Judgements of Co-Identification
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Abstract: A popular way for irrealists to explain co-identification—thinking and talking 'about the same thing' when there is no such thing—is by appeal to causal, historical or informational chains, networks or practices. Recently, however, this approach has come under attack by philosophers who contend that it cannot provide necessary and/or sufficient conditions for co-identification. In this paper I defend the approach against these objections. My claim is not that the appeal to such practices can provide necessary and sufficient conditions for co-identification, but rather that it is a mistake to seek these in the first place.

1. The Phenomenon

Just as different people can think and talk about Bernardine Evaristo (the author), they can think and talk about Amma Bonsu (one of her characters). But whereas thoughts and utterances about Evaristo *co-refer*, the same cannot be said of thoughts and utterances about Amma. Amma does not exist; there is no real person to be the object of reference. I use the terms *identification* and *co-identification* to pick out the phenomenon of people thinking and talking 'about the same thing', even when there is no such thing (Friend 2014). The phenomenon is common, encompassing fictional characters as well as mythical beings (Pegasus), failed scientific posits (Vulcan), religious beings (Ashur) and the like. And it is not restricted to uses of the same name. We identify Homer's Odysseus with Dante's Ulysses; Richardson's Pamela with Defoe's Shamela; the Greek god Zeus with the Roman deity Jupiter; and the American Santa Claus with the British Father Christmas.

Co-identification is a version of what Peter Geach called *intentional identity:* 'attitudes with a common focus, whether or not there actually is something at that focus' (1967, 627). Geach illustrated the idea with a now-famous example:

> (G) Hob thinks a witch has blighted Bob's mare, and Nob wonders whether she (the same witch) killed Cob's sow.

The reading of this sentence that Geach wants to capture is one on which the speaker is not committed to the existence of witches, and Nob has never heard of Hob or Bob. One way to prompt the intuition that Hob and Nob are thinking 'about the same witch', even if there are no witches, is by postulating a shared source for their witch-representations such as a newspaper article. The idea is that we are likely to judge them as co-identifying if their thoughts are linked in the right way.

The same idea motivates a popular way for irrealists—those who maintain that Vulcan, Zeus and their ilk are as non-existent as witches—to account for co-identification.[1] These irrealists (i) explain our judgements of identification and co-identification via the same mechanisms that underpin reference and co-reference, and (ii) take these mechanisms typically to involve causal, historical or informational 'chains', 'practices' or 'networks'.[2]

[1] I assume irrealism here. For arguments that postulating exotic entities does not help explain co-identification, see Friend 2014; Sandgren 2018; García-Carpintero 2020.

[2] The terminology includes: 'historical chains' (Donnellan 1974), 'chains of explicit co-reference' (Taylor 2003), 'name-using practices' (Sainsbury 2005), 'naming practices' (García-Carpintero 2020), 'notion networks' or 'name-notion networks' (Perry 2001, 2012; Korta and Perry 2011; Friend 2014) and 'representation networks' (Everett 2013).

The basic idea is that even if there is no such planet as Vulcan and no such god as Zeus, there are practices of thinking and talking about them, to which we can appeal in explaining co-identification.[3] Advocates of this approach thus reject not only realism about fictional characters and mythical entities, but also theories according to which reference or identification is explained by descriptive satisfaction or similarity.[4] I will call irrealist theories that conform to these commitments, regardless of their differences, *Causal-Historical-Informational Practice Theories*, or CHIP Theories.

CHIP Theories have come increasingly under attack by philosophers who contend that they cannot provide necessary and/or sufficient conditions for co-identification. The critics point to judgements of co-identification that do not seem explicable by appeal to CHIPs and propose alternative conditions that are meant to encompass a wider range of examples. In this paper I defend the CHIP approach from these attacks. My claim is not that CHIP Theories *can* provide necessary and sufficient conditions for co-identification, but rather that it is a mistake to seek these in the first place. Alternative proposals that offer such conditions inevitably misconstrue the phenomena they are trying to explain. These phenomena are our *judgements* that certain representations—names, pictures, attitudes and other mental representations, and so on—are about the same particular thing even when there is no thing or, conversely, that they are about different particular things even when there are no things. (In what follows I will take 'judgements of co-identification' to encompass the converse as well.) To explain these judgements is not to uncover a fact of the matter about whether different representations *really* do or do not co-identify; for an irrealist, there is no such fact of the matter (Crane 2013, 163).

