



Desire satisfaction and its discontents

(La satisfacción de deseos y sus discontenidos)

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ABSTRACT: According to a well-established view of desire satisfaction, a desire that *p* is satisfied iff *p* obtains. Call this the ‘standard view’. The standard view is purely semantic, which means the satisfaction condition of desires is placed in the truth of the embedded proposition that indicates the content of the desire. This paper aims to defend the standard view against two frequently discussed problems: the problem of *underspecification* and *desires conditional on their own persistence*. The former holds that the standard view cannot capture the specific ways of desire satisfaction. The latter holds that the standard view does not provide sufficient conditions for the satisfaction of desires conditional on their own persistence. To address the first problem, I will clarify two different interpretations of desire ascriptions using *de re/de dicto* distinction. My argument to address the second problem rests on the disambiguation of different senses of satisfaction: semantic and agent.

KEYWORDS: desires, semantic satisfaction, agent satisfaction, underspecification, desires conditional on their own persistence, *de re/de dicto*

RESUMEN: De acuerdo con una propuesta de amplia aceptación sobre la satisfacción de deseos, un deseo de que *p* queda satisfecho si y solo si *p* tiene lugar. Llamemos a esta propuesta la ‘postura estándar’. La postura estándar es puramente semántica, en el sentido de que la condición de satisfacción de los deseos se sitúa en la verdad de la proposición que indica el contenido del deseo. El objetivo de este artículo es defender la postura estándar contra dos problemas discutidos con frecuencia en la literatura: el problema de la infraespecificación y el problema de los deseos condicionales a su propia persistencia. La primera objeción consiste en que la postura tradicional no puede distinguir diferentes formas específicas de satisfacer un deseo. En la segunda objeción se sostiene que la postura tradicional no proporciona condiciones suficientes para la satisfacción de deseos condicionales a su propia persistencia. Para tratar el primer problema, clarifico dos interpretaciones diferentes de las adscripciones de deseos, usando la distinción de *re/de dicto*. Mi argumento para solucionar el segundo problema se apoya en la desambiguación de diferentes sentidos de satisfacción: semántico y agencial.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Deseos, satisfacción semántica, satisfacción agencial, infraespecificación, deseos condicionales a su propia persistencia, *de re/de dicto*

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1. Introduction

There is a unified consensus that desires aim at satisfaction. According to the *standard view* of satisfaction (*SV*), a desire is a relation between a person and a proposition.¹ So, for a desire to be satisfied, the proposition should be true, otherwise frustrated.² For example, Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug is satisfied iff Jamie has a Persian rug. *SV* is a purely semantic view, which means the satisfaction conditions of desires is entirely placed in 'the truth of the proposition expressed by the complement of a sentence ascribing the desire' (Stampe, 1986, p. 151). Support for *SV* is longstanding;³ however, some authors have recently proposed objections to it.⁴ The central issue in these objections is that a purely semantic account of satisfaction is not sufficient to specify the satisfaction conditions of desires. The purpose of this paper is to defend *SV* against two frequently discussed problems.⁵

The first problem arises from what Fara (2013) calls the problem of *underspecification*. Suppose that Jamie says that he wants to have a Persian rug. But he actually wants a Persian rug for his living room. A wall-hanging Persian rug does not satisfy his desire. The problem for *SV* is that when Jamie says that he wants to have a Persian rug, he does not express a desire that becomes satisfied just in case the proposition that he has a Persian rug becomes true. That proposition becomes true even if he has a wall-hanging Persian rug. But his desire does not thereby become satisfied. Therefore, *SV* is not sufficient to explain the satisfaction of desires whose content is underspecified. Note that the problem of underspecification is primarily about desire reports, i.e. a desire that *p* can be true even if *p* does not specify the complete content of the desire. However, it has an immediate impact on *SV* because this view takes the satisfaction conditions of a desire to be bound to the truth of the propositional content. More specifically, *SV*, i.e. the truth of the that-clause expressing *p*, does not suffice for the satisfaction of a desire if its content is only partially specified. So, the problem of underspecification also puts a challenge for *SV*.

¹ *SV* presupposes that desires are propositional attitudes. This is a widely shared thesis about desires, and I will take it for granted in this paper. See Stampe (1987), Schueler (1995), McDaniel and Bradley (2008).

² Also known as 'received wisdom' by McDaniel and Bradley (2008), 'the plausible view' by Braun (2015), and 'Satisfaction-is-Truth Principle' by Grant and Phillips-Brown (2020).

³ See Stampe (1986), Searle (2010, Ch. 2), Braun (2015), and Shaw (2020).

⁴ See McDaniel and Bradley (2008), Fara (2003, 2013), Lycan (2012), Grant and Phillips-Brown (2020).

⁵ There are some alternative views of desire satisfaction in the literature. For instance, one way of understanding desire satisfaction is that a desire that *p* is satisfied iff the desirer is disposed to realize *p*. In this view, the satisfaction condition of desire is tied to the desirer's disposition to carry out the content. This account is implied in the motivational view of desires, such as the one defended by Michael Smith (1994), Searle (1983), and Gregory (2017). For an elaboration on the dispositional understanding of satisfaction and an objection to it, see Lauria (2017, pp. 149-150). Another view of desire satisfaction proposed by McDaniel and Bradley (2008) holds that all desires are directed at two propositions: one indicating the object of the desire and another stating the condition of the desire. For a desire to be satisfied, both propositions need to be true. Lastly, an interesting view of satisfaction is proposed by Shaw (2020), called satisfaction as normal termination. According to this view, a desire to eat, for example, is satisfied if it is terminated normally, meaning, "when it terminates through the consumption of food via the operation of the mechanisms underlying satiation" (Shaw, 2020, p. 376).

I agree that Jamie's desire is not satisfied by the Persian wall-hanging rug; however, SV is not at fault. Rather, this problem arises from equivocating different interpretations of Jamie's desire ascription. In section 2, after sketching the problem and rejecting a response proposed by Braun (2015), I will use *de re/de dicto* distinction to clarify two interpretations of Jamie's desire ascription. This clarification brings to light the true intended referent of Jamie's desire ascription, which is not having a wall-hanging Persian rug.

The second problem is the *desires conditional on their persistence* (Parfit, 1984, p. 151; McDaniel & Bradley, 2008). For example, suppose Derek wants to swim when the Moon later rises. He wants to do so only if, when the Moon rises, he still wants to swim. However, imagine when the Moon rises, he does not want to swim anymore. So, he ends up not swimming. Is his former desire frustrated when he does not swim? Opponents respond: according to SV, yes, but intuitively, no. They argue that for the satisfaction of a *desire conditional on its persistence*, in addition to the realisation of its content, it should be the case that the desire persists by the time of fulfilment. Semantic satisfaction might be necessary in this case, but it is not sufficient. Therefore, SV fails.

