

Transactional belief Eraña and Montemayor

This paper defends two claims. The first is that a thorough account of the psychology of belief demands a distinction between two kinds of norms for belief, a *truth norm* and what we shall call a *personal norm*. Beliefs guided by the truth norm constitute the main type of propositional attitude we use to investigate credit and responsibility in epistemology. But there is more to belief than truth. A thorough examination of the psychology of belief shows that only beliefs can help ground *personal identity* by the guidance of a norm that differs significantly from the truth norm.

The second claim is that there must be a meta-norm that unifies all our beliefs. We first show that although such a meta-norm is needed, it is very difficult to clearly articulate it. We argue that it cannot be captured either by coherence, evidential, prudential, teleological, or moral norms (although *all* these norms certainly play a role in how our beliefs become unified). We conclude with a tentative proposal to articulate such a norm in terms of autobiographical *narrative* elements, and call it, for lack of a better term, a *transactional norm*. Unlike other treatments of belief where the aim is to show that some beliefs are irrational, arational, or rational but incoherent with explicit belief (as in dual system approaches), our aim is to show that both norms for belief play an important role in human rationality, independently of whether they are heuristic, explicit, conscious or implicit.

1. The truth norm

Epistemology demands that belief be governed by truth—true belief is a basic necessary condition for doxastic epistemic value. The notion that belief might dispense with a truth-norm seems incoherent for the following reasons. On all accounts, belief is an assertive mental state because it is an attitude towards a content that entails epistemic *commitment* to its being true. So it seems a priori incoherent to say that beliefs may have any other norm, other than an attitude guided towards the truth. In fact, all other epistemic norms seem to depend fundamentally on the truth norm.

For instance, coherence and consistency rules for belief should be followed by epistemic agents because rational agents should avoid conflict or contradiction among beliefs. But this only makes epistemic sense if those beliefs are true. A rational agent should aim at coherence even when the beliefs are false (as in the new evil demon scenario), but this rule is guided by the more fundamental rule that avoiding contradiction is important to guide belief effectively towards truth. The more complete rule, then, is that one should have as many true consistent beliefs as possible, not that one should have as many coherent or consistent beliefs as possible, even if they are all false. Similarly, with an evidential norm, the norm that one should have beliefs supported by evidence should be interpreted in terms of evidence that is truth-

conducive, rather than misleading evidence. Thus, the truth norm guides or constrains coherence and evidential norms.

One way of defining belief as guided by truth assumes that beliefs are constitutively dependent on mapping or tracking conditions—the externalist proposal. At the very least, according to this view, belief is either a representational or a dispositional state. There must be a mapping or “law-like” relation between the representational content of a belief and what it represents (its accuracy conditions) or between the disposition to believe and its manifestations, such that successful mappings are associated with truth or epistemic success. A belief is a “map by which we steer” and maps must track reality for them to be useful.

On an alternative construal, the conditions that are constitutive of epistemically evaluable belief must be phenomenally conscious ones—a version of internalism. On this account, reliable tracking relations are not sufficient or even necessary to explain our *rational access* to belief. Take for instance the new evil demon scenario. You and your phenomenal duplicate have the same experiences and should “believe your eyes”—for example, believe that you are holding a glass of water because that is what your visual and tactile phenomenology conveys to you. Although your duplicate is unfortunately not tracking the truth, it seems you are both equally justified in your belief; you and your duplicate are rationally identical because you are phenomenologically identical. So tracking relations alone will not do to capture rationality and responsibly formed belief.

Still, even on this account, the reason why you should believe your eyes is because, typically, that is the best you can do in order to arrive at the truth. You and your phenomenal duplicate have the same *evidence and reasons* to believe that you are holding a glass, provided by your phenomenology. Evidence and reasons are good, epistemically speaking, only in so far as they lead the path towards knowledge and truth. Coherence and evidential rules, even if understood phenomenally and internally, must also be constrained by the truth norm—although *how exactly* truth constraints coherence and rationality is a matter of debate.

What makes a belief the paradigmatic mental state for epistemic evaluation is that its propositional content is not only true when it succeeds, but that the epistemic agent is *committed* to its being true. How, then, could we possibly *conceive* of belief as guided by any other norm, other than a truth norm? If what we said so far is right, that it seems a priori incoherent to think of belief as not being oriented towards truth, as a propositional attitude and as a commitment on the part of the agent governed by the truth norm.

