Prescriptive and Evaluative Norms of Assertion

Jonathan Ichikawa

1 Introduction

Assertions are subject to norms. Someone's assertion might be *poignant* or *clever* or *eloquent*, for instance, and these can be reasons to make it; or it might be *rude* or *distracting* or *racist*, which might explain why it shouldn't have been asserted. So much, so obvious.

Many philosophers have suspected that there are also more distinctive senses in which assertions are subject to norms. Rude assertions are rude in the same way other rude things are; perhaps there are norms that are special to assertion. For example, there is now a large literature considering this putative norm:

Knowledge Norm of Assertion "One must: assert p only if one knows p."

If this norm is correct, it is tied more closely to assertion than any norms about eloquence or rudeness are. One shouldn't assert rudely because in general, one shouldn't do rude things. If one shouldn't assert unknowingly, that's for a more specific reason; there is no general prohibition on doing things unknowingly. (It is for example perfectly acceptable to *ask* or *wonder* whether p without knowing p.) By contrast, rude questions are just as rude as rude assertions.[1]

Much of the philosophical literature on norms governing assertion has centred around the plausibility of a knowledge norm in approximately the form given above. Competing accounts have replaced the knowledge condition with different epistemic conditions, tying permissible assertion to states like justification or certainty instead of knowledge.[2]

In their (2021) *Sharing Knowledge: A Functionalist Account of Assertion*, Chrisoph Kelp & Mona Simion contribute to this literature in three main ways. The first is a detailed overview, synthesis, and critique of many of the central moves in the existing literature. Roughly the first half of each of their chapters is dedicated to exposition along these lines, providing a thorough and accessible overview of the philosophical literature on assertion norms. The second contribution Kelp & Simion make is the most philosophically interesting one: they argue that assertion is subject to two very different *kinds* of epistemic norms — the knowledge norm mentioned above, as well as its standard competitors, are *regulative* norms,

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[1]See Benton (2016) for this argument in more detail.

[2]For defenses of the knowledge norm, see Unger (1975, pp. 258–60), Williamson (2000, p. 241), DeRose (2009, p. 99), Benton (2016), or Ichikawa (2017, ch. 6). Weiner (2005), Lackey (2007), and Maitra and Weatherson (2010) give objections or alternative views.

which indicate whether an assertion is *permissible*; Kelp & Simion say that assertion is also subject to *evaluative* norms, which indicate whether an assertion is a *good* one. Moreover, their treatments of these two kinds of norms are quite different from one another: different considerations motivate different regulative and evaluative norms. Their treatment thus reshapes the knowledge norm literature in a significant way.

This brings me to the third central contribution of Kelp & Simion's book, which is a specific philosophical defence of their own favoured pair of norms. They endorse a familiar version of the knowledge norm of assertion as a regulative norm. But their favoured evaluative norm is quite novel:

The Evaluative Norm of Assertion "One's assertion that p is (epistemically) good if and only if it has the disposition to generate knowledge that p in one's hearer(s) (function fulfilment) by functioning normally when in normal conditions." (Kelp and Simion, 2021, p. 89)

This idea is based in turn on some of Kelp & Simion's ideas about the etiological function of the practice of assertion. For the most part, I find Kelp & Simion's central ideas interesting and plausible; however, I'm less sure than they are about how to connect them to the existing literature. In particular, I suspect that Kelp & Simion sometimes operate with some tacit *uniqueness* assumptions about the status of various potential norms. Such assumptions might be well-motivated, given some other approaches to knowledge norms in the literature — for example, those suggesting that the norms are definitive of the practice of assertion. But given some of Kelp & Simion's own commitments, these uniqueness assumptions may not be particularly plausible.

I'll explain these worries in more detail below.

2 The Knowledge Regulative Norm

The first part of the book focuses on the more familiar regulative norms, centred around the question whether "assertion [is] governed by a norm that specifically governs assertion" (ibid., p. 1). Kelp & Simion answer in the affirmative, and propose that the distinctive norm is an epistemic one of this form:

CRA "One must (epistemically): assert p only if p has C." (ibid.)