I will defend SV's response that Derek's former desire is frustrated. This response seems counterintuitive because of equivocating two senses of satisfaction. In section 3, I will reinforce the distinction between semantic and agent satisfaction and argue that while the persistence of desires by the time of fulfilment is essential for agent satisfaction, it does not play a role in semantic satisfaction. Thus, Derek's *past* desire is semantically frustrated when he does not swim, even though he himself is not frustrated.

The goal of this paper is to defend SV, as a plausible view of satisfaction, against these two significant problems.

2. Problem of underspecification

Jamie wants to have a Persian rug. He wants a Persian rug for his living room. Surprisingly, he receives a Persian rug for his birthday. More specifically, he receives a wall-hanging Persian rug from his mother, with a note which reads: Here is the Persian rug you always wanted. Happy birthday! Not this!, Jamie protests for the confusion. Is Jamie's desire satisfied? Advocates of the underspecification problem argue that if we accept SV, Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug is satisfied because it is the case that he has a Persian rug. It is argued that mere *semantic* satisfaction cannot explain Jamie's desire. More factors are involved in the 'ordinary sense' of satisfaction, and we do not care about the semantic satisfaction of our desires (Lycan, 2012, p. 206). Therefore, SV seems to be insufficient to explain the satisfaction conditions of Jamie's desire.

The problem of underspecification was proposed by Fara (2003, 2013), re-stated by Lycan (2012), and recently defended by Grant and Phillips-Brown (2020). According to this problem, when Jamie says that he wants to have a Persian rug, he does not express a desire that becomes satisfied just in case the proposition that he has a Persian rug becomes true. That proposition becomes true even if he has a wall-hanging Persian rug. However, his desire does not thereby become satisfied. Thus, 'the desire that makes [Jamie's] claim true has a more specific content than the proposition expressed by [his] embedded clause' (Braun, 2015, p. 148). Note that although the problem of underspecification is primarily about desire reports, it has an immediate impact on SV for this view takes the satisfaction

conditions of desires solely to be in the truth of the proposition in the embedded clause of desire content. Thus, SV is not sufficient in the case of desires whose content is not fully specified, as the objection goes.

There are three claims made in the problem of underspecification. First, the desirer *truly* has the desire he says he has, i.e. the desire ascription is correct. For example, Jamie speaks truly when he says that he wants to have a Persian rug, and we trust his words. Second, the agent's desire is not necessarily satisfied when the proposition that indicates the content of desire becomes true. For example, when Jamie has a wall-hanging Persian rug, his desire is not satisfied. Third, SV fails to capture the specifications of desire satisfaction in these cases.

In order to defend SV, one of these claims should be rejected.⁶ In such an attempt, Braun (2015) challenges the first claim by arguing that the agent in this case does not really have the desire he says he has. When an agent says that he has a specific desire, we trust his words and conclude he genuinely has that particular desire. For instance, in Jamie's case, when Jamie says that he wants to have a Persian rug, we take the expression of his desire at face value and accept that he has the expressed desire. However, Braun argues that we may be wrong about it. His argument relies on a distinction between saying and asserting.⁷ Although Jamie speaks truly when he says that he wants to have a Persian rug, he does not actually mean that he wants to have a Persian rug. By saying that he wants to have a Persian rug, he means that he wants to have a Persian rug that he can put in his living room. He says something false, but what he asserts is true. According to Braun, for speaking truly, it is sufficient to mean or assert something true even if what the agent is saying is false. Braun writes:

[Jamie] means or asserts, and primarily intends to communicate, one or more other true propositions, such as the proposition that [he wants to have a Persian rug]. However, since [he] means or asserts those propositions, and those propositions are true, [he] speaks truly when [he] says that [he wants to have a Persian rug]. So, [Jamie says that he wants to have a Persian rug], and [he] speaks truly when [he] does so, but [he does not want to have a Persian rug].⁸ (2015, p. 158)

Although Braun is on the right track about the distinction between saying and asserting, his response is not plausible. First, Jamie speaks literally and unmetaphorically when he says that he wants to have a Persian rug. His case is not quite comparable to the type of examples Braun uses in which the speaker says something false but means something true. Here are two examples from Braun:

Bill says: I ate a billion French fries last night.

Sara (addressing her students in a seminar) says: I want everyone to arrive on time for the next meeting of this seminar.

⁶ See Lycan (2012, pp. 206-211) for some possible responses to the problem of underspecification.

⁷ Braun's argument is influenced by others who defend this distinction, e.g. Soames (2008) and Bach (2005).

⁸ Braun (2015, p. 142) uses an example borrowed from Fara (2013, p. 250): Fiona says that she wants to catch a fish. But she actually wants to catch a meal-sized fish. A tiny minnow will not satisfy her desire. I have replaced this example in the quotation with Jamie's example for the sake of consistency in the paper. For all purposes, both examples illustrate the same point.

The former is a case of exaggeration where the speaker distorts the truth for effect by stretching it. Bill uses *a billion* to mean *a lot of*; he says something false but means something true. In the latter case, if, following Braun, we accept that the quantifier everyone is never contextually restricted, then what Sarah says is that she wants ‘everyone in the universe’ to arrive on time for the next meeting of her seminar. She says something false, but she does not mean it.⁹ What she means is that she wants ‘everyone *to whom she is speaking*’ to arrive on time for the next meeting (*ibid.*, emphasis from original).

However, In Jamie’s case, what makes us search for something other than what is said is not its obvious falsity but its lack of relevant specificity. Jamie is not precise but still means what he is saying. In other words, Jamie speaks loosely – he says something but means a more qualified version of that. Thus, it is true that he wants to have a Persian rug, and it is true that he wants to have a Persian rug for his living room, which is a type of Persian rug. As Grant and Phillips-Brown put it: ‘just because one statement is more informative than the other doesn’t make the first false’ (2020, p. 1797). Jamie could have made his desire more accurately explicit by elaborating that he wanted to have a Persian rug with certain conditions. However, he does not have to since it is conversationally acceptable to say something more concisely, even if it is inaccurate to convey information efficiently. Bach (2001a, 2001b) makes a similar point in his discussion of ‘implicature’:¹⁰

We commonly speak loosely, by omitting words that could have made what we meant more explicit, and we let our audience fill in the gaps. Language works far more efficiently when we do that. Literalism can have its virtues, like when we are drawing up a contract or programming a computer, but we generally opt for efficiency over explicitness. In most conversations, though, spelling things out is not only unnecessary, it just slows things down. It is often misleading too, insofar as it guards against something that does not need to be guarded against. (2001a, p. 250)

Another way to resist Braun’s response is the following. We can take the statement Jamie wants to have a Persian rug as what Brogaard calls the ‘obviously relevant and necessary consequence’ of the statement Jamie wants to have a Persian rug for his living room (2008, p. 101). As Brogaard puts it:

If q is an obviously relevant and necessary consequence of p , then you are in a position to determine easily that q follows from p , and the subject-matter of q will have some obvious relevance to the subject-matter of p . [Thus] if s wants that p , and q is an obviously relevant and necessary consequence of p for s , then s wants that q . (*ibid.*)

So, if it is true that Jamie wants to have a Persian rug for his living room, and Jamie has a Persian rug is an ‘obviously relevant and necessary consequence’ of Jamie has a Persian rug for his living room, then it is true that Jamie wants to have a Persian rug. Therefore, Braun’s suggestion that Jamie says something false when he says he wants to have a Persian

⁹ Braun follows Bach (2000) and Soames (2005, 2008) in this thought.