Moore’s paradox illustrates this kind of incoherence. Any subject that thinks ‘*p*’, but I do not believe that *p*’ is irrational because, on the face of it, they are expressing a kind of epistemic contradiction (which is, nonetheless, a *possible mental state*). If belief were not constitutively dependent on the fact that *p* is true, then Moore’s paradox would not be paradoxical. So, since it is paradoxical, it is a conceptual necessity that belief be essentially related to truth because the subject *takes* the belief to be true. Thus, any account of a norm for belief, other than the

truth-norm, must explain why such a norm is needed in the first place and what are the consequences of such a norm for Moore-paradoxical states.

Moreover, there are semantic reasons to favor the view that beliefs can only be guided by a truth norm. A simple argument based on semantic considerations is as follows: All beliefs depend constitutively on their content—any belief is always a belief *that p*. Contents must be understood in terms of some kind of accuracy or truth conditions (internally or externally conceived) that must eliminate incompatible possibilities. Therefore, all beliefs are guided by a truth norm because the content they present is endorsed as veridical. The very idea that beliefs serve as cognitive maps entails the view that they are governed by a truth norm.

These are powerful reasons to give up on the project of expanding the norms for belief into non-truth-guided territory. However, there are also good reasons to think that the truth norm can only *partially* capture the nature of belief. Take for instance the case of religious, aesthetic, or ethical belief. We frequently have non-faulty disagreements about aesthetic belief in a way that fundamentally differs from other non-faulty disagreements. Although the details are intricate, it seems relatively clear that when we disagree about whether María is tall, we disagree relative to a context of evaluation or a standard, which is not determined by our subjective reactions. However, when we disagree about whether a painting is beautiful, our disagreement cannot easily be reduced to contexts of evaluation or standards. And even if we could, it seems, our disagreement would be based fundamentally on our *reactive attitudes*, rather than on the truth or falsehood of our belief, according to some standard. Ethical belief is notoriously different, but even here there is a wide range of cases (e.g., not killing, not eating meat, not having children outside marriage).

Religious belief might be the clearest case of why the truth norm cannot govern all kinds of belief. In fact, according to some authors, a truth norm is deeply inadequate to define the most important beliefs a human being can have, namely those that define her spiritual convictions. Kierkegaard's analysis of the Biblical passage concerning Abraham's decision to kill his son Isaac is based on this principle. As Kierkegaard says, one believes, in the case of religion, on the *strength of the absurd*. Moore's paradox, or any notion of epistemic impossibility, should not be an obstacle for religious—or deeply personal—belief. The religious person finds strength in the apparent absurdity of religious belief, but not out of stupidity or epistemic inadequacy. Rather, religious belief demands this. The religious person believes with the conviction that religious belief demands the strongest type of *faith*, against all types of reasons and evidence to the contrary. This is personal commitment, but not to the truth (or at least not simply to the truth). This radical departure from a truth norm seems to sharply define religious belief.

There are, therefore, good enough reasons to consider expanding our understanding of the *normativity of belief* in order to explain rules of belief that radically depart from the truth norm. But, on the face of it and given the discussion above, it is not clear what this could mean. How revisionary a project is this? What happens to all the norms that depend on the truth norm, such as coherence and evidential rules? Would the “non-truth” norm be essentially irrational,

arational, or non-truth rational (or “proto-rational”)? And if it is part of our rationality, and if so, presumably a fundamental part of human rationality, what is its relation to the truth norm?

From the outset, it is crucial to establish that this project should not entail a whole different way of understanding the core aspects of belief, as a mental state, typically understood as a doxastic propositional attitude. We think that a key desideratum for any account of the normativity of belief is that it should be explanatory of our *rationality*. So it better be the case that this non-alethic norm is not irrational. Likewise, the norm should guide us as rational beings, and have grip on us because of its rational guidance. So it cannot be arational either. Explaining how this alternative norm for belief is rational will obviously require a more robust understanding of rationality than mere truth-conduciveness, but that is already part of the standard notion of rationality, which at least involves practical and moral reasoning. *Norms of belief are incompatible with akrasia and overall incoherence.*

Thus, essential aspects of the epistemic norms for belief should be preserved, such as why it is irrational to be epistemically akratic, or akratic in general. The alternative norm should govern belief, as a representational and assertive mental state. It should be very clear why other propositional attitudes are not sufficient to describe the alternative norm (e.g., imagination, hope, or desire). So a compelling argument for the alternative norm must be presented, in a way that rationality is not threatened, and in fact, fully explained. This norm, therefore, must be somehow compatible with the truth norm. Providing this explanation is the main goal of the following section.

