

## Team Identity and Fan Loyalty

Matthew H. Slater and Achille C. Varzi

*The following is a transcript of what might very well have been five telephone conversations between Michael Jordan and former Chicago Bulls coach Phil Jackson. The conversations took place in early March 1995, just before the announcement of MJ's comeback after a year spent pursuing baseball.*

### Day One: The Conditional Comeback

Phil: Hello?

Mike: Hey Phil, it's me — is this a bad time?

Phil: It's never a bad time, as long as I'm not deep in meditation — I was just visualizing our next game. What's up?

Mike: Still thinking about my comeback.

Phil: Come on Michael, give it a break — it'll be just like old times. Two words: Repeat Threepat. Heck, why stop there: we'll stamp out championship trophies like a factory, trust me.

Mike: I just can't help wondering. With no Horace, B.J., Bill, Scott...is it *really* going to be the same team? You know how important that is for me.

Phil: Getting philosophical in your old age, huh?

Mike: Time away from basketball got me thinking. If I'm going to be part of the team again, shouldn't I know what the team really is — whether it'll really be the same team as before?

Phil: Some might say that *you're* the team. But what do you suppose a team is?

Mike: I'd say that *we're* the team: all twelve of us, even JoJo.

Phil: I'll pretend you said "all thirteen of us, including our beloved coach and spiritual leader."

Mike: That's what I meant.

Phil: Well, in that case, let me tell you: in a way your worry is warranted. If teams

are just their players (and coaches), then it might seem that you can't ever play on the same team if the players aren't the same.

Mike: So I was right? *We won't really* be the same?

Phil: It depends on what you mean by "same."

Mike: Don't get all Clinton-y on me, now.

Phil: No really — think about it. "Being the same" is ambiguous. Things can be *qualitatively* the same or *numerically* the same. Our trophies are indistinguishable, except for their inscriptions: in other words, they're qualitatively the same. But they're not the same trophy: they are distinct. Numerically distinct trophies can be qualitatively identical. The question it seems you want answered is whether a thing can change yet be literally *one and the same thing*.

Mike: Right. How can it? If a team is just its players (and coach), how could it survive gaining or losing any of them? I'll tell Krause<sup>1</sup> that I'll come back only if it's gonna be the same team, okay? If we get *everyone* back together, I'll play.

Phil: So you think that having the same players is a sufficient condition for having the same team? That if you have the same players, you'd have the same team?

Mike: I guess that's what I'm saying. But now that I think about it, I figure it depends on you as much as Krause.

Phil: How so?

Mike: Well, you decide who plays what position. Even if we had all the same players, if you ran Cartwright at point guard and me at center, we'd have a problem. We'd lose (and you'd get fired) — and people might not recognize us as the same team. So perhaps merely having the same players back together isn't sufficient after all: we need them playing in the same positions.

Phil: I can guarantee that I'd never try Bill at point (I'll tell you about this nightmare I had sometime), but I can't guarantee that I won't make some minor adjustments. Remember when Doug Collins moved you to shooting

---

<sup>1</sup> Jerry Krause, General Manager of the Bulls from 1985 – 2003.

guard and had B.J. Armstrong run point? Did that destroy the team or just make it better?

Mike: Ah Doug . . . now *he* was a superstar's coach! "Stand back and give Michael the ball!" he'd say. I hope that I get to play for him again someday. You know, I don't think I . . .

Phil: Ahem!

Mike: Sorry. Okay, I see the point: My "same players, same positions" criterion might be a bit strict: but it's hard to deny that it's a sufficient condition for team identity. If we have the very same players in the very same positions, that's definitely enough for it to be the same old team.

Phil: Granted. I guess now we also need to know what the *necessary* conditions are for your comeback. What minimum conditions must we meet for it to be the same team and to get you back?

Mike: It figures that you'd want both the necessary and sufficient conditions.<sup>2</sup> I'll talk to my agent and get back to you.

## Day Two: Teams Change

Mike: Hi Phil.

Phil: Hi Mike, come to any conclusions?

Mike: My agent wasn't very helpful — he kept suggesting I ask the Jerrys<sup>3</sup> to "show me the money." But I think I'm going to stick to the strict criterion: it'll be the same team *if and only if* we have the same players playing the same positions.

Phil: Okay: but even if we managed it, the team wouldn't last for long.

Mike: Change is inevitable, I suppose.