¹⁰ Implicature is a kind of loose talk by which the speaker says something but means a more qualified version of that. For example, Jamie says that he hasn’t eaten and he leaves out lunch or today from his utterance. For more examples of implicatures, see Bach (2001a, 2001b)

rug is not correct. In other words, even if we accept that Jamie means something more specific than what he says, what he says is not false.

In another attempt to defend SV, Braun challenges the second claim: *the agent's desire is not satisfied when the proposition that indicates the content of desire becomes true*. Braun argues that Jamie's desire is actually satisfied when he has the wall-hanging Persian rug even though he himself is not satisfied (Braun, 2015, pp. 158-159). He argues that Jamie has two desires: a desire to have a Persian rug and a desire to have a Persian rug for his living room. Braun would explain Jamie's two desires as follows.

Suppose Jamie reflects carefully on his desire to have a Persian rug for his living room. He realises that having a Persian rug is necessary for having a Persian rug for his living room. So, he decides that he had better have a Persian rug if he wants to satisfy his desire to have a Persian rug for his living room. So, Jamie has a goal now: to have a Persian rug. So, Jamie wants to have a Persian rug. Jamie sadly admits that, of course, if he has a wall-hanging Persian rug, then his desire to have a Persian rug will be satisfied, though his desire to have a Persian rug for his living room will be unsatisfied, and he himself will be unsatisfied. The problem for Jamie is that in some worlds in which he has a Persian rug, he only has wall-hanging Persian rugs. In those worlds, his desire to have a Persian rug for his living room is unsatisfied, which means he himself would be unsatisfied. Nevertheless, his desire to have a Persian rug is satisfied in worlds where he has a wall-hanging Persian rug. Simply put, Braun argues that when Jamie has the wall-hanging Persian rug, his desire to have a Persian rug is actually satisfied even though he remains unsatisfied. Therefore, the second claim in the objection is false; the agent's desire is *actually satisfied* when the proposition that indicates the content of desire becomes true.

However, this response also faces problems. Here, Braun emphasises the distinction between desire satisfaction and agent satisfaction and uses agent satisfaction to explain away Jamie's case. Agent (or experiential) satisfaction refers to the feelings of satisfaction or frustration that the desirer experiences after the fulfilment of the desire. Desire (or semantic) satisfaction refers to the realisation of the content of desire independent of the agent's experiences. Agent satisfaction is irrelevant in the accounts of satisfaction for it is neither necessary nor sufficient for desire satisfaction. It is not necessary as there are cases where the desire is satisfied independent of the agent's experiential feelings. An example is a desire that my favourite football team wins the world cup. As long as my favourite football team wins the world cup, this desire is satisfied even if I do not realise it has been satisfied. Moreover, it is not sufficient as there are cases where agent satisfaction occurs due to a faulty perception of states of affairs. Take as an example my desire to eat chocolate cake. Imagine someone blindfolds me and tells me what is on the plate in front of me is chocolate cake. Unbeknownst to me, what is on the plate tastes and smells like chocolate cake but actually is not. When I eat that pseudo-chocolate cake, I form the perception that I am eating chocolate cake. So, I feel satisfaction. However, satisfaction is an illusion, so to speak, in this case. My desire is not actually satisfied as what is on the plate is not chocolate cake. Moreover, agent satisfaction is trivial in most cases because agents can have all sorts of feelings when the desired object becomes true; they might even be disappointed and frustrated when the desire is actually fulfilled. All in all, agent satisfaction is not a reliable anchor for determining the satisfaction conditions of desires. Therefore, appealing to the agent satisfaction to explain away Jamie's case is somewhat off the point. Thus, it is false to say Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug is satisfied by having the wall-hanging Persian rug *regardless of*

whether or not he himself is satisfied. In order to defend SV, Braun should show that Jamie's desire is not satisfied by the wall-hanging Persian rug because to accept the opposite (that his desire is satisfied) means agreeing with the objection that SV fails to capture the specifications of desire satisfaction in these cases.

Summing up, in an attempt to defend SV against the problem of underspecification, Braun (2015) proposes two separate responses. First, he argues that Jamie says something false (that he desires to have a Persian rug), but he asserts something true (that he desires to have a Persian rug for his living room) and asserting something true is sufficient for speaking truly. Second, Braun argues against the second claim by suggesting that Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug is actually satisfied when he has the wall-hanging Persian rug even though he himself is not satisfied. Although I sympathise with Braun's intention to defend SV, both of his responses fail to resolve the problem of underspecification. Jamie's desire ascription is not false, and his desire is not satisfied by the wall-hanging Persian rug, as I shall argue in the following.

2.1. ONE DESIRE, TWO INTERPRETATIONS: *DE RE* VERSUS *DE DICTO*

In this section, I will argue that the problem of underspecification does not lie in SV as a view of desire satisfaction but rather in confusion in identifying *the intended referent* of Jamie's desire report. My aim is not to solve the problem of underspecification per se, but rather to show that cases like Jamie's desire are not a counter-example to SV. Here is the short version of my argument:

I agree with opponents that Jamie has a desire to have a Persian rug and that his desire to have a Persian rug is not satisfied when he has a wall-hanging Persian rug. However, I believe that the counterintuitivity of Jamie's case arises from equivocation in different interpretations of Jamie's desire ascription. Jamie's desire ascription has two possible interpretations: either there is a particular Persian rug (or a particular type of Persian rug) that Jamie desires to have, or Jamie desires that he has a Persian rug, no matter what. This clarification reveals that Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug is not satisfied by a wall-hanging Persian rug because the proposition expressed by the embedded clause of his desire ascription (he has a Persian rug) does *not* become true by the proposition indicating the obtained state of affairs (he has a wall-hanging Persian rug). That proposition becomes true only if *the intended referent of the proposition obtains*, which is, a Persian rug that fits his living room. In the following, I will flesh out this argument.

The first step in the argument is to clarify two possible interpretations of Jamie's desire ascription. In short, Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug can be read either as there is a particular Persian rug that Jamie desires to have or as Jamie has a desire whose content is: to have a Persian rug whatever that might be. The former is a *de re* (about a thing or object) reading, and the latter is a *de dicto* (about a dictum or proposition) reading.

