function to constitute and support relevant Lockean cross-temporal ties. And plan states are inputs to and help shape characteristic forms of practical reasoning. This will include reasoning about means to intended ends. It will also include important forms of deliberation in which one weighs various considerations, pro and con. This is because such weighing is commonly shaped by policy-like attitudes in favor of giving certain considerations certain weights in deliberation: a policy, say, of giving weight to the needs of one’s mother, or perhaps instead to the needs of the Free French. (Bratman 2007d 244-245)

Such policies are plan states that are suitably general. They may be associated with certain evaluative judgments, but in general they need not involve correspondingly strong, inter-subjectively accountable evaluative judgments. Though their content is in a sense normative, since it involves the idea of treating a consideration as a reason/as having weight, these policies need not themselves be inter-subjectively accountable normative judgments. (Bratman 2007e) Appeal to such policies allows us better to understand an agent who has settled on a life that gives priority to one of what she sees to be several conflicting, non-comparable considerations. It also allows us to respond to other pressures against what I have called a Platonic model of an agent’s standpoint. (Bratman 2010 17-18)

Given both the human capacity for reflection and pervasive needs for self-management, such policies about weights will frequently be in part higher-order: they

will involve policies about how to treat relevant desires in relevant practical reasoning. (Bratman 2007c 215-220, Bratman 2007d 241-3, 246-7, Bratman 2014 165 n52) And this gives us a model of identification with a first-order desire in favor of X: it involves a policy of giving X and/or one's desire for X weight in one's relevant deliberation. (Bratman 2007e 142, Bratman 2007f 37-40)

These plan-theoretic resources give us a preliminary sketch of a model of a planning agent's synchronic self governance, one that highlights guidance of thought and action by a standpoint that involves in a basic way relevant plan states, including relevant (and, commonly, in part higher-order) policies about weights. Such plan-infused guidance is guidance by plan attitudes that play, as a matter of function, both relevant Lockean cross-temporal roles and relevant roles in deliberation and practical reasoning.

I have called the cited policies of weights *self-governing policies*. These self-governing policies will normally help constitute and support diachronic Lockean ties that are, in particular, embedded within forms of temporally extended practical reasoning and deliberative weighing.

So far, however, we have not ensured that the agent is not deeply conflicted about certain of these self-governing policies in a way that is in tension with self-governance. Perhaps he is guided by a policy to give weight to the needs of his mother even though he remains deeply conflicted about whether instead to leave his mother and fight with the Free French. So here another Frankfurtian idea is apt, the idea of wholeheartedness or satisfaction. (Frankfurt 1988c, 1999b) Put roughly, this is the idea that there is not within the psychic economy relevant forms of unresolved and potentially destabilizing pressures for change with respect to the relevant plan states. (Bratman 2007c 203-204, Bratman 2007f 34-35, Bratman 2007d 247 n.52)

A further point is that a standpoint whose guidance constitutes the agent's self-governance needs also to avoid basic forms of plan inconsistency or incoherence. If the standpoint includes, say, both an intention to help one's mother and an intention to do something one knows is incompatible with that, then there will not be a sufficiently clear place where the agent stands such that its guidance is the agent's relevant self-governance. (Bratman 2009)

Putting these ideas together, we can say that when such policies about weights - policies that are normally in part higher-order, and policies with which the agent is satisfied – guide, and the agent’s relevant structure of plans is appropriately consistent and coherent, then the agent governs in the relevant domain. This is, roughly, my proposed non-homuncular plan-theoretic model of sufficient conditions for a planning agent’s self-governance.

In a probing discussion of these ideas, R. Jay Wallace raises a question about the relation of my approaches to (1) and to (2), a question that is relevant to my discussion of Franklin’s essay. Wallace notes my emphasis on policies whose content is along the lines of: give these considerations weight in/treat them as reasons in deliberation. But he wonders how this fits with the role of constituting and supporting Lockean ties. He writes:

It is a striking feature of Bratman’s development of the volitional approach that it ... builds normative content into the policies that constitute our framework for identifying with the items in our own mental lives. ... As far as the account of authority is concerned, however, this aspect of Bratman’s position appears to do no real work. The thing that allegedly confers authority on self-regulating policies ... is the role they play in establishing cross-temporal structures of agency. But the ability of an agent’s policies to satisfy this condition seems completely independent from whether they have or lack normative content.

(Wallace 2014, 111-112)

In response: I agree that attitudes that do not have the cited normative content might nevertheless, as a matter of function, help constitute and support broadly Lockean ties – though these may not be the kinds of ties central to, in particular, temporally extended reasoning and deliberation. Guidance by such attitudes may not, however, be self-*governance*. Governance involves a kind of deliberation-infused control, and for that the guiding attitudes with Lockean authority need also to help shape relevant deliberation in relevant ways. By appealing to policies about weights we appeal to attitudes that have both jobs (support of Lockean ties and support of deliberation), and so can be at the bottom of a non-homuncular model of self-governance. Wallace worries that putting these two ideas together amounts to a “a gratuitous stipulation,

unmotivated by anything in [Bratman's] systematic account of psychological authority.” (2014, 112) And he is right that the appeal to attitudes with normative content does not derive from the Lockean account of authority. What it derives from is the need, in self-governance, for the attitudes with Lockean authority to guide relevant practical reasoning and deliberation. As noted, the key is to identify attitudes that satisfy in a coordinated way both design specifications: their guidance normally both shapes ongoing practical deliberation and helps constitute the agent's direction of thought and action. And that is what self-governing policies do.<sup>5</sup> (Bratman 2007h 101)