Instead, we want to explain central features of our judgements. Among these I will highlight three. First is the widespread agreement in many contexts that different people's thoughts and utterances co-identify: for instance, that when I read Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*, I think about the same Amma Bonsu as the author, or that when children in the US and UK expect presents on Christmas morning, they are waiting for the same fellow to deliver them. Second is the possibility of disagreements that seem to presuppose co-identification (Friend 2011). For instance, there are critical debates about the whether the governess in Henry James's *Turn of the Screw* is reliable or delusional, the sort of 'vermin' Gregor Samsa becomes in Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' and what is really going on with Melville's Bartleby the Scrivener. In each case we take the disputants to be disagreeing about the *same* characters though they represent them differently. Finally, our judgements of co-identification can vary according to context and purpose (Burge 1983). For example, we may identify Homer's Odysseus with Virgil's Ulysses when emphasizing the background to the character's hostile portrayal in the *Aeneid*, but we may with equal justification distinguish Virgil's character from Homer's for purposes of close textual analysis. Similarly, though Brits nowadays think of Father Christmas and Santa Claus as one and the same, a historian of folklore would distinguish them in describing their very different origins.[5]

Does this mean that judgements of co-identification are too messy to theorize about, or that there can be nothing more than similarity of representations behind such judgements?[6] CHIP Theories offer a way to avoid these conclusions. If CHIP Theories are correct, our judgements of co-identification track real-world facts about our shared practices. In what follows I will elaborate the approach and the challenges it faces (§§2-3); describe and criticize alternative accounts of co-identification (§§4-6); and show that CHIP Theories can avoid the objections once their scope is appropriately delimited (§§7-8).

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[3] Some realists also appeal to CHIPs (e.g. Thomasson 1999; Salmon 2006), taking them to secure reference.
[4] It should be noted, though, that causal descriptivists (e.g. Kroon 1987) also appeal to CHIPs.
[5] I discuss this case in more detail in (Friend 2014).
[6] The latter is Crane's (2013, 164) position.

2. CHIP Theories

As noted above, advocates of CHIP Theories assume non-descriptive accounts of ordinary reference determination. For example, they take uses of the name 'Margaret Macdonald' to refer to the philosopher, not because she uniquely satisfies certain qualitative conditions, but rather because uses of the name are linked back to Macdonald herself. CHIP Theories of reference paradigmatically concern singular terms or singular thoughts directed toward concrete individuals. They are designed to explain how we can refer to those individuals even if we are not directly (perceptually) acquainted with them, and even if we lack uniquely identifying descriptions of them, by appeal to reference-preserving links between representations. The theories under consideration exploit the links between representations to explain co-identification as well.

To clarify the idea, it is useful to describe two different ways that the links are characterized in the literature, focusing for the moment on referring names. According to the first, inspired by Kripke (1980), uses of a name are linked together by *co-referential intentions* (Korta and Perry 2011).[7] These are intentions to use the name to refer to the same object as the person from whom the name was acquired (Sainsbury 2005), or more generally to defer to others' uses of names to pick out the same thing (Sainsbury 2015). The referent, if any, is usually taken to be the causal origin of the resulting network of deferential uses. According to the second approach, inspired by Evans (1973), uses of a name are linked by intentions to talk about the individual who is the *dominant source of information* associated with the name—roughly, the causal source of most of the most important information stored within a (metaphorical) 'mental file' (Dickie 2011; 2015).[8] I call these two approaches to CHIPs *name-centric* and *info-centric*, respectively (Friend 2014).

When it comes to co-identification, however, both the name-centric and info-centric approaches face difficulties. Deferential uses of names like 'Santa Claus', 'Vulcan' and 'Dorothea Brooke' do not originate in any existing individual, and there are no individuals to be sources of information in Evans's sense.[9] Yet there are patently still practices of thinking and talking about them. Philosophers who agree with (i) and (ii) therefore must adapt standard accounts of CHIPs to accommodate the empty (non-referring) case.

For example, Mark Sainsbury (2005), deploying a name-centric approach, individuates his 'name-using practices' not by origin but by *baptism*, here construed as the introduction of a name. This introduction need not involve perception of a real individual; it can be descriptive instead. If the descriptive condition is met, the name refers, and if it does not, the name fails to refer. But either way, people may start using the name to talk 'about the same thing'. In the classic example, Le Verrier used the name 'Vulcan' for the planet between Mercury and the Sun, which he hypothesized to explain perturbations in Mercury's orbit. By contrast with Neptune, the location of which Le Verrier successfully predicted, it turned out that Vulcan did not exist. Nonetheless, Le Verrier's introduction of the name initiated a successful practice because it 'caught on' despite the lack of referent (Sainsbury 2005, 109). Elsewhere Sainsbury (2010; 2018) offers a similar account of how thoughts come to co-identify, in terms of the origins of concepts, which are transmitted via deferential chains.