2. Personal belief: more theoretical difficulties

Core aspects of belief need to be essential for the explanation of the alternative norm. Belief must be guided by this norm, as opposed to hope or desire, in a way that the assertive commitment of belief is essential to the guidance of the norm. A successful account of this norm should explain how all kinds of belief could be guided by it, but it is an important question whether or not this norm will apply to all *types* of belief (e.g., general, probabilistic, or full belief). There is significant debate, for instance, about whether coherence rules apply only to probabilistic belief, or to any kind of belief at all. It is not our purpose to evaluate the complexity of normative requirements concerning different types of belief. Our goal is to evaluate a more general set of requirements for norms that are not governed by the truth norm.

To illustrate this point, in principle, there is no obstacle to postulating various types of norm tailored specifically to types of belief. For instance, a pragmatist might consider the following norms. First order belief, or belief that has concrete or de re content, is guided by an action norm: you should believe only what leads to successful action. General belief (like “I believe all humans are mortal”) and a priori belief (“I believe $2 + 2 = 4$ ”) are guided by a norm of simplicity: Frame your first order beliefs so that action is simplified, organized, and expanded by general beliefs. Other norms might regulate assertion, rationality, evidence updating, and inquiry along these lines. We take the case of pragmatism only as an illustration of the variety of forms that the truth norm can have.

In the same vein, there might be a large variety of norms for belief (e.g., ethical, aesthetic or religious) that are unified by a general principle, similarly to the way in which the truth norm guides a variety of coherence and evidential norms. This is the approach we will investigate. Just as the truth norm characterizes a large variety of norms for belief, a *personal norm* serves as an analogously general principle for beliefs. This non-alethic general norm cannot be defined in terms of pragmatic, ethical or aesthetic norms as such, but it governs these norms by being the ultimate goal of such norms.

To a first approximation, a personal norm can be stated as follows: *Believe only what you can endorse as either a manifestation of your character or as essential to your personal values and narrative.*

This could be interpreted as a virtue responsibilist rule, in the minimal sense that *character* is assumed—if only partially. Some views of rationality take ethics and epistemology to be normatively continuous, and ethics might even have priority over epistemology according to these views. The guidance provided by the norm “you should live a good life” could be, accordingly, the meta-norm guiding ethical and epistemic norms, including the generic truth norm.

But a virtue responsibilist-personal norm has the unfortunate consequence that it violates at least one of the desiderata above: if character is assumed as essential for governing *all* belief, such an account may have revisionary consequences with respect to the essential epistemic aspects of the truth norm, thereby leading to *irrationality* if taken to the extreme—in the face of very good evidence that I should vaccinate my kids, I refuse to do so because I cannot reconcile the evidence with my essential character traits and values. This is a borderline case, but if it generalizes towards character rather than truth that would certainly lead to irrationality. Perhaps the scope of the norm is what is wrong here and a less restricted norm could work. But then it is arbitrary why it applies to some beliefs and not all beliefs. So it seems that manifestations of character alone will not do. As we explain below, this is because, for this rule to be rational, the personal rule needs to be, somehow, *less solipsistic* while at the same time, *autobiographical*. It is because of this seemingly paradoxical requirement that the norm is transactional.

Why not consider, however, a less complex approach? Could what we are calling the “personal norm” simply be a *condition* on the “grip” of norms in general? Clearly such a condition for normative grip cannot merely be based on the truth norm. The truth norm gets grip on us through epistemic *needs and motivations* that are essential to navigate our environment (Dickie, Fairweather and Montemayor). If we didn’t satisfy these representational needs and were not motivated to do so (even though such motivations are largely implicit) then we would simply fail at the most vital and tasks. Moral or practical norms radically differ with respect to this issue and in a sense they are more “personal.” Here we confront much more vividly the problem that Korsgaard (1996) calls the “normative question” namely even if we recognize a

norm as applicable to our circumstance, why would we feel compelled to obey the norm—how do we explain the authority the norm has on *us* from our first person perspective?