Phil: Sounds like you wanna be like Heraclitus.

---

<sup>2</sup> In philosophical lingo, a "necessary condition" is something that *must be present* in order for something else to exist or take place. Being on the roster, for example, is a necessary condition of being a starter. A "sufficient condition," on the other hand, is something that *is all that is needed* for something else to exist or take place. Thus, in the NBA having six personal fouls is a sufficient condition getting expelled from a game; so is head-butting a referee.

<sup>3</sup> Presumably Jerry Reinsdorf (the owner of the Bulls) and Jerry Krause (their general manager).

Mike: Who?

Phil: Heraclitus. An ancient Greek philosopher who thought that change was the only constant. He said that one could never step twice in the same river since the water would always be different.<sup>4</sup>

Mike: Exactly!

Phil: Of course, even if the water stayed the same, *you* could never step twice in the same river since *you* are constantly changing too.

Mike: What do you mean?

Phil: How tall are you?

Mike: Six-six.

Phil: But you weren't born that tall. Remember that little boy in North Carolina cut from his high school team who was shorter than six foot?

Mike: I'm so tired of that story.

Phil: But it's a story about *you*, right?

Mike: I suppose you're gonna tell me it's not? That since I've changed — like the river water — I'm not really the same person?

Phil: *I'm* not telling you that. But if you think that rivers and teams can't survive any change of their parts, why think that people can survive such changes? You are qualitatively different from that little boy in North Carolina: why think that you really *are* that boy?

Mike: Well, for one, my changes have all been gradual. I didn't go from 5'8" to 6'6" overnight. When I left the NBA in '93, though, the team was radically and suddenly changed. It'd be as if someone replaced your brain — no one can survive that kind of drastic change.

Phil: I'm not sure I buy the analogy, but we're getting there. Surely teams too can survive *gradual* change, like other things — perhaps what matters is not losing too many players all at once. Of course, if Krause went nuts and

---

<sup>4</sup> So says Plato in *Cratylus* 402A (Heraclitus's "Fragment 41"). But perhaps Phil means to say that you can step twice in the same *river*, though not in the same *water*? That is what Heraclitus himself seems to have said, according to other doxographic reports ("Fragment 12", from Arius Didymus).

decided to replace all the players on the team before the season began, he'd have a different team on his hands, right? But players retire and new ones get drafted and traded all the time. None of those sorts of changes seem significant enough to affect the team's identity (present company excluded).

Mike: Thanks. Okay, maybe you're right. So while the "same players, same positions" condition is sufficient for team identity, it's not necessary. Some degree of change is unavoidable, as long as it's gradual and continuous.

Phil: It seems to be the norm, in fact.

Mike: But what if the change becomes total? What if every player is gradually replaced until none of the original players are left?

Phil: For all we've said, it could still be the same team, so long as those changes were made slowly enough. Even you, Michael, constantly lose and replace cells all the time. As a result, your body probably has none of the same parts it had when you were a little boy.

Mike: So you think continuity, even when it results in a complete change in parts, is a necessary condition on team identity?

Phil: Perhaps. But I'm not so sure: It's not even clear that *all* abrupt changes in players should result in a team change. Suppose the whole team was lost in a tragic airplane crash. Most people would probably regard the team as going on in spite of this loss.

Mike: Let's not speculate about that.

Phil: It was just a thought. These matters are not easily settled. Perhaps if Krause fired everyone, the team might survive in virtue of the new players pursuing the same goal in the same way (running the same plays, bringing home the trophy, and so on).

Mike: What worries me now is that a lot seems to depend on Krause — on whether he wants to make the changes in the right way. I'm gonna call him and explain all this to him.

### Day Three: Traveling

Mike: Phil?

Phil: Hi Mike.