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[7] Korta and Perry (2011) prefer the broader concept of *conditional co-reference,* or *coco-reference*, where the intention is to refer to the same thing as others do on the condition that there is such a thing.

[8] On mental files see e.g. Jeshion 2010; Perry 2012; Recanati 2012; 2014. Evans (1973) uses the term 'dossier' from Grice (1969).

[9] There are texts or representations that provide information, but these are clearly not the intended referents of the names.

By contrast, I propose an info-centric account of co-identification sustained through a 'notion network', a communication practice transmitting information between mental files (Friend 2014).[10] The key to this approach is to adapt Evans's (1982) contrast between *producers*, individuals acquainted with the referent who can 'insert new information into the practice' (1982, 377), and *consumers*, who refer only because the information in their mental files is dominantly derived from producers. In my version, producers include anyone who has the authority to initiate or introduce information into a network, whether or not they refer; in the case of Vulcan, that would include Le Verrier. Consumers identify Vulcan insofar as their information dominantly derives from the relevant files of producers. Names and other representations co-identify so long as they are guided by the relevant mental files.

In comparing my approach to Sainsbury's, I argued that an info-centric account better explains the ways in which judgements of co-identification vary with context and purpose. I now believe that the right approach to both reference and identification requires a combination of name-centric and info-centric conditions (Friend n.d.). However, the objections to CHIP Theories are meant to apply to the approach generally, regardless of the precise ways in which it characterizes co-identifying links. For present purposes, then, the differences between accounts like mine and Sainsbury's do not matter. Challenges to CHIP Theories are designed to show that judgements of co-identification may be independent of CHIPs of any stripe.

3. Challenging CHIPs

Arguments against CHIP Theories come in the form of a series of counterexamples, one of which is given by reference itself. [11] Manuel García-Carpintero (2020) considers Frege's (1997) example of two populations who live on opposite sides of a mountain, neither knowing of the other's existence. One calls the mountain 'Ateb' and the other 'Aphla'. The two names co-refer, though the practices of using these names are entirely independent. If identification operates via the same mechanisms as reference, it looks as if we should want an account that is neutral between them: that is, one which explains the common focus whether or not there is anything at that focus.

Other examples focus on scenarios where there is no object. Anthony Everett (2013, 96) describes two inattentive audience members watching a production of *Hamlet*, who fail to realize that Ophelia is Polonius's daughter. One starts thinking about Ophelia's mother, and the other about Polonius's wife. It seems as if, on certain natural assumptions, they are 'thinking "about" the same person'. But this cannot be because they participate in the same CHIP, since their thoughts are independent and there is no mention of this person in the play.

Walter Edelberg (1992, 574-75) provides a similar example outside the fictional context. Suppose that two teams of astronomers, one American and one Soviet, independently investigate an anomaly in deep space; neither knows the other group is there. Both teams attempt to explain the anomaly 'by postulating an "overdensity" of galaxies', located at slightly different coordinates. The Americans name it 'The Great Attractor' and the Soviets 'The Overdensity'. As it turns out, there is no overdensity; the cause of the anomaly is something else entirely. Despite the failure of reference, the two names seem to co-identify, for instance in a statement like 'The Soviets think the Great Attractor is farther away than the Americans'. Yet again there is no shared CHIP.

These counterexamples are meant to show that participation in the same CHIP is unnecessary for a judgement of co-identification. García-Carpintero (2020, 15) presents a different case to suggest that it is insufficient. Suppose that Alice writes a novel in which she

[10] The term 'notion network' is from Perry (2001).

[11] See García-Carpintero 2020 for further discussion of the counterexamples in this section.

models two fictional characters, Alex and Adrian, on herself. She does this by deploying different self-ascribed features from her mental file to portray each of them. Yet we do not take thoughts or utterances about Alex and Adrian to co-identify with each other. The example is directed against info-centric CHIP Theories, which characterize the links between representations in terms of the flow of information. But a version of the example could be generated to counter name-centric approaches. Suppose that Alice—having a bit of postmodern fun—writes a fiction in which she used the names 'Dr Jekyll' and Mr Hyde' deferentially with respect to Stevenson's novel, yet makes clear within the story that these are two different people.[12] Either way, it looks as if Alice participates in a single CHIP, but we do not identify the characters in her fictions with each other.

4. The Pretence Account

The philosophers who put forward these and other counterexamples propose alternatives to CHIP Theories to explain them. Edelberg (1992, 576) appeals to 'rough similarity of explanatory role. If two ideas are introduced to explain roughly the same (or better, counterpart) data in roughly the same way, they are counterparts.'[13] However, he does not claim that the same explanation applies across all cases of co-identification. It would not work for Everett's *Hamlet* case, for instance, because the explanatory roles (Polonius's wife, Ophelia's mother) are distinct, and arguably also the 'data' from different parts of the play.