This is indeed an important topic and normative grip is indeed clearly related to motivation. However, a difference in the grip or authority of the personal norm versus the truth norm does not explain the nature of the personal norm and its role in rational thought. Perhaps it is true that there is an important distinction to explore here, between epistemic and moral grip. But why should this issue illuminate the nature of a norm that, on the face of it, could lead to irrationality if not properly constrained by a truth norm?

There is a crucial issue in the vicinity, concerning rationality and the first person perspective, which is very helpful here. This distinction has to do with the kind of support given by evidence and the more general rational requirements on how we *integrate* our propositional attitudes (Broome, Worsnip). The basic idea is that reasons based on *evidence* are narrow in scope in the sense that they are reasons concerning what attitude one should have towards the evidence. By contrast, *coherence* requirements on our rationality concern the combination of various attitudes and can be assessed a priori, from the first person perspective of the individual, independently of any evidence the individual has at that time.

Some authors have proposed that there cannot be any conflicts between rational norms for evidence and coherence, either because one reduces to the other (XXXX) or because the conflict is one in which the epistemic agent must weigh which of the requirements should prevail (Christensen). Yet other authors (Worsnip) argue that the conflict is not at the same level of normativity—as in the case of ethical dilemmas—but rather, that it concerns different levels of normativity. These are intricate issues, and we shall say something about them in section 5. Our main goal for now is to highlight the complexity of normative differences within and outside epistemology.

As Worsnip points out, epistemologists have largely assumed that no such conflicts could emerge between reasons for evidence and reasons for coherence. Perhaps a good diagnosis for this is that they all assume that the truth norm guides all norms. But in other normative domains, such as morality and practical reasoning, no appeal to the truth norm might suffice for unification. One can easily see that a particular course of action is the best from a practical point of view, but feel strongly against it, and decide against it, for moral reasons.

Let us grant for now that the truth norm unifies epistemic rationality with respect to evidence and coherence. And let us ignore for the time being the intricate issues this entails with respect to meta-evidence, cognitive access to information and associated potential conflicts between evidential and coherence norms. All we need for now is to highlight the significant difference between moral and practical rationality. The “reasons” versus “requirements for rationality” difference, which has been recently studied in epistemology, looks very different in morality and practical reasoning. Conflict here is natural, or at least a starting point for many discussions concerning instrumental and categorical norms, rather than difficult to explain. Why?

If the truth norm unifies normativity in epistemology but not in general human rationality, then a difference in either grip or normativity is needed to explain the full range of rational norms. We here argue that grip will not do. The next section argues that a *non-alethic* norm is needed.

Evidence reasons do not feature as prominently in morality as they do in epistemology. In moral theory, there is the divide between objectivist and subjectivist theories, but nothing really analogous to evidence reasons and overall requirements for rationality. Or at least moral rationality seems more clearly in conflict with merely evidential rules. But as Kant showed, this difference is not merely a difference in grip. It is not merely the feeling of being compelled to follow a moral norm versus an instrumental or evidential norm that explains the difference between moral norms and other norms. It is rather they are normative categorically that explains normative conflicts and what is distinctive of moral norms. Not treating rational beings as means towards an end should be obeyed categorically, even against good evidence about good results and the satisfaction of good-producing goals.

A personal norm could explain the condition under which a moral or practical norm should be accepted, thereby playing the role that the truth norm plays in epistemology. My belief that increasing the wealth of the poor does not justify taking the property of a wealthy person seems a more controversially moral one than my belief that killing one person is acceptable if that saves 10 people. This difference could be explained by my character and personal values because these traits of mine could explain why a norm like the categorical imperative has a grip on me. But why should *this* norm be *rational*?¹

Here is the beginning of a possible answer to this question: a typical human being would be epistemically *irresponsible* if it only followed a personal norm, but she would not be able to have a *cohesive personal point of view*—a coherent first person perspective—if she completely ignored this norm.

To sum up, the asymmetry between moral and epistemic rationality must depend on a difference in normativity, rather than merely a difference in grip. A personal norm can explain the grip of the categorical imperative, but not why it is *rational* to accept it against hypothetical imperatives concerning good evidence. A categorical norm is too abstract to explain personal grip. A compromise seems necessary. But first, we need to explore which personal norms could lean more towards general rationality and not depend exclusively on personal character.