- Mike: Answer me honestly: do I travel?
- Phil: Michael, I think that life is a great journey and that everyone is traveling.
- Mike: That's not what I meant, and you know it. Anyway, listen, about the team: maybe we're over-thinking things. Say Krause fired us and replaced us with a bunch of rookies. They'd still play in Chicago, they'd still wear white and red at home, and all that. Don't you think it'd be the same team in virtue of playing in the same city and being called the same name?
- Phil: Krause threatened to fire all of us, didn't he?
- Mike: Oh yeah.
- Phil: He wouldn't. But let's think about the suggestion that location is what matters for team identity, rather than sameness of players and positions or continuity of player-change. Let me ask you: how many championships have the Lakers won?
- Mike: Eleven, I think.<sup>5</sup> They were an awesome team, but we'll beat that record someday. Speaking of the Lakers, what's up with that name? There weren't any lakes in L.A. last I checked. Makes about as much sense as the Utah "Jazz" or the Memphis "Grizzlies."
- Phil: You mean the *Vancouver* Grizzlies and the *New Orleans* Jazz? Teams travel too, Michael. The *Minneapolis* Lakers arose in Minnesota, "The Land of 10,000 Lakes" — hence "Lakers" — and then moved to Los Angeles in 1960 to avoid losing their best players because of money trouble. That was a dominant team too: they won five championships in Minneapolis.
- Mike: Hmmmm . . . , forgot about that. Perhaps a team's city isn't as important as I thought.
- Phil: Perhaps. On the other hand . . .
- Mike: What now?
- Phil: As before, we can look at the situation in two ways: either the move to L.A. destroyed the Minneapolis Lakers and a new team with the same name was created in L.A., or one and the same team just moved — like you might one day move from Chicago to, say, Washington D.C. In the first case, the

---

<sup>5</sup> Of course, this number is higher now. Remember, these phone calls took place in 1995.

Lakers have won six championships; in the second, they've won eleven: six in L.A., five in Minneapolis.

Mike: I'm a little torn. I want to say that the Lakers just moved, but then again, I can't imagine our team moving to Cheyenne or Cheboygan. Even if everyone came with us (heck even if Reinsdorf still owned it), it'd have a different feel, different home court, locker room, different fans — it'd be a different team.

Phil: Your loyalty is admirable, but maybe a little old-fashioned. Remember: in the early days of basketball, some teams were only loosely, accidentally associated with cities. Often, they were extensions of corporations. The Detroit Pistons began their existence as the Zollner Pistons of Fort Wayne, Indiana — they literally made pistons. Company owners like Fred Zollner would suit up factory workers for a few games a week. A few “barnstorming” teams traveled from city to city for a cut of the door. I heard of one owner who had “reversible” uniforms made so he could bring the same team through the same venue twice. People didn't realize they were paying to watch the same players again in different uniforms.<sup>6</sup>

Mike: I couldn't do that as a player: I'll always be 23. Okay, so maybe things aren't so simple. We've got to think about this some more.

#### **Day Four: The Team of Theseus**

Mike: Hey, Phil. Listen, I've thought about it: I'm changing my number to 45.

Phil: So you're coming back?!

Mike: Yeah: I still believe the strict “same players, same positions” criterion is sufficient for team identity, but I agree: it's not necessary. Nor is it the *only* sufficient condition. I think you're right that the continuity criterion is fine too.

Phil: The continuity criterion?

Mike: The thought that things can survive change so long as it's gradual enough. That works fine for teams, too. Perhaps it's not a necessary criterion, if you really believe that a team can survive the sudden loss of all its players. But

---

<sup>6</sup> See Mark Stewart's *Basketball: A History of Hoops* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1998), p. 48 for more detail.

continuity does seem sufficient for . . . what was it, *arithmetical* sameness?

Phil: Numerical. You were interested in knowing whether the team we're putting back together and the team we had before are one and the same team, as opposed to *two* different teams.

Mike: That's it: I promised myself that I would only ever play for one team.

Phil: I wonder, though . . .

Mike: What?

Phil: Well, we have two sufficient conditions for team identity, right?

Mike: Right — a strict criterion and a looser one: the continuity criterion. Teams can survive replacing a player or two every season even if it means eventually changing every player.

Phil: Okay. But now imagine the following happens. Krause trades Horace one season; Scottie the next; Bill after that, and so on until all of the present team has been traded away.<sup>7</sup>

Mike: I just said: I've come to accept change. It would still be the same team, as long as the trades were sufficiently gradual. That's pretty much what happens to teams over time in the normal course of things — as with people who grow older and change their body cells.