A different account is proposed by Everett (2013, 88-102), for whom all cases of co-identification involve pretence. When we judge that two empty terms co-identify, this is because, given the 'principles of generation' (Walton 1990)—that is, the implicit rules that generate fictional truths—for the relevant pretence, they count as co-referring. The two audience members, for example, co-identify 'simply because, within the scope of the pretense that *Hamlet* is fact, Ophelia's mother is Polonius's wife and so within the pretense our respective thoughts count as being about the same thing' (Everett 2013, 96). Everett would construe the Edelberg case in similar terms. Though the two teams of scientists are not themselves pretending, anyone who identifies the non-existent overdensity of one team with the non-existent overdensity of the other is engaged in a pretence of reference; they speak *as if* the teams refer to something. According to plausible rules for this pretence, if the two terms refer, they also co-refer (in the pretence) and thus co-identify (in reality). Everett also gives an account of co-identification between fictions, as with Odysseus/Ulysses. These cases involve an *extended pretence* 'which allows us to talk as-if character *a* from one fiction could be incorporated into another fiction as character *b*' (97).

Because the principles of generation for a given pretence may themselves be sensitive to our interests and aims, Everett accommodates variability in judgements of co-identification. His conclusions about co-identification in the above cases concern what we are to imagine according to the principles of generation relevant to a particular pretence. If we are engaged in a different kind of pretence, the principles will be different and so too our judgements. For instance, there may be conflicting interpretations of *The Inferno*, according to one of which we should treat our thoughts or statements about Ulysses as identifying the Odysseus of *The Odyssey*, and according to the other of which we should not. Even if there were only one way of interpreting *The Inferno*, there is more than one sort of extended pretence. In particular, there are two different ways of thinking about fictions and fictional characters, typically called the *internal* and *external* perspectives (Lamarque and Olsen 1994, 143-48). From the internal perspective, we engage in the pretence of imagining Ulysses as a *person*, with a particular history partly described in previous epics. But we can also think and

[12] This is an instance of what Voltolini (2012) calls 'fission'.
[13] Edelberg goes on to complicate the story in light of further cases, but this rough idea will do here.

talk about Odysseus or Ulysses as literary constructs created by authors; this is the external perspective which, for Everett, involves a different kind of pretence. When engaged in this pretence, we may have reasons external to the fiction's content to identify or distinguish the characters.

Now, some philosophers object to the invocation of pretence to explain co-identification and related phenomena, especially for the external perspective and especially in contexts like the Edelberg case that do not involve fiction.[14] My objection is different: namely, that the appeal to pretence is not explanatory. Let us suppose that when we co-identify, say, Odysseus and Ulysses, we are engaged in one kind of pretence, with principles of generation that make co-identification appropriate; and when we distinguish Odysseus from Ulysses, we are engaged in another kind of pretence, with principles that make co-identification inappropriate. Even if this is true, it does not tell us how the principles are determined in each case. Nor does it explain how different kinds of pretence, such as the pretence that Ulysses is a person and the pretence that he is a fictional character, can be 'about the same thing' (Friend 2014). What we want is some account of the real-world facts on which the pretences depend, which in turn make judgements of co-identification appropriate or inappropriate, better or worse.

5. The Counterfactual Approach

The most common alternative to CHIP Theories is a counterfactual or modal approach. Peter Pagin articulates a modal condition on co-identification ('cofocalization') as follows:

> (ID) Two attitudes *A* and *B* are *cofocalized* iff had *A* [*B*] been about a real object, then *A* and *B* would have been about the same real object. (Pagin 2014, 94)

Often accompanied by realism about possibilia (Glick 2012; Pagin 2014), the idea is that we consider worlds in which, say, the newspaper story read by Hob and Nob refers to a real witch, or the motion of the superclusters is explained by a real overdensity.

García-Carpintero, focusing on fiction, proposes a version of this view that does not take possible worlds as either real or primitive, and instead appeals to the 'reference-fixing presuppositions' of a fiction:

> (CI_{GC}) If two representations are associated with fiction F, then they co-identify if and only if the rf-presuppositions of F 'pick out' the same 'object'. (García-Carpintero 2020, 24)

The presuppositions include those about how reference is fixed by certain kinds of terms, such as names or descriptions, and other propositions accepted within the *common ground* (Stalnaker 2002). With fiction, the common ground is constituted by the content of the story: what obtains in the 'presupposition world', in this case the world of the fiction. Since 'Ophelia's mother' and 'Polonius's wife' designate the same person within the storyworld of *Hamlet*, the terms co-identify. Since 'Alex' and 'Adrian' in Alice's novel designate different people in their storyworld, they do not co-identify.