Attitude statements (in particular ascriptions of propositional desires) sometimes allow for two interpretations: *de re* and *de dicto*. The distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* attitudes is not uncontroversial,¹¹ but a broad way to draw the distinction is that *de re* at-

¹¹ For instance, Dennett (1982) is sceptical about the plausibility of the distinction, and Kraut (1983) argues against the distinction by showing that *de dicto* attitudes do not exist. See Bach (1982) for a counter-argument to these views.

titudes refer to a particular object that the agent has in mind, and this object can be determined only contextually, and not based on the attitude statement alone.¹² On the other hand, the referent of the *de dicto* attitude is whatever fits the description of the attitude statement. It should be emphasised that from an attitude report alone we cannot determine whether the attitude is *de re* or *de dicto*. As it will become clear in what follows, context plays a crucial role in this regard. Here are some examples to illustrate the distinction:

(1) I want a sloop.

This is a classic example of the distinction by Quine (1956). It could either mean that there is a particular sloop that Quine wants, or he has no particular sloop in mind, and he just wants ‘relief from slooplessness’. The former is a *de re* reading, and the latter is *de dicto* reading.

(2) Jane wants to watch a movie tonight.

On *de re* reading, this statement attributes to Jane a desire that is about watching a particular movie (e.g. Joker). On *de dicto* reading, the statement does not attribute to Jane a desire that is distinctively about a particular movie – she might not even know what movie she wants to watch. She wants whatever fits the description of her statement.

Similarly, Jamie’s desire report has two possible readings. On *de re* reading, the statement attributes to Jamie a desire that is about a particular Persian rug. This means Jamie has a specific Persian rug in mind. For example, he desires to have a Persian rug that fits his living room; more specifically, the one he saw on the internet is what he actually wants. On *de dicto* reading, Jamie desires that: he has a Persian rug. This means Jamie wants Persian rugs no matter what. He just wants relief from *Persian-rug-less-ness*. Whatever fits the description of his desire report, he wants that – be it a wall-hanging Persian rug or a large Persian rug.

The second step in the argument is that the *de dicto* reading of Jamie’s desire ascription is false. In other words, the proposition expressed by the embedded clause of Jamie’s desire ascription does not become true by just any state of affairs that fits the description of the proposition. At first glance, Jamie’s desire report might be construed as a *de dicto* one – whatever counts as a Persian rug, he wants that. This is how Jamie’s mother understood his desire. But this is false, what he actually wants is not just any Persian rug that fits the description of his desire report.

Some clarifications are in order. First, we typically rely on *context* or *conversational pressure* to identify the correct intended referent of a desire report.¹³ For instance, Jamie says: I want to have a Persian rug. We press: What if you receive a wall-hanging Persian rug? Jamie

¹² Bach (1982, pp. 131-132) suggests that having a *de re* belief does not require knowing what the object is or being able to fully identify the details of the object. The object of a *de re* belief is determined contextually.

¹³ See Penco (2010, pp. 56-60) for an account of what context is. Penco defines context as ‘a setting where an assertion is made under a set of parameters’ (2010, p. 57). These parameters are: partiality (domain restriction), perspective (speaker or hearer’s presuppositions), and approximation (level of granularity).

laughs: That would be nice too, but what I really want is a Persian that fits my living room. We press further: But what about a Persian rug that was stolen? Jamie: It is true I will have a Persian rug in that case, but I do not want a stolen rug! We insist: What about a Persian rug that gives your family a fatal skin disease? Jamie: Why would I want such horror? This conversation can continue indefinitely as such.¹⁴ By eliminating unfavourable options, it becomes clear that not just any state of affairs that fits the description of his desire report will satisfy Jamie's desire.

Second, note that the second step of the argument is not putting forward the claim that Jamie's desire *is de re*, but rather that it *is not de dicto*. So, I am not claiming which interpretation of his desire ascription is definitely correct, but which one is false. We would need more information about Jamie and his desire to determine if his desire is *de re*. However, for defending SV against count-examples, like Jamie's case, it is enough to show that the *de dicto* reading of his desire report is false, that is, his desire is not satisfied just by anything. So, we do not have to argue that his desire is *de re*.

Third, it might seem there is inconsistency in the argument. More precisely, the second step of the argument, i.e. the *de dicto* reading of Jamie's desire is false, is not consistent with the first claim of the underspecification problem, which I accepted earlier in the paper, that is, Jamie speaks truly when he says he wants a Persian rug. In other words, the claim that *Jamie's desire ascription is true* and the claim that *the de dicto reading of Jamie's desire report is false* are inconsistent.¹⁵ To remind the reader of what was discussed earlier in the paper, I accept that Jamie speaks truly when he says that he wants a Persian rug. I disagree with Braun's suggestion that Jamie says something false but asserts something true. The claim that Jamie speaks truly means that he is not using metaphorical or exaggerated language to express his desire. His desire report is not a false statement. Jamie actually wants a Persian rug. However, his desire ascription can be interpreted in two ways; *de re* and *de dicto*. Jamie's desire is similar to my desire to watch a movie; I say something true and I actually want to watch a movie, but it is unclear whether there is a particular movie I want to watch, or any movie will do. In Jamie's case, the *de dicto* interpretation is false based on its context; it is not that any Persian rug will satisfy his desire. Note that both interpretations cannot be true at the same time, that is, Jamie's desire cannot be a desire for a specific Persian rug and a desire for any Persian rug at the same time. Therefore, there is no inconsistency involved in accepting that Jamie speaks truly when he says that he wants a Persian rug, and that the *de dicto* interpretation of Jamie's desire ascription in this context is false.

Summing up the first and second steps of my argument, Jamie's desire ascription has two possible interpretations. I used *de re* and *de dicto* distinction to clarify two readings of

¹⁴ One worry here is that appealing to context undermines the significance of a semantic view of satisfaction. More precisely, when we appeal to context to determine the truth conditions of a statement, other factors, besides pure semantics, are involved. However, this worry is unwarranted. A semantic theory should explain the truth conditions of what is asserted in a sentence, and this is impossible if we isolate a sentence from its context. Penco, like many others, argues that semantic interpretation is only possible in context: 'Sentences alone do not say anything, and their truth condition depends on the objects the sentence uttered in a context refers to' (2010, p. 61). Context constrains, but not determines, what a desire report could reasonably refer to. Thus, it is unrealistic to try to specify the correct interpretation of a desire out of its context.

¹⁵ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue.

Jamie's desire ascription. I argued that determining which interpretation of Jamie's desire ascription is correct depends on the context where the desire is uttered. Also, by conversational pressure, it becomes clear that Jamie's desire is not *de dicto*, i.e. not any state of affairs that fits the description of the desire will satisfy Jamie's desire. The referent of the desire is a specific type of Persian rug (if not a specific object), that Jamie has in mind. I emphasised the importance of contextual elements to determine the intended object desire ascriptions are supposed to refer to.

Moving on to my argument's final step, Jamie's case is not a counterexample to SV. The embedded proposition of Jamie's desire ascription (he has a Persian rug) does not become true by the obtained states of affairs (he has a wall-hanging Persian rug). The satisfaction condition of a desire depends on the realisation of *the intended referent* of the desire ascription. If the desire is *de re*, only the intended object that desire ascription is supposed to refer to will satisfy the desire. If the desire is *de dicto*, whatever fits the description of the desire ascription will satisfy the desire. Therefore, we can formulate the satisfaction conditions of desires based on their possible interpretations. Let us revisit SV's formulation of desire satisfaction:

A desire that *p* is satisfied iff *p*.