Phil: But imagine that you were each gradually signed to an expansion team: call it the "Cheboygan Boars." So after a few years we would have two teams — the Bulls which have proceeded continuously through the years (getting slightly worse each season) and then (suddenly) the Boars with a starting lineup of Michael, Scottie, Horace, B.J., and Bill — the familiar, championship-winning group.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Evidently, Phil has read Plutarch's *Lives*: "The thirty-oared galley in which Theseus sailed with the youths [to Crete on a mission to kill the Minotaur] was preserved by the Athenians down to the time of Demetrius of Phalerum. At intervals they removed the old timbers and replaced them with sound ones, so that the ship became a classic illustration for the philosophers of the disputed question of growth and change, some of them arguing that it remained the same, and others that it became a different vessel." Plutarch, *The Rise and Fall of Athens*, translated by Ian Scott-Kilvert (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1960), pp. 28-29.

<sup>8</sup> So Phil has read Thomas Hobbes, too: "If the ship of Theseus were continually repaired by the replacing of all the old planks with new, then — according to the Athenian philosophers — the later ship would be numerically identical with the original. But if some man had kept the old planks as they were taken out and were to assemble a ship of them, then this ship would, also, without doubt be numerically identical with the original. And so there would be *two* ships, existing at the same time, both of which would be numerically identical with the original. But this latter verdict is absurd." (*De Corpore*, part II, chap.

Mike: So?

Phil: So the question is: which team is really the Bulls? The team in Chicago that changes only gradually through the years or the new team in Cheboygan that eventually comes to have all the same players as the Bulls do now? Each team meets one of the two sufficient conditions you've suggested.

Mike: Well, only one team would be named the Bulls . . .

Phil: But of course names can be misleading: a team can survive a mere name and location change just as a different team can adopt an old team's name. To be clear, let's call the team in Chicago after all the gradual trades are completed the "Continuous Team." Then the question is: are the Bulls identical with the Boars or with the Continuous Team?

Mike: I see the problem.

Phil: Good. So the Boars are now indistinguishable from the original Bulls: the players are exactly the same — the coach too, let's suppose. They play like Bulls; they win like Bulls. The Continuous Team, on the other hand, may be struggling dead last with not one recognizable player. But ordinarily — if there were no expansion Boars — we'd regard the Continuous Team as the Bulls.

Mike: Well, it might be a nice reunion to play with the guys again on the Boars, but I don't think I'd be playing for the same team. Yeah, it'd be the same group playing the same positions — hell, maybe even running the triangle offence — but there'd be a weird gap in the team's history. What would've happened to the Bulls in the meantime, before the Boars were assembled?

Phil: I suppose they wouldn't have existed. But I'm not sure: what happens to a watch when you take it apart and put it back together again? Does it cease to be for a while or does it exist in a scattered, non-functional state?

Mike: Are you philosophers just interested in raising problems? You ever come up with any *answers*?

Phil: I've heard that before. But you must agree: not any answer is a *good* answer.

Mike: I suppose there has to be a fact of the matter one way or another. But anyway, the continuity criterion doesn't force us to decide what it is. Let's

just drop the strict criterion altogether. The Continuous Team would be the Bulls even if last year's players were playing in Cheboygan.

Phil: I still have my doubts. Consider this: The Bulls and the Pistons begin to trade players with each other and . . .

Mike: Are you crazy!?

Phil: It's just an example — hear me out. Imagine that the trades happen as before: one a year. This year they exchange a power forward; next year a shooting guard; the year after a center. Eventually all twelve players have been switched. Let the coaches switch too, if you like. The change is gradual and your continuity criterion is satisfied. Would you say that the teams have stayed put? That the Pistons still play in Detroit and the Bulls in Chicago?

Mike: Argh! I don't know! I could never be a Piston, I know that.

Phil: Nor could any self-respecting Bulls fans cheer for the Pistons. But they'd certainly root for you, Scottie, Horace, Bill, and Dennis — even if you happened to play in Detroit. There'd be some years of confusion, to be sure (I can't quite picture you and Dumars playing together night after night). But in the end, I know which team I'd think of as the Bulls — even if some cruel twist of fate had renamed them the Pistons. Think of it this way: If you and I gradually exchanged all our furniture, wouldn't you say that in the end your furniture just *moved* to my place, and mine to yours?

Mike: I suppose so.

Phil: So if we see the Bulls and Pistons as gradually switching names and cities, the continuity criterion can't be right.

Mike: Strike three . . .

### Day Five: Fan Loyalty?

Mike: Phil?

Phil: Knew it was gonna be you.

Mike: Phil — do you really think that the fans would leave the Bulls for the Boars,

or even for the Pistons? (If we all moved to Detroit, that is.)

Phil: Seems like a serious possibility. Especially if the Continuous Bulls play poorly.