3. The personal norm: a constitutive rule

Is the personal norm a kind of “balancing” or “weighing” norm that allows us to decide between two conflicting norms in terms of what we value? Or is it simply a *judgment* about the desirability or grip of a norm (say, practical versus moral)? A lesson from Kant is that one should

¹ Incidentally, there are rule-following concerns here as well, including the problem of inferential regress (what Boghossian calls “ingress” and “egress”) but we shall not focus on this kind of issue in this paper.

never think of norms as “personal,” on pain of contradiction. For what makes a norm rationally acceptable is its universal application, not the contingencies of desire and motivation. This is why Kant focused also on *judgement*. Aesthetic experiences are subjective, but for Kant, the judgment is one of universal value. That explains why the aesthetic has a normative dimension without eliminating the relevance of the subjective experience. This is an important insight: there must be reconciliation between the universal and the personal for normativity to exist.

Certainly, there is a kind of judgment involved in the grip of a norm, but that kind of judgment explains mostly the motivational role of the norm. On the one hand, the judgment itself needs normative status, and that is what we are seeking to explain. On the other hand, the motivation alone is not sufficient to explain this normative status. So perhaps we should settle for judgments guided by different rules, perhaps a multiplicity of them, instead of searching for an overarching non-alethic rational rule. Perhaps this quasi-Kantian solution is the best we can do to account of human rationality.

But Kantians are not concerned with the type of issues we are focusing on here. Our central concern is to provide an explanation of how *beliefs* that are constitutive of personal identity through values ground the coherence of the first person perspective in a *rational* way. The challenge presented in the previous sections is that: i) for beliefs to play this role a non-alethic norm is needed because the truth norm is insufficient to play this role, and ii) that the explanation needs the articulation of a general norm because grip and judgment are insufficient as well.

So is the personal norm a *weighing* norm? Presumably, one needs reasons to arrive at some weighing judgments, and to that extent, the personal norm could guide such judgments. It seems that this is a good way to understand the personal norm as weighing the preference between, say, a practical and a moral norm based on our values. One need not think of extreme examples like Abraham and Isaac to illustrate this. In many situations, one believes only what one can *internally negotiate* and make compatible with one’s own deepest commitments, after weighing one’s options for action.

What exactly is the form of the question or inference guided by the personal norm? It cannot be a simple weighing of options because of the constitutive character of beliefs and their role in determining a personal perspective. “*Can I really believe this?*” captures this notion better than “*Should I believe this?*” because there is a constitutive relation between the personal norm and the first person perspective. More precisely, the proposed structure of rationality we are suggesting is as follows:

Constitutive norms of belief:

- a) *The truth norm*: A mental state is a belief only if the agent endorses its propositional content as veridical.
- b) *The synchronic personal norm*: A mental state is a belief only if the agent can introspect it.

b') *The diachronic personal norm*: A mental state is a belief only if it is part of the essential character of a person through time.

Regulative norms of belief, derived from the constitutive norms:

1. *Coherence synchronic-evidential*: Beliefs should be compatible with the evidence at agent has at a time.
2. *Coherence synchronic-formal*: Determining whether a set of beliefs is coherent should be possible a priori, independent of evidential relations.
3. *Reason/evidence synchronic*: Beliefs should be supported by evidence.

A lot of recent epistemology has focused on the regulative norms (1-3), and there is a lot to be said about these norms, for instance, the issue of whether they all apply to full beliefs. But these norms are not our focus here. What's permissible, obligatory, prohibited and supererogatory in our doxastic life is certainly fundamental to explain truth-oriented rules of rationality. We may also be omitting important deontological alethic norms from this list because diachronic coherence and meta-evidential norms may also play a fundamental role. Our main claim, however, is that these deontic rule do not exhaustively capture the normativity of human rationality.

The endorsement in a) might be implicit in most cases, and could be understood dispositionally. In its most important manifestation, the endorsement will be conscious or at least accessible to introspection, in order to allow for conscious rational evaluation. Both types of endorsement are constitutive of belief in accordance to the truth norm. We are not requiring that all commitment be explicit, because rational responsibility may extend to beliefs that are implicit (see Siegel, 2017). This, however, is also not the main focus of our analysis because this discussion covers mostly aspects of the regulative norms in relation to the truth-norm.