García-Carpintero takes the condition to apply beyond fiction, for instance to the two teams of scientists in Edelberg's example:

[14] For instance, Sainsbury (2010) argues that the appeal to pretence is unnecessary, preferring his account of 'presupposition-relative truth'.

> For the two communities make the same pragmatic presuppositions (that the referent of the relevant name is the F) when they use their respective names for their posits. So, when we consider their views, and the relevant presupposition worlds, both names will pick out whatever is the F in those worlds. Hence the two names will co-refer with respect to each presupposition world. The two communities make singular reference-fixing presuppositions that, although independent of each other, we reasonably take to co-identify in relevant worlds. (2020, 24)

In short, the two teams co-identify because, had they each successfully referred to an overdensity causing the anomaly, there would be just one such structure to which they both referred.

Yet these judgements are not as definitive as they may appear. In García-Carpintero's original Alice example, the intention to create two fictional characters is likely sufficient to block judgements of identification, regardless of how much information concerning real individuals is deployed (Friend 2014). I take modelling to be a looser representational relation than referring. That said, there might be situations in which we identify Adrian and Alex with Alice—as when we are considering the respects in which the novel is autobiographical. Notice that this would be a judgement about the names *in reality*, rather than *in the story*. Similarly, understanding the playfulness of the Jekyll/Hyde example requires recognizing that the two characters in Alice's story should be (from the external perspective) identified with the single character in Stevenson's.

In the Edelberg case, even if we would conclude that the two teams of astronomers co-referred had they been *correct* about the overdensity—specifically, had they been correct that there was an overdensity causing the anomaly they observed—it remains open to us to deny co-identification in the opposite scenario. We might want to point out differences between the posits of the two teams, such as their locations, or have other reasons for distinguishing them. Contrast the Ateb/Aphla example, in which the two CHIPs, each supporting the use of a different name, have the same origin. The CHIPs are related causally to this origin, insofar at least some people on each side can perceive the mountain. The scientists do not bear any similar relation to the non-existent overdensity that would *require* us to treat their representations as co-identifying. That the scientists are trying to explain the same anomaly is not enough. Suppose that in doing so, the Americans and Soviets had postulated overdensities of significantly different sizes, or farther apart; or that one team had postulated an overdensity and the other an entirely different sort of phenomenon. It is doubtful that we would treat the representations as co-identifying in these cases.

None of this is to deny that in Edelberg's scenario, it is more likely than not that people would treat the two teams of scientists as co-identifying. But this is a pragmatic decision, not a deep metaphysical claim, on a par with deciding to call a newly discovered one-horned animal a 'unicorn'. Just as the latter decision does not entail that the animal *is* the mythical beast (Kripke 1980, 157-58), the former does not entail that the two 'overdensities' are one and the same. There is no overdensity, and thus no determinate answer to the question of whether the names co-identify.

6. Triangulation Theory

Alexander Sandgren (2019) proposes an account of co-identification similar to García-Carpintero's, but designed to allow greater flexibility in judgements. By contrast with García-Carpintero, who takes for granted that the presuppositions concerning reference are symmetrical—that is, they are the same for the different individuals concerned—Sandgren argues that they may be asymmetrical. In making this argument he adapts another example of Edelberg's: Suppose that Hob and Nob believe that a certain witch has blighted Bob's mare,

as in (G), but they disagree about who killed Cob's sow; Hob thinks it was the same witch, whereas Nob concludes that it was a different witch (Sandgren 2019, 3683).[15] In this scenario, Hob is likely to think that he and Nob are identifying the same witch but disagreeing about the extent of her crimes. By contrast, Nob would presumably deny co-identification, at least when it comes to whoever killed Cob's sow.

In light of this and a series of other scenarios, Sandgren proposes conditions for co-identification relativized to particular agents' metarepresentational beliefs, their higher-order beliefs about what it takes for their lower-order beliefs to be about a 'putative target'. These (implicit) beliefs generate 'triangulation conditions': the conditions under which, from that agent's perspective, someone else's attitudes would be about the same thing. Sandgren articulates his triangulation theory as follows, where 'being g-related' means co-identifying, and the superscript picks out the relevant agent whose perspective is at issue:

> (T) For any token belief A and token belief B, A is g-related^{S} to B if, and only if, B satisfies at least one of the triangulation conditions S lays out for the putative target of A. (Sandgren 2019, 3687)

Suppose that Hob would take someone else to be identifying the same witch if their beliefs about her were formed from the same newspaper article that prompted his own beliefs. If the article was the source of Nob's beliefs, then they co-identify with Hob's, even if the two disagree about the witch's activities.