Mike: So maybe we should take that into account. Is it the fans who decide who the Bulls really are?

Phil: That sounds a bit crude, but it's worth considering. Certainly what the fans think is not by itself enough to determine the identity of a team. If some mad scientist from Detroit brainwashed Bulls fans to suddenly root for the Pistons and speak of them as if they were the Bulls, that wouldn't make the Bulls the Pistons.

Mike: That's a little far-fetched.

Phil: True, but we have to be willing to consider even odd scenarios in testing our hypotheses. Anyway, you know how common it is for front-running fans to root for a team only if it's winning. Otherwise, if someday (David Stern<sup>9</sup> forbid!) the Bulls became a mediocre team and fan support waned, we'd have to regard the team as being annihilated when it seems we should say that it just got worse and lost its fans.

Mike: But in a sense it would be a different team.

Phil: In a sense, sure — but only a figurative sense. We're after the literal, metaphysical sense. The team would be *qualitatively* different. But I have trouble seeing fan opinion as either a necessary or sufficient condition for *numerical* team identity.

Mike: Maybe front-running fans are only *figurative fans*. Like false friends, they're not really friends. What if we say that a team is the same only if *loyal fans* continue to cheer for them?

Phil: "Only if"? I thought you weren't interested in necessary conditions.

Mike: Well, perhaps a bunch of necessary conditions will add up to a sufficient one. I haven't quite given up on continuity yet.

Phil: Okay, but your new condition looks like it might be circular: aren't *loyal fans* precisely those fans that continue to cheer for the *same* team (even if it

---

<sup>9</sup> Commissioner of the NBA from 1984 to the present.

begins to lose)?

Mike: Say that again.

Phil: We have to understand what it is to be a loyal fan in order to understand what it is to be the same team, and vice versa. So we're no closer to solving the problem.

Mike: We *are* closer. We just need to find some other definition of fan loyalty. Anyway, that it's circular doesn't mean it's wrong.

Phil: True. Aristotle had a similar idea when it came to virtue: he thought that virtuous deeds were the ones virtuous people did.<sup>10</sup> But virtuous people are just those who do virtuous deeds.

Mike: Hmmm . . . virtuous fans? Let's just say the fans, for now.<sup>11</sup>

Phil: All of them?

Mike: A majority. And don't start playing with numbers now. You know what I mean: a good majority.

Phil: A good majority can gradually change. Initially they all stick to the Bulls. Then, gradually, one by one, the fans switch to cheering for the Boars . . .

Mike: Stop right there. I know everything changes and that's why we have a problem in the first place. But let's say the fans *now*. Suppose we've got our two teams, the Continuous Team and the Boars, and those who used to cheer for the Bulls now cheer for the Boars. Those are the fans I mean. Do you think we should listen to them and identify the original team with the Boars?

Phil: Yes, I'd say so. But not just because of the fans. Remember: the Boars are supposed to have the same players and coach as the initial Bulls. So we have *two* elements supporting the view that the old Bulls are the new Boars: composition and the fans.

Mike: Hold on. Suppose the fans *didn't* follow the players but kept cheering for the team called the Bulls — the Continuous Team, located in Chicago.

---

<sup>10</sup> Phil is referring here to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Senor offers some interesting reflections on fandom in his "Should Cubs Fans Be Committed? What Bleacher Bums Have to Teach Us About the Nature of Faith", in *Baseball and Philosophy*, edited by Eric Bronson (Chicago: Open Court, 2004).

Then we would still have two elements: continuity and the fans. (Indeed, we would also have the location element, but never mind that.) So why are you saying that it's not just because of the fans? It seems to me that if we let the fans into the picture, they *would* make all the difference.

Phil: But then wouldn't everything be up for grabs? What a team is would be a matter of what the fans think.

Mike: Maybe. A bit like contemporary art: whether something is a piece of art would be a matter of whether we think it is.<sup>12</sup>

Phil: That might be right when we do aesthetics, especially these days. But here we are doing metaphysics, Mike. We are trying to nail down some good identity criteria for entities of a certain kind — teams. And you don't think metaphysics is a matter of opinion, do you? You don't think existence and identity are just a matter of what people think?