b) might be too restrictive, because of the rational aspects of our dispositions and biases. But also b'), about the manifestation of essential character traits and values might be too restrictive. In fact, there might be reasons to suspect that character traits are not psychologically stable or empirically verifiable, and certainly not identifiable across time (Doris). We are not assuming the existence of such traits here. All we need is the norm that beliefs must match the essential aspects of our values and character according to our autobiographical narrative, as if they were stable. Similar to how belief can be guided by truth without being true, belief can be dependent on our narrative, even if that narrative is not an objectively verifiable scientific object.

b') is the personal norm. It is a diachronic, narrative based, constitutive norm, compatible with implicit states. The transactional rule we discuss next only concerns diachronic agency in relation to the truth norm. One of the main characteristics of the personal norm is that, because of its autobiographically narrative structure, it is mediated by cultural, social and political narratives as well. What I believe because it is a core aspect of who I am is not isolated from the cultural milieu that makes it valuable. The truth is "out there" but the beliefs constituted by the personal norm belong to me and my circumstances.

The next section explains why the transactional norm demands that if one acts as if one has an implicit belief that opposes one's explicit belief, one needs to do all that is possible to eliminate such an implicit belief. The transactional norm, therefore, is best understood as a weighing, deontic norm. It obliges us to be committed not only to the truth, but also our values, in a coherent, rational manner. The transactional norm is exclusively a diachronic norm, because it regulates the constitutive and diachronic, personal norm. It is a meta-rational norm that includes implicit and explicit belief, and demands that what we are disposed to do comports with what we explicitly believe (or assert).

4. The transactional norm

Since it is a weighing norm, the application of the transactional norm may result in dilemmas, such as "should I believe this very reliable source of information and give up on this fundamental belief I hold dear?" But typically, it will implicitly regulate how values are negotiated with evidence and truth in order to form our personal narrative. It is a general norm for human rationality, but it demands different things for each rational human being.

The transactional norm is very unlike the constitutive norms of truth and personal value in many other respects. Formally, as just mentioned, the transactional norm is deontic, but it is much more intricate than the deontic epistemic norms, because it includes ethical and aesthetical values. It is also unlike all the deontic norms based on the truth norm because it applies differently to each individual given her *cultural circumstances*. It is, in other words, an essentially social norm that applies to each individual in different ways. This makes this norm extremely unique—it is a type of semi-constitutive rule.

We believe that this is a very important missing piece in Susanna Siegel's account of "the mind of the world" (Siegel, 2017, 186-95). Our claim is that it is not simply a *mind* of the world that shapes and determines us through something like the personal norm, but that this mind of the world needs to itself be a kind of norm or source of normativity for it to have *rational grip* on us. But she is right that these social influences are essential aspects of our rationality as a whole, which includes not only epistemic, but also ethical and practical rationality.

One of the main claims we have defended so far is that there are two constitutive norms of belief which can enter into conflict *through the deontic transactional norm*. We now shall argue that the transactional norm provides the only way for humans to be rational. It is not merely a weighing norm for personal purposes. It is an essential norm of rationality that mediates personal interests with social values. That is because humans do not care exclusively about the truth. Caring about moral and aesthetic value is an *essential part of what human beings are* and their rational norms must reflect this. It would be irrational and destructive for a human being to only care about the truth.

We cannot simply live lives that satisfy standards for truth. All our beliefs may be accurate, but if we cannot substantially relate them to a meaningful personal narrative, shaped by ethical and non-alethic commitments, our lives would be extremely impoverished, or in fact, unlivable. If

what we have said so far is true, then human rationality necessitates the transactional norm. Otherwise we could not give reasons for our actions *as persons*. We would not really have a first person perspective. And such a rational agent seems a priori inconceivable. Therefore, the transactional norm that mediates between the two main constitutive norms for belief is an essential component of human rationality. It would be irrational to follow exclusively the deontic epistemic norms precisely *because it would be destructive* to do so for any typical human being. Ignoring such a norm would be destructive for their communities, families, and ultimately, for themselves.

The importance of a transactional balance between autobiographical narrative and truth has been discussed in the recent literature on memory. Marya Schechtman has forcefully argued for the importance of narrative to appreciate the complex balance required in this transaction, among other authors (XXXX). I am always my circumstances and necessarily operate within a cultural milieu. Our claim is that this topic needs to be addressed in a comprehensive theory of rationality and social convention. As Tomasello (forthcoming), has argued, my “cooperative identity” is fundamental to my personal identity when it comes to following any convention or rule.