Sandgren acknowledges, though, that we may have reasons to evaluate judgements of co-identification relative to other perspectives, including the perspective of the person judging, and that triangulation conditions can vary widely. Perhaps Nob's implicit metarepresentational beliefs entail a descriptive condition: the only way to co-identify is to agree on the witch's description ('any witch who just blights mares is not the witch I'm thinking of!'). From Nob's perspective, then, co-identification does not occur, even when the topic is who blighted Bob's mare.

Metarepresentational beliefs function in Sandgren's account much as reference-fixing presuppositions do in García-Carpintero's account, except that Sandgren relativizes them to agents rather than assuming that they are common ground. To be fair, Sandgren does not use the term 'reference' in describing triangulation conditions; but his examples suggest that the metarepresentational beliefs concern the ordinary reference conditions taken for granted by agents. From Hob's perspective, after all, so long as Nob's representation had the same source as his, they would successfully refer to the same witch. From Nob's perspective, they would both refer to the same witch as long as Hob's representation was sufficiently descriptively similar to his (and perhaps also shared a source). Sandgren's proposal thus allows for greater variability in judgements of co-identification than García-Carpintero's.

However, the triangulation theory mislocates the source of variability. For Sandgren, judgements of co-identification will differ according to which agent's perspective is relevant. The question is what determines relevance, and here Sandgren faces a dilemma. Suppose, on the one hand, that in any given context there is a definitive answer. For instance, it could be (for whatever reason) that we must adopt Hob's perspective when evaluating (G). Then there is no variation of judgement possible; we must take Hob and Nob to be co-identifying so long as they both meet Hob's triangulation conditions. Now suppose, on the other hand, that in any given context there is no definitive answer to which perspective is relevant. Then the possible variations appear unconstrained. We might judge co-identification according to Hob's or

[15] Sandgren uses this case to challenge against realist accounts.

Nob's or our own metarepresentational beliefs. Differing judgements cannot be better or worse so long as they accord with a chosen perspective.

Now, Sandgren does consider a variety of factors that might lead us to make judgements relative to one or another agent, or multiple agents, so the choice of perspective may not be entirely unconstrained.[16] Nonetheless, perspectival relativity of whatever sort cannot fully explain the variations in our judgements of co-identification. Whether we decide that 'The Great Attractor' and 'The Overdensity' co-identify, for example, does not seem to turn on whether the American or Soviet teams of scientists would agree. Moreover, we could decide either way, depending on what we want to explain—and this is true independently of the metarepresentational beliefs of the two teams. The same goes for Hob and Nob and the examples from fiction previously considered. Even if we are judging from a single perspective (in most cases, our own), our judgements can differ across contexts and purposes.

7. CHIP Theories Again

García-Carpintero's and Sandgren's approaches fail to accommodate the variability in our judgements of co-identification for the same reason: Both offer necessary and sufficient conditions for co-identification, which they take to turn on what *would be* the case if certain reference-fixing presuppositions (those in the common ground or those of a particular agent) were met. There are two problems with this way of proceeding. First, as I have argued, when we judge that two empty representations co-identify we are not constrained by any such condition. Even if we would treat the two teams of scientists—or Hob and Nob, or Dante and Homer—as co-referring if either was referring at all, we can choose to deny co-identification when reference does not go through. Second, the theories have difficulty explaining successful co-reference. Here what matters are not presuppositions or beliefs *about* the conditions of reference, but those conditions themselves.

Needless to say, objections to alternative accounts do not show that CHIP Theories do any better. And I agree that CHIP Theories fail to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for co-identification. But CHIP Theories are not best understood as offering such conditions in the first place.[17] It will be recalled that irrealist advocates of these theories (i) explain our judgements of identification and co-identification via the same mechanisms that underpin reference and co-reference, and (ii) take these mechanisms typically to involve causal, historical or informational 'chains', 'practices' or 'networks'. The idea is that we can say something about what makes certain judgements of co-identification appropriate by appeal to the CHIPs that link together representations, even if there is no object which those representations are about. Importantly, this appeal is not to counterfactual CHIPs that *would* link representations to real objects *if* there were objects at their origins. It is instead an appeal to existing CHIPs which *already* link representations. This is enough to justify (but not necessitate) judgements of co-identification. Successful reference further requires that the CHIPs have origins.

When these origins are lacking, differing judgements of co-identification are possible. This is because CHIPs are typically complex, supporting multiple naming practices and different bodies of information flowing through different branches. The cases in which there is widespread agreement about co-identification are those in which the links are fairly direct, as between Evaristo's representation of Amma Bonsu and my imagining the same character in reading *Girl, Woman, Other*. We are also inclined to identify a character through a series by the same author, taking for granted that the same mental representation or name or concept

[16] For instance, Sandgren (2019, 3687) suggests that we are likely to evaluate (G) relative to Nob's perspective, due to the placement of the pronoun 'she' within the ascription to Nob.