Now, depending on how the desire statement is interpreted, the satisfaction conditions of the desire will be either of the following:

- (1) If the desire is interpreted as *de re*: both propositions (the proposition expressed by the embedded clause of a desire ascription and the proposition indicating the obtained state of affairs) should refer to the same object. Therefore, a *de re* desire is satisfied iff the intended referent of the content of desire becomes true, otherwise frustrated. To emphasise, the object of *de re* desire is determined contextually.
- (2) If the desire is interpreted as *de dicto*: the second proposition (the proposition indicating the obtained state of affairs) should fit the description of the first proposition (the proposition expressed by the embedded clause of a desire ascription). Therefore, a *de dicto* desire is satisfied iff any state of affairs fitting the content of the desire comes true, otherwise frustrated.

Considering these two interpretations of desires and their specific satisfaction conditions, we can revisit the problem of underspecification for SV, according to which, Jamie's case is a counterexample for SV. The problem can be formulated as follows:

- P1. Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug is satisfied iff he has a Persian rug. (SV)
- P2. Jamie receives a wall-hanging Persian rug. (Stipulation)
- C1. Therefore, Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug is satisfied. (P1 & P2)
- P3. Not that! Jamie protests. (Stipulation)
- P4. Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug is not satisfied, while the embedded proposition of his desire ascription is true. (P2 & P3)
- C2. SV is false. (P1 & P4)

The problem in this argument lies in the misinterpretation of Jamie's desire ascription. As discussed in step two of the argument, Jamie's desire is not *de dicto*. More specifically, the desire report attributes to Jamie a desire that is about a specific type of Persian rug— not

any Persian rug will do. This means the proposition expressed by the embedded clause of his desire ascription in P1 and the proposition indicating the obtained state of affairs in P2 should refer to the same object. However, this is not the case. The obtained state of affairs in P2 (he has a wall-hanging Persian rug) is not the same as the intended object of Jamie's desire in P1 (he has a Persian rug). In other words, the embedded proposition in Jamie's desire ascription (he has a Persian rug) does not become true by the states of affairs obtained in P2 (he has a wall-hanging Persian rug) because their intended referents are two different objects. Thus, Jamie's desire is not satisfied (C1 is false), and the embedded proposition of his desire ascription is not true (P4 is false). Therefore, the conclusion is false. Jamie's case is not a counterexample to SV. The mistake lies in interpreting Jamie's statement as *de dicto* and taking whatever fits the description of his statement to make the embedded proposition of his desire report come true.

In order to solve the problem of underspecification, it is sufficient to show that Jamie's desire is not satisfied by the obtained state of affairs. The three steps of the above argument aimed to show that his desire is not satisfied by the Persian wall-hanging rug, as the *de dicto* interpretation is clearly false, considering the context. So, the satisfaction condition of Jamie's desire is not the truth of the content, understood *de dicto*. His desire is only satisfied by what the content of his desire refers to, in this case, perhaps a specific rug.

At this point, an anonymous reviewer asked *what exactly the correct reading of Jamie's desire and its satisfaction condition are supposed to be*. To remind the reader, from the desire statement alone we cannot determine whether the desire is *de re* or *de dicto*. Also, *de re* desires cannot be fully conceptualized, i.e. it is not possible to express the full details of a *de re* desire in a statement.¹⁶ Jamie does not need to fully express his desire in order to determine what precisely the object of his desire is. Therefore, to determine whether the desire is *de re* or *de dicto*, we need to consider it in its context.¹⁷ Considering the context of Jamie's case, the dicto reading of his desire is clearly false, and not anything that fits the desire content will satisfy the desire. However, we need to know more about the context of Jamie's desire to determine if it is *de re*, and what exactly it is referring to. All we can know about the true referent of his desire is that it is a specific type of Persian rug. However, imagine we determined that Jamie's desire was *de re*, and from its context, we identified the object it refers to, then the satisfaction condition of that desire is the very object or type of object he has in mind in that particular context.

Another anonymous reviewer raised the following issue. Wouldn't Jamie's desire be satisfied if he received a Persian rug with a different pattern? Imagine Jamie's partner brings him a Persian rug with slightly different specifications, and Jamie's desire to have a Persian rug disappears and he is happy with what he got. It seems plausible to say that his desire for a Persian rug was satisfied. But from my argument, it follows that Jamie's desire, in this case, was frustrated because he did not get precisely what he wanted.

In order to see whether Jamie's desire is satisfied or frustrated in this case, first, a clarification is needed. It seems that in this case, Jamie decided to ignore his desire specifications because either it was not too important to him that the pattern was different, or it was important to him but for situational reasons (peer pressure, embarrassed to look too

¹⁶ Bach (1982, pp. 131-132). His view is on *de re* beliefs, but it is applicable to all *de re* attitudes.

¹⁷ See Bach (1982) for a detailed discussion of these points.

picky, etc.) he *compromises* some of the specifications of his desire. When Jamie sees the rug with a different pattern, he might think to himself “too bad it’s not the same pattern”, but then compromises. This is what we do in many cases of our desires. We often compromise and modify our desires when the precise specifications are not met. But a pressing question arises. When Jamie compromises some part of the content of his desire, and he is happy with what he gets, and his desire disappears, is it still the same desire that is satisfied or a different one? My argument would be that since by compromising, the content of the desire changes, a new desire is formed. So, when Jamie receives a Persian rug but with a different pattern than the one he had in mind, then his first desire is frustrated, since its content did not come true. However, the newly-formed desire is satisfied. The content of the compromised desire is slightly different from the initial desire. The first was a Persian rug he saw online (with its own specifications), the second is a Persian rug with a different pattern bought by his partner. Since the content of the initial desire does not precisely obtain, it is frustrated. The compromised desire is satisfied. We all have plenty of frustrated desires, which are transformed to satisfied compromised desires.¹⁸

It is worth noting that Grant and Philips-Brown (2020) have presented a new argument in favour of the underspecification problem. The core idea in their argument is that since agents are *disposed* to bring about their desires, and their dispositions are ‘discriminatory’ and ‘ways-specific’, then desire satisfaction is ‘ways-specific’. So, SV (they call it Satisfaction-is-Truth Principle) fails to capture the ways-specificity of desire satisfaction. The example they use is Millie who wants to drink milk but is not disposed to drink some spoiled milk, which is the only milk available to her. The idea here is that Millie is disposed to drink milk, but this disposition is ways-specific, and not just any old milk will do. Applying their argument to Jamie’s case, we have: Jamie wants to have a Persian rug but is not disposed to get a wall-hanging Persian rug, which is (let us imagine for the sake of argument) the only type of Persian rug available to him. Here is their argument:

- P1. If Millie has a desire that is satisfied in exactly the worlds where she drinks milk, then Millie is disposed to do what she believes will bring it about that she drinks milk.
- P2. Millie wants to drink milk.
- P3. Millie is not disposed to do what she believes will bring it about that she drinks milk – she is not disposed to drink the spoiled milk.