I can now turn to Franklin's essay. Begin with two preliminary points. Franklin talks of self-determination. But I have indicated a need to distinguish self-direction from full-blown self-governance: in self-governance, but not in all forms of self-direction, there is deliberation-based control. So I will take the liberty of understanding Franklin's talk of self-determination as talk of self-governance. Second, I take it that our fundamental concern is with such self-governance. Talk of identification, alienation, agential standpoint and the like earns its place in our theorizing insofar as it helps us get at structures of agency that are central to self-governance. (Bratman 2007e 138n3)

Franklin develops three main criticisms of my proposals. First: might not the desire for the drug, in Frankfurt's famous example, by itself play, as a matter of function, the roles of constituting and supporting diachronic Lockean ties? And if so, doesn't this show that my theory is unable to distinguish between guidance by such a desire and guidance by relevant self-governing policies, and so is unable to explain why guidance by such a desire is not self-governance?

Well, I agree that it might turn out that such a desire plays, as a matter of function, such Lockean roles. But it would not follow on my theory that its guidance constitutes the agent's self-governance. There are two reasons for this. The first is that this desire may simply exert motivational pressure rather than provide what the agent takes as a consideration to be given weight in relevant deliberation. (Bratman 2007f 37-9) Indeed, this solely motivational role seems to have been Frankfurt's understanding of the functioning of such a desire. (Bratman 2007g 73) Granted, (and as Franklin notes, drawing from James Stacey Taylor) the agent might have a policy of treating this desire

as providing a consideration that has weight in deliberation. But then it is that policy that will explain the relation between that desire and the potential for self-governance.

Franklin does not address this reply: in general, he does not focus on the way in which the policies to which I appeal have a kind of normative content and are thereby poised to shape relevant deliberation. This may be because he shares Wallace's misgivings about the way the theory brings together the Lockean model of authority with the appeal to such content. But once both these aspects of my model of self-governance are on board, we can say that even if the cited desire plays, as a matter of function, the cited cross-temporal Lockean roles it may not be apt to shape deliberation in the way characteristic of self-governance.

This takes us to a second reply to Franklin's first criticism: the agent may well not be satisfied with this functioning of the desire for the drug. And Franklin grants that a version of this reply is potentially successful. (He notes that we do not yet have a fully detailed account of satisfaction to support this reply; and here I agree.) This is why he turns to a second objection. The objection now is that if we say that the attitudes whose guidance constitutes self-governance are ones with which the agent is satisfied, then we "effectively preclude... the possibility of performing a self-determined [self-governed] action in certain cases of motivational conflict." (Franklin 2016, 8) And he thinks that this would be a mistake. After all, Kevin (in his example) might follow through with his self-governing policy in favor of giving weight to his family even though this policy is in conflict with his self-governing policy in favor of his philosophical projects and even though this conflict blocks his satisfaction with his family-friendly policy. Despite this absence of satisfaction, Kevin's activities with his family may well be self-governed. Or so Franklin avers.

Now there does seem to me to be an important difference between Kevin and a person who is more wholehearted in and satisfied with his family-friendly policy. Such a person is more "fully behind" his family-oriented activities in a sense that to some extent matters to issues about self-governance. But the more important point is that it does not matter in a deep way whether or not we extend the label 'self-governance' to Kevin's case. Perhaps there are contexts within which we will want to appeal to a weaker form of self-governance, one that allows for an absence of satisfaction in a case like Kevin's.

(Here it is important to note that the attitudes of interest in this example are policies with a relevant normative content.) Whatever we decide about this, we can still agree that the trio of inter-connected ideas I have provided -- Lockean authority, normative content, and satisfaction – when taken together with the planning theory of our agency, allows us to articulate sufficient conditions for robust forms of self-governance. This is enough to show what we wanted to show, namely that a planning agent's self-governance is in this way naturalistically embeddable.

This brings me to Franklin's third criticism:

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. (Franklin 2016, 9-10)

The problem here is that one can be satisfied with a wide range of psychic phenomena that do not seem to be at the heart of self-governance. I might be satisfied with my newly relaxed and calmed state of mind after a long day (and a stiff drink). But we should not infer that such a calmed state plays a basic role in our model of self-governance. Granted, it might be natural to say that I am not alienated from my calmness. But we need to remind ourselves that our talk of alienation is of interest here primarily to the extent that it gets at something central to self-governance. Focusing on self-governance, we will want to appeal to satisfaction with attitudes that are, for further theoretical reasons, central to self-governance. And there is good reason to think that a feature of such attitudes that matters is their coordinated combination of relevant normative content with a kind of authority that is grounded in Lockean ties. This trio of ideas – Lockean authority, contents about deliberative weights, and satisfaction – taken together with the overall planning theory, allows us to construct a naturalistically embeddable model of a planning agent's self-governance at a time.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the ideas to be discussed in this essay see (Bratman 2007b).

<sup>2</sup> Concerning the latter see (Bratman, unpublished).

<sup>3</sup> See (Bratman 2007b 11-12). For a similar methodological point in theorizing about shared agency see (Bratman 2014a 36).

<sup>4</sup> Most of these are reprinted in (Bratman 2007a). See also (Bratman 2010).

<sup>5</sup> This is a more developed version of my brief reply to Wallace in (Bratman 2014b 320).

<sup>6</sup> Thanks to Facundo Alonso for helpful comments.