Mike: I surely *didn't*. I was looking for objective criteria for team identity, like composition, location, continuity. But then *you* suggested we take the fans into account. And that's right: the fans don't play on the team, but they sure seem to play a role in team identity— they somehow contribute from the outside. *External factors* may matter when it comes to determining which team we are part of, especially when the intrinsic factors don't seem to settle the issue.

Phil: Have you told the Jerrys about that?

Mike: I'm telling you. And I thought you'd be happy, since it was your idea.

Phil: I'm content. But I'm not a materialist — you know that.

Mike: Come on: I've seen your ranch in Montana.

Phil: I meant in the philosophical sense: I don't believe everything boils down to physical bodies and processes. I'm happy to say that the team is not just you guys (and me); it's something *over and above* its actual members. And I'm happy to say that the extra bit comes from the fans, among other things. But that means that when the season starts, there will be two things after all: the *group* consisting of all of us, which exists and is what it is regardless of the fans, and the *team*, whose identity depends on the fans.

---

<sup>12</sup> Sounds like Mike has read Nelson Goodman's "When Is Art?", in *The Arts and Cognition*, edited by D. Perkins and B. Leondar (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp. 11–19.

- Mike: I don't like that. I'm definitely a materialist.
- Phil: That's fine. You don't want two things in the same place at the same time. You want the team to be the group.
- Mike: No Phil, that would take us back to the initial deadlock between the composition criterion and the continuity criterion.
- Phil: Then what?
- Mike: That's where the fans come into the picture. None of the other criteria work because we are confusing two concepts: the group, with its composition, location, history, and so on, and the team, with its fans. You are saying these two concepts identify two entities, the group and the team. I'd say we've got two concepts and the problem is to see how they interact.
- Phil: Holy Toledo Mud Hens: baseball did have an impact on you! Go ahead...keep swinging!
- Mike: Wise guy. So we've got the group, that's for sure: a bunch of guys, with a coach — convention doesn't decide this. Now is this group a team? Yes, as long as they do certain things. *What* team it is, however — and whether it always counts as the *same* team — is up to the fans. It's not that we *are* the Bulls or the Boars. We *count* as the Bulls or as the Boars depending in part on what the fans think.<sup>13</sup>
- Phil: Just like Clinton counts as the President so long as he plays a certain role and is properly acknowledged by certain laws?
- Mike: That's the idea. Clinton definitely exists — he's part of this world, regardless of what people might think of him. That he's *President*, on the other hand, is a matter for some sort of social convention to decide.
- Phil: So in our case you agree with me: we have a group *and* a team.
- Mike: No. We have a group, period. And that group *counts as* a certain team only if the fans think so. A bit like art, if you like, but not because everything is up for grabs. Take a modern sculpture, say one of Henry Moore's *Large Forms*: there's a piece of bronze, shaped in a certain way, and the question

---

<sup>13</sup> Has Mike supplemented his reading of Goodman with that John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York, Free Press, 1995)? Unlikely, since the book came out at the time of this phone call. But the phrase "counts as" is really Searle's.

is not whether there is *also* a sculpture, something over and above the bronze. The question is whether that piece of bronze counts as a sculpture — whether it has features that qualify it as an artwork. Maybe that's up for grabs, for different people may feel differently. But that is not a metaphysical question. It's sociology, you know. The only metaphysical question is whether the bronze is there, and that has a straight answer.<sup>14</sup>

Phil: I think I see. So tell me, Mike: how does this help you out?

Mike: Well, I guess I was after the wrong answer, 'cause I was asking the wrong question.

Phil: You were asking whether the team we're putting together is the same old Bulls you used to play with.

Mike: Right. It turns out that I'm interested in two things: whether it'll be the same group, and whether that group will count as the same team. But it matters less whether the group is really the same, since different groups can count as the same team.

Phil: So have we been talking about group identity all this time? Are we not back at square one?

Mike: I'm not sure. Perhaps composition, continuity, and all that are criteria that the fans can use to decide where their allegiance lies. But perhaps group identity is a more subtle and fickle business than we had in mind. Perhaps there *are* no necessary and sufficient criteria informing their decision — the criteria may not even be *consistent*.

Phil: Okay — so where does this leave us?

Mike: So it depends on the fans. I'll come back only if they're happy. I'm sure it's gonna be a good group, whether or not it's strictly the same old group. I wanna be sure the fans think it makes a good team — their team.

---

<sup>14</sup> Mike must have read at least some of the papers that are now collected in Michael Rea's reader, *Material Constitution* (Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).