¹⁸ An alternative explanation for Jamie’s modified desire could be that it is a case of epistemic confusion, meaning Jamie’s desire was *de dicto* from the beginning, and he was wrong in the specifications of his desire. Under conversational pressure or situational reasons, he comes to realize that what he actually wants is a Persian rug understood *de dicto*, i.e. whatever fits the description, he wants that. So, it is his understanding of the desire, and not the desire itself that changes. He realizes he was mistaken about the precision of the object of his desire. The point is that people can be wrong about the precise object of their desire. An apparent *de re* desire might be *de dicto*, and an apparent *de dicto* desire might be *de re*. The reason for this is that desires are not transparent states and we might be mistaken about them. Desires are opaque states because we can be in a state of desiring without even knowing it. Unconscious desires are a good proof of desires opacity. See Michael Smith (1987, p. 46) for a discussion of the opacity of desires. In this case, Jamie’s desire is satisfied as the content of desire obtains. SV takes the satisfaction conditions of the desire to be the truth of the content, and in this case, the content becomes true.

- C1. Millie does not have a desire that is satisfied in exactly the worlds where she drinks milk. (by P1 and P3)
- C2. Millie wants to drink milk and Millie does not have a desire that is satisfied in exactly the worlds where she drinks milk. (by P2 and C1)

C2 is a counterexample to SV, ‘which entails that if Millie wants to drink milk, then she has a desire that is satisfied in exactly the worlds where she drinks milk’ (2020, 1794).

This argument faces the same problem, that is, the equivocation of different readings of desire ascription. Millie’s desire is *not de dicto* as she does not find just any kind of milk appealing (this is stipulated in the description of the case, and the authors accept it). So, only the intended object that the desire ascription is supposed to refer to will satisfy Millie’s desire. Drinking spoiled milk is excluded from Millie’s desire ascription, and its realisation will not satisfy her desire to drink milk. Thus, Millie does not believe drinking spoiled milk will satisfy her desire even though it is the only milk available to her. Therefore, P3 in this argument is false (i.e. Millie does not have such a belief), and consequently, C1 and C2 are false. The flaw in this argument results from interpreting Millie’s desire as *de dicto* and taking any state of affairs that fits the description of her desire to satisfy her desire. However, it is not the case as it is stipulated ‘not just any old milk will do’.

Moreover, it is debatable whether the agent’s dispositions are relevant in the problem of underspecification. The problem is rooted in the semantics of the desire ascription. Even if we accept a dispositional account of desires (which is controversial),¹⁹ the agent’s dispositions become relevant to the matter *only after* the intended referent of the desire ascription is determined. More specifically, the agent’s desire dispositions are ‘discriminatory and ways-specific’ exactly because they depend on what the intended referent of the desire is. If the desire is *de re*, then there is a particular object that satisfies the desire – whatever that fits the description of desire will not do. Based on this, the agent forms beliefs about what will or will not satisfy the desire and, accordingly, will be disposed to certain things and not disposed to other things. Millie is not disposed to drink the spoiled milk because that is not what she wants in the first place – drinking spoiled milk is not the intended referent of her desire. Therefore, the dispositions of the desirer in realizing the desire is not directly relevant to the problem.

Summing up, although different authors have presented the problem of underspecification, it always has the same structure: opponents interpret a given desire ascription as *de dicto* based on what is uttered, and then they suppose an implausible way fitting the description of desire comes true, and conclude that SV fails to capture the supposed specification in desire satisfaction. However, I argued that there is equivocation in this reasoning. The semantic satisfaction condition of a desire depends on the realisation of the intended referent of desire ascription. If the desire is *de re*, the object that the desire ascription is supposed to refer to is specific, and only that object (or type of object) will satisfy the desire. If the desire is *de dicto*, then anything that fits the description of desire report satisfies the desire. In the counter-examples against SV, the desire is not *de dicto* and not just any state fitting the description of the desire report will satisfy the desire. Thus, SV is sufficient to explain the satisfaction conditions of such desires.

¹⁹ Some opponents of the dispositional view of desires are Schroder (2004) and Lauria (2017).

3. *Problem of desires conditional on their own persistence*

Suppose that Derek wants to swim when the Moon later rises. He wants to do so only if, when the Moon rises, he still wants to swim. However, imagine that when the Moon rises, he does not want to swim anymore; he loses his desire to swim. So, he ends up not swimming. Is his past desire frustrated when he does not swim? Imagine after losing his desire, Derek meets some friends and ends up swimming in the river with them. Is his former desire satisfied when he swims?

SV's response to both questions is yes. However, opponents find this response counterintuitive. Here is the outline of this objection. There are some desires that SV fails to explain. Such desires are what Parfit called 'implicitly conditional on their own persistence' (1984, p. 151) (CP-desires, for short), which basically means it is necessary for their satisfaction that the desire persists by the time of fulfilment. Common examples of CP-desires used in the literature are: now wanting to swim when the Moon later rises (Parfit, 1984, p. 151), now wanting to have a beer later (McDaniel & Bradley, 2008), an appetitive desire to eat later (Gordon, 1986; Shaw, 2020), my desire to travel by train tomorrow (Persson, 2005, p. 154). CP and non-CP desires are typically distinguished by examples.²⁰ McDaniel and Bradley, two of the prominent advocates of this problem, argue that:

When B's desire at $t1$ for beer at $t2$ rests on the presupposition that at $t2$ B desires beer, and that presupposition is false, the question of whether B's desire at $t1$ is satisfied or frustrated simply does not arise. The desire is incapable of being satisfied or frustrated; it has been cancelled. (2008, 275) [...] In an important respect it is as if the desire never happened. The desire is off; there is nothing that can be satisfied or frustrated. (2008, p. 276)

According to this objection, in addition to the realisation of content, for a CP-desire to be satisfied, it should be the case that the desire persists by the time of fulfilment. Semantic satisfaction might be necessary for the satisfaction of CP-desires, but it is not sufficient. There are two assumptions in this objection to SV. First, desires are divided into CP and non-CP desires. Second, the persistence of the desire by the time of fulfilment is necessary for the satisfaction of certain desires (CP-desires). Therefore, the satisfaction condition specified by SV is not sufficient to explain the satisfaction of such desires.

To solve the problem, Shaw (2020) offers three different notions of satisfaction, and argues that if the notion of satisfaction is understood correctly, the problem is resolved. However, his argument is basically focused on appetitive desires, specifically on a desire to eat. McDaniel and Bradley (2008) address the problem by rejecting SV altogether and offer an alternative view of desire satisfaction which can accommodate the satisfaction of CP-desires.²¹ However, I take an alternative approach to the problem. Although I am not sympathetic with the distinction between CP desires and non-CP desires, for the sake of argument, I stay neutral about this distinction.²² The argument in the following section

²⁰ Some examples of non-CP desires are: a desire that a stranger be successful, a child's desire to become a poet, desires of the dead, a desire that Venice be saved (Parfit, 1984, pp. 151-158), a desire to be healthy (Gordon, 1986, pp. 105-109).