[17] I cannot speak for all CHIP Theorists, but I have not intended to offer such conditions. For this reason I would reject García-Carpintero's (2020, 13) attempt to formulate such conditions on my behalf.

is guiding the continuing story. The looser these links become, the less definitive our judgements, as when new authors continue a series or import a character into a new scenario.

For example, suppose that a professor of literature tells her class that Dante's Ulysses is the same character as Homer's Odysseus. Such a claim is appropriate in virtue of the causal and informational relations between Dante's representation of the character, via Virgil's in *The Aeneid*, with Homer's. But now suppose we are engaged in close textual analysis that requires contrasting the characters. The contrast may be explained by appeal to the divergent bodies of information deployed in the representations. On my account (Friend 2014), for example, Dante inserts new information into the relevant CHIP as a producer, and this can justify drawing a distinction. The idea is that judgements of co-identification turn on real-world facts about the differing kinds of links between representations.

8. Replying to the Challenges

With this in mind, we can reconsider the force of the counterexamples levelled against CHIP Theories. The question they pose is not whether these theories provide necessary or sufficient conditions for co-identification, but rather whether CHIPs play a role in explaining our judgements. Arguments for either the non-necessity or non-sufficiency of CHIPs are best interpreted as demonstrating that CHIPs do not *always* play such a role: in other words, we sometimes take judgements of co-identification to be appropriate for reasons having nothing to do with facts about CHIPs. There are various replies available.

First, CHIP Theorists could try to expand the notion of a causal link to encompass the kinds of connections exemplified in some of the cases. Perhaps the fact that the inattentive audience members are watching the same performance of *Hamlet* and are thereby related to Shakespeare's representations of Ophelia and Polonius renders it more plausible that they co-identify. Similarly, one reason for recognizing co-identification in Edelberg's scenario is that the two teams of scientists are causally related to the same anomaly. These connections do not seem to be enough, however. Shakespeare's play could just as well prompt us to imagine Ophelia's aunt or Polonius's sister. And as mentioned above (§5), a connection to the same explanandum is insufficient by itself to secure a judgement of co-identification; other conditions, such as postulating the same kind of phenomenon in roughly same location, are also relevant. But these are not conditions on CHIPs.

The second option is simply to accept that judgements of co-identification can be appropriate independently of facts about CHIPs. After all, if there is no fact of the matter about co-identification, there is nothing stopping us from making such judgements on other grounds. The CHIP Theorist could still point out that the vast majority of co-identification judgements are justified by appeal to features of CHIPs, and that these include the cases where there is substantial agreement. Suppose that two different works of fiction, or two different myths, contained characters described in strikingly similar ways. We would be far more likely to recognize co-identification if there were some connection between the authors; if it turned out they could not have known of each other, we would probably consider the characters' similarity a coincidence. Appeal to CHIPs would still capture a great deal about our practices of co-identifying, even if it did not justify all our judgements.

Although I am sympathetic to this second reply, I do not think the CHIP Theorist should leave it at that; there is more to say about *why* CHIPs have the explanatory scope that they do. To show this I will take another look at the counterexamples, which can be divided by whether or not they concern fiction.

In one of the fiction cases, the author Alice models two characters, Alex and Adrian, on herself, assuming a single (info-centric) CHIP, but we are apt to deny that 'Alex' and 'Adrian' co-identify because they are distinct within the novel (García-Carpintero 2020). In another, two inattentive audience members think about 'Ophelia's mother' and 'Polonius's

wife', and we are apt to identify them even though there is no shared CHIP (Everett 2013). I have already discussed the Alice example (§5), pointing out that what is fictionally the case about reference can come apart from the real-world facts that underpin judgements of co-identification. I believe that Everett's counterexample trades on the same kind of equivocation between the internal and external perspectives.

When Everett says that the audience members are 'thinking "about" the same *person*' (emphasis added), this can be only from the internal perspective; it is only from the internal perspective that fictional characters are persons. Let's assume that it follows from the principles of generation for *Hamlet* that within the pretence, the thoughts refer to same person. This does not entail that they co-identify *outside* the pretence. If 'Ophelia's mother' and 'Polonius's wife' did co-identify outside the pretence, it would be to the same character—a literary construct or device—not the same person. But *there is no such character*. Shakespeare simply did not create the character, on any interpretation of 'create' one prefers, realist or irrealist.[18] (Even if 'creating a character' is a further invitation to pretence, it is a different one from the pretence according to which the characters are persons, and still requires the pretend-creation of a character.) The upshot is that CHIP Theories concern real-world judgements of co-identification, which need not correspond to judgements of what obtains within a storyworld.