²¹ See Lycan (2012) for more possible solutions to the problem.

²² I will not develop an argument against this distinction in this paper as it deserves a larger space.

will focus on the role of the persistence of desire by the time of fulfilment in all desires regardless of this division. It should be noted that my approach to the problem is similar to Shaw's – in the way that the focus is on the notion of satisfaction itself – but distinct from his – in the way that this notion is characterised. To further clarify this distinction, I will return to his view at the end of the section.

3.1. SEMANTIC SATISFACTION *VERSUS* AGENT SATISFACTION

Briefly put, my argument is that the persistence of desires is not an issue in *desire* satisfaction. Instead, it plays an essential role in *agent* satisfaction. To clarify this, I shall emphasise the distinction between semantic satisfaction (aka factual) and agent satisfaction (aka experiential). What determines the necessary and sufficient conditions of desire satisfaction is semantic satisfaction rather than agent satisfaction. This argument is against Lycan's claim that 'it is what we do ordinarily call satisfaction that counts, not semantic satisfaction' (Lycan, 2012, p. 203).

The first step in my argument is to diagnose the roots of the problem, which is the equivocation of two senses of satisfaction. To begin with, according to SV, a desire is satisfied iff the intended object of desire obtains. Satisfaction in this view does not require the persistence of the desire by the time of fulfilment. Even after the desire is past, the desire can still be satisfied or frustrated. So, Derek's former desire to swim is frustrated when he does not swim. Similarly, when he ends up swimming, his former desire is satisfied. Whether or not the desire persists by the time of fulfilment does not rule out the satisfaction or frustration of the desire.

The reason for finding this response counterintuitive is that we ourselves do not feel frustrated or satisfied for a lost desire, so we find it odd that the past desire itself can still be satisfied or frustrated. More specifically, we usually equivocate two different senses of satisfaction: semantic and agent. Agent satisfaction refers to the feelings of satisfaction or frustration that the desirer experiences after the fulfilment of the desire. Semantic satisfaction refers to the realisation of the content of desire independent of the agent's experiences.²³

The second step in my argument is supporting the following thesis: the persistence of desires plays an essential role in agent satisfaction but not in semantic satisfaction. For an agent to experience satisfaction or frustration of their desire, it is necessary that the desire still exists by the time of fulfilment. If the agent loses the desire (e.g. due to a change of mind about the object of desire), the desire cannot be experientially satisfied. The reason is that the agent does not possess the mental state of desiring whose content is *p*; thus, the realisation of *p* does not satisfy any of his current desires. He does not care about *p* anymore, so to speak, to feel anything about *p*'s realisation. When Derek does not swim when the Moon rises, his past desire to swim is not *experientially* frustrated as Derek does not have

²³ Agent and semantic satisfaction are distinct senses of satisfaction. Agent satisfaction does not necessarily entail semantic satisfaction. The reason is that agents' perceptions always come in between semantic and agent satisfaction. In other words, agent satisfaction necessarily relies on the agents' perceptions, and these perceptions can be false in some cases. For instance, in a case that the agent does not realise the object of desire is obtained, agent satisfaction will not happen. Also, in a case that agent mistakenly perceives the realisation of the object of desire, agent satisfaction happens without semantic satisfaction of the desire.

the desire to swim anymore. Derek is not frustrated when he does not swim. Similarly, if he somehow ends up swimming when the Moon rises, his past desire is not *experientially* satisfied. His experiences and feelings when he ends up swimming are not relevant to the satisfaction or frustration of his former desire.

However, the persistence of desires is not a requirement for the semantic satisfaction of desires. Even if the agent loses the desire, the desire can still be semantically satisfied or frustrated. For the semantic satisfaction of a desire, it is sufficient that the intended object of desire obtains. In Derek's case, if he does not swim when the Moon rises, his past desire is *semantically* frustrated even if he himself is not frustrated. Similarly, if he somehow ends up swimming when the Moon rises, his past desire is *semantically* satisfied even if he himself is not satisfied. The reason is that semantic satisfaction does not require the continuation of the desire up until the time of satisfaction. All that is required is whether or not the content of the desire obtains in the world. So, if the content of desire is actual in the world, then the desire is satisfied. If the content of the desire is not actual in the world, the desire is frustrated.

A possible confusion here might be how a *non-existent* desire can be satisfied/frustrated.²⁴ To clarify, it should be emphasised that such desires are not precisely non-existent, but rather they are past, i.e. the person once desired that *p* and then later lost the desire that *p*, perhaps because of a change of mind. So, our discussion is not about non-existent desires but rather desires that were once existent and are now past. To further elaborate on how a past desire can still be satisfied/frustrated, consider the following example. As a young girl, Jane desired that she became an actress when she got older. But she outgrew the desire and forgot about it when she got older. Now that she is older, she is not an actress. According to SV, Jane's desire to become an actress is satisfied iff she becomes an actress, otherwise frustrated. So, to determine whether or not her desire is semantically satisfied or frustrated, all we need is to see whether or not the content of the desire is actual in the world, i.e. if she is an actress or not. Since she is not an actress –i.e. the content of her desire does not obtain, her past desire to become an actress is frustrated. To repeat, SV, as a semantic view of desire satisfaction holds that a desire is satisfied iff the intended object of desire obtains. Satisfaction in this view does not require the persistence of the desire by the time of fulfilment. Therefore, even after the desire is past, the desire can still be satisfied or frustrated because what matters for the semantic satisfaction of a desire is whether or not the content of the desire and the states of affairs in the world match, not the continuation of the desire until the time of fulfilment.

A clarification is in order. The claim that a past desire can be satisfied should not be confused with the claim that a past desire can give the desirer reasons to realize the desire. The latter is false. To clarify this claim, take Parfit's following example: "When I was young what I most wanted was to be a poet. [...] Now that I am older, I have lost this desire. Does my past desire give me a reason to try to write poems now, though I now have no desire to do so?" (Parfit, 1984, p. 157) This example concerns the desirer's reasons to realize the desire. However, the satisfaction of a desire is not about the agent's reasons for realizing the desire. More precisely, the person in Parfit's example can ignore his desire to become a poet once his desire becomes past. If he grows older and does not find writing poems appealing

²⁴ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer to raise this issue.

anymore, there is no reason for him to fulfil his past desire. The reason for this is that the loss of desires in such cases usually happens due to a change of mind. Something that was once appealing to us stops being so, and as a result, we lose the desire. This is why our past desires can rationally be ignored. It is even counterintuitive to regard desires to be providing reasons for action even when past. Therefore, desires do not provide reasons for fulfilment once they are past. However, this does not mean they cannot be satisfied or frustrated. The satisfaction of desires can be totally independent of the desirer's reasons for action.²⁵ So, if Parfit's desire as a child was to become a poet when he is older, and now he is older and not a poet, then his childhood desire is frustrated, although he has no reason to write poems and he himself is not frustrated for not being a poet. Therefore, the claim that past desires can be satisfied should not be confused with the claim that past desires can give the desirer reasons to realize the desire.