Frege's Aphla/Ateb example and Edelberg's overdensity scenario already concern real-world judgements. And I think that each demonstrates that there are judgements of co-identification that do not rely on CHIPs. However, we should not be surprised by this result. It follows straightforwardly from the fact that CHIP Theories are parasitic on causal-historical-information accounts of ordinary reference determination. Because the latter are limited in scope, the former are as well.[19]

In Frege's example, members of the two populations co-refer to the mountain without any shared CHIP. What secures co-reference is presumably the fact that people on either side can see the same mountain, rather than any communication between the isolated groups. But CHIPs are invoked to explain reference to concrete individuals *when direct (perceptual) acquaintance is lacking*. Consider a different version of the case, in which the mountain separates, not two small populations, but instead two enormous territories. Given the size of these territories, only the inhabitants of towns near the mountain can see it; others live too far away. Suppose Abe lives at a distance on the one side and has only read about the mountain called 'Ateb', while Alfie lives at a distance on the other side and has only heard about the mountain called 'Aphla'. If we judge that Abe and Alfie co-refer with these names, this will be because their uses of the names are supported by CHIPs that originate in the same mountain. It is only once we move away from perceptual acquaintance that CHIPs play a role in determining co-reference and thus co-identification.

Edelberg's counterexample is different. If we judge that the two teams of scientists co-identify, this is not due to co-reference or perceptual acquaintance, since the overdensity does not exist. And it is not due to a shared CHIP, since neither team knows what the other is doing. Still, the scenario is again one that CHIPs cannot be invoked to explain. Deploying Sainsbury's framework, the two teams can be construed as independently *baptizing* the hypothesized overdensity with a descriptive condition, in just the way that Le Verrier did for Vulcan. In this framework, baptisms are the way that CHIPs are initiated, so long as the practice of using the relevant name catches on; but a baptism can take place without initiating a CHIP, if no one ever uses the name again. The same is true when a name refers. Suppose

[18] I propose an irrealist account of 'creating a fictional character' in Friend n.d.

[19] Other limits are familiar, for instance that causal accounts cannot explain (apparent) reference to mathematical objects (Benacerraf 1973). Sandgren (2020, 3682-83) counts this against CHIP Theories of co-identification, but it is better construed as a more general worry.

that Le Verrier had introduced the name 'Neptune' for the planet that explained perturbations in Uranus's orbit before the observational confirmation of his prediction.[20] And suppose that John Couch Adams—a British astronomer sometimes also credited with predicting Neptune's existence at the same time as Le Verrier—had introduced the name 'Big Blue' with the same description.[21] We would presumably regard the two astronomers as co-referring despite there not (yet) being any CHIP. If co-reference via baptism is not explicable by appeal to CHIPs, we should not expect co-identification via baptism to be explicable that way either.

This raises the question of what does explain co-reference or co-identification in such cases. One possibility is that we treat 'Neptune', 'Vulcan', 'The Great Attractor' and their ilk as *descriptive names* that refer so long as the associated description is satisfied.[22] If different people associate the same descriptive conditions with the names they introduce, we are apt to say that they co-refer to whatever satisfies the conditions or co-identify if nothing does. However, I do not have strong views either about how reference is fixed for baptisms or how to interpret descriptive names. My point is that answers to these questions will not advert to CHIPs—nor should they.

I conclude that even the more persuasive counterexamples to CHIP Theories are not as threatening as they initially appear. Although they demonstrate that not all judgements of co-identification turn on shared practices, no one should have expected otherwise. CHIP Theories of co-identification are just as limited as the accounts of ordinary co-reference upon which they rely. So, it is no surprise that CHIP Theories have the explanatory scope that they do. Despite this limitation, CHIP Theories are far more successful at accounting for central features of our judgements of co-identification, such as their variability, than alternatives that seek necessary and sufficient conditions for co-identification.[23] For irrealists, the failure to provide such conditions should be embraced rather than regretted.[24]

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[20] The name was actually bestowed later (https://www.universetoday.com/75693/how-did-neptune-get-its-name).

[21] For more on what actually happened, see Sheehan, Kollerstrom, and Waff 2004.

[22] On issues around descriptive names, see e.g. Jeshion 2004; Sainsbury 2005; Dickie 2019.

[23] This may seem disappointing to anyone who was hoping for a clear answer concerning co-identification. Part of the goal of this paper is to persuade such individuals that clear answers are not forthcoming.

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