The final step in my argument is to reinforce the thesis that agent satisfaction, in contrast to semantic satisfaction, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for desire satisfaction. As this thought was discussed earlier in this paper (where I rejected Braun's second response to the problem of underspecification), I will only recap it here. It is not necessary as there are cases where the satisfaction of desire is independent from the agent's feelings (e.g. a desire that my favourite football team wins the world cup). Nor is it sufficient as there are cases where agent satisfaction occurs due to a faulty perception of states of affairs (e.g. a desire to eat chocolate cake). Also, agents' feelings in desire satisfaction are unreliable because agents might even feel disappointed and frustrated when the desire is actually fulfilled.

However, there is a possible objection to this proposal. Someone might resist the claim that semantic satisfaction is always more essential than agent satisfaction. This hypothetical opponent might appeal to the cases of desires which cannot be fulfilled without the agent satisfaction. The argument is that semantic satisfaction is not sufficient in these cases. Here are two cases of such desires by Persson:

I want to sign another insurance policy, not because I believe that I shall really need it, but to alleviate my neurotic sense of insecurity. To alleviate this feeling, a firm belief that I have signed the policy is enough. So, acquiring this belief is the important thing; actually signing the policy is only a means to this. But suppose I happen to sign the policy without realising it; it might then be doubted that my desire has really been satisfied. (Persson, 2005, p. 154)

Persson desires to travel by train tomorrow. Imagine that he is asleep or unconscious when he is dumped on a train. He does not have any experience of travelling. Therefore, it is not sufficient for his desire satisfaction that he travels by train. His desire is not satisfied as it is conditional on the belief that "I shall be able to *experience* a possible train journey tomorrow, and so experience the fulfilment of my desire". (*ibid.*)

To respond, I should remind the reader of the satisfaction conditions of desires discussed in the previous section. SV, as a purely semantic view of satisfaction, holds that the satisfaction condition of a desire necessarily depends on the realisation of the intended object of that desire. Note that the intended object of a desire can be anything: objects, states of affairs, other people, or the desirer's own experiences. There is no restriction or specification

²⁵ See Lauria (2017) for a discussion of this.

on what type of phenomenon the intended object of desire should be. In some cases, the intended object of desire is a state of affairs where the agent has certain experiences. For instance, the intended object of my desire to be happy is the state of affairs where I am happy, and this desire is satisfied iff I am happy. To repeat, all that SV claims is that a desire is satisfied iff its content obtains; it is neutral in regards to what that content might be.²⁶

Now, let us return to the desire to sign another insurance policy to alleviate one's neurotic sense of insecurity. As stated in the case description, the agent's belief that he has signed the insurance policy is sufficient to alleviate his sense of insecurity. Thus, the intended object of this desire is *signing another insurance policy where he is aware of signing another insurance policy*. So, his desire is not satisfied when he signs the insurance policy without realising it. Thus, semantic satisfaction is sufficient for this desire to be satisfied.

Similarly, semantic satisfaction is sufficient for the satisfaction of Persson's desire to travel by train tomorrow. However, this desire is open to interpretation. Understood *de re*, the intended object of the desire is travelling by train tomorrow in the circumstances in which Persson has a joyful experience. Thus, his desire is satisfied iff he travels by train in the circumstances in which he has a joyful experience. If he is unconscious and dumped in a train, his desire is frustrated as the precise object of desire does not come true. Understood *de dicto*, the intended object of desire is whatever fits the description of desire ascription. Thus, his desire is satisfied when he travels by train regardless of his experiences: he might be happy with the trip, or hate it, or even be totally unconscious during the trip. To conclude, although the agents' experiences are central in these cases, semantic satisfaction is sufficient to explain the satisfaction conditions of these desires.

Before ending, it is worthwhile to clarify how the proposed view is different from Shaw's (2020). The proposed solution here follows Shaw's approach to the problem, which is disambiguating the notion of satisfaction. However, my solution parts from his in the categorisation of different notions of satisfaction. He disambiguates three notions of satisfaction in total, objectual (which is basically semantic satisfaction), and attitudinal (which includes two different notions: a. the attitude of desire having a true content, b. the normal termination of desire). Although this categorisation neatly solves the problem of CP-desires, it has some limits. For instance, the attitudinal satisfaction, specifically the normal termination, is only applicable to appetitive desires, such as desire to eat. Shaw does not mind this limitation and admits it because he is committed to the distinction between CP and non-CP desires. However, my argument is not bound to the distinction and aims to address the problem of persistence in general, regardless of the type of desire in question. Moreover, although Shaw remains neutral about which of the senses of satisfaction is fundamental in understanding desire satisfaction (and he is not particularly sympathetic to SV), I argued in favour of semantic satisfaction over agent satisfaction, and defended SV against such counter-examples.²⁷

²⁶ Note that the diversity of the nature of the object of desires is not incongruent with desires being propositional attitudes. We can take a desire to be a relation between a subject and a proposition and at the same time hold that that embedded proposition refers to various types of objects.

²⁷ Agent satisfaction is different from what Shaw calls attitudinal satisfaction in the sense that the former is not about the desire itself but rather the desirer's feelings, which ultimately depends on the desirer's perception of the truth of the content of the desire.

Summing up. By emphasising the distinction between two important senses of satisfaction (agent and semantic), I argued that the persistence of desires by the time of fulfilment, while an essential element in agent satisfaction, is actually irrelevant in desire satisfaction. Moreover, I argued that agent satisfaction is neither necessary nor sufficient in satisfaction of desires. Semantic satisfaction, not agent satisfaction, is what determines desire satisfaction.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to defend SV, a plausible view of desire satisfaction, against two significant problems: the problem of *underspecification* and *desires conditional on their own persistence*. The root of the first problem was diagnosed in the equivocation of two different interpretations of the desire ascription, which was clarified by using *de re/de dicto* distinction. I argued that the satisfaction condition of a desire depends on the realisation of the true referent of desire ascription. If the desire is *de re*, the object that the desire ascription is supposed to refer to is specific, and only that object can satisfy the desire. If the desire is *de dicto*, then anything that fits the description of desire report satisfies the desire. In the counter-example used against SV, the *de dicto* reading of the desire report is false, thus, not just any state of affairs satisfies the desire. The root of the second problem was diagnosed in the equivocation of two senses of satisfaction. I argued that the persistence of desires by the time of fulfilment, while an essential condition in agent satisfaction, is actually irrelevant to *desire* satisfaction. Moreover, agent satisfaction is neither necessary nor sufficient in desire satisfaction. Semantic satisfaction, not agent satisfaction, is what determines desire satisfaction. My hope is that the arguments in this paper clarified the roots of these problems, which are not in SV, so that we can again embrace this view as intuitive.

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