This is meant to apply, I think, for all speakers, for all propositions p, and for some C to be specified by theorists. Kelp & Simion go on to rehearse and contribute to standard debates about competing norms, defending KRA as preferable to JRA:

KRA "One must (epistemically): assert p only if one knows p." (ibid., p. 2)

JRA "One must (epistemically): assert p only if one has justification for believing p." (ibid.)

Many philosophers who accept such norms treat them as distinctive *assertion* norms, as opposed to general norms that happen to apply to assertion. One way some philosophers have implemented this thought attributes to these norms a *constitutive* status in characterizing assertion. Timothy Williamson (2000, p. 240) famously suggested, for instance, that no practice could be the practice of assertion unless it were governed by KRA.

Kelp & Simion will reject this strong kind of constitutivist view in chapter 7 of their book. Rather than consider their reasons for doing so, I'll focus here on the implications of that rejection. What does the debate over competing norms looks like, once one rejects the idea that an epistemic norm is constitutive or definitive of the practice of assertion? In particular, if one doesn't think a norm like KRA or JRA plays a role in characterizing what the practice of assertion is, in what sense should one think they're competitors at all?

There is no inconsistency in accepting both KRA and JRA. Indeed, on the standard assumption that knowledge entails justification, KRA entails JRA. Consequently, most arguments in favour of KRA apply straightforwardly to JRA as well. Here is one example. In Chapter 1, Kelp & Simion argue that when a subject asserts something they don't know, this is prima facie criticisable, and that this implies that a rule of assertion has been violated, providing confirmation for KRA.

If Kelp & Simion's argument supports KRA, a trivial variant of it also supports JRA. Suppose S asserts p, something for which they have no justification to believe. If we assume (with an epistemological orthodoxy that Kelp & Simion do not challenge) that knowledge requires justification, then S doesn't know p. By Kelp & Simion's argument above, S is thereby prima facie critisable, which implies that a rule of assertion has been violated, thus providing confirmation for JRA.

Kelp & Simion also point out, in service of KRA, that that if one's assertion is challenged with the complaint, "you don't know that," it is impermissible to treat the challenge as irrelevant. If one challenges your assertion on the grounds that it doesn't rhyme, you may — assuming an ordinary situation and context — simply reply, "so what?" There no regulative norm requiring that assertions must rhyme. But justification challenges are quite unlike rhyming challenges; if someone challenges your assertion on the grounds that you have no justification to believe the content you asserted, you must recognize that as a legitimate form of challenge.

Kelp & Simion object to JRA thus:

> JRA predicts that ... 'Thats false!' turns out to be a prima facie illegitimate criticism, even when we know that what the speaker asserted is false. What's more, unless there is special reason rendering the criticism legitimate ... JRA predicts that the criticism can be prima facie legitimately rebutted as irrelevant or misplaced. 'So what?' can be a prima facie legitimate rejoinder to 'Thats false!'. It is easy to see that these predictions are manifestly incorrect. (ibid., p. 27)

But JRA doesn't make these predictions. JRA imposes a certain requirement: that one assert only what one has justification to believe. JRA is consistent with the existence of other requirements; practices can be governed by many rules.

Starting on their p. 23, Kelp & Simion draw an extended analogy to the card game *Uno*, which includes this rule:

Declaration One must: play one's penultimate card only if one declares 'uno!' aloud.

There are of course other rules of *Uno*, like this one:

Matching One must: play a card only if it matches the number or colour of the top card on the pile, or it is a wild card.

Declaration and Matching are perfectly consistent rules. Suppose I have two cards in my hand, then play a red 3 on top of a yellow 7, declaring 'uno!' aloud. *Declaration* obviously does not predict that a criticism for failure to match would be illegitimate, or that I could appropriately respond, 'so what?'. Nor does JRA predict that criticism targeting something other than justification is illegitimate or dismissible.

By Kelp & Simion's lights, they should *accept* JRA, since it follows from their explicit commitment to KRA. Their opposition to JRA is based, it seems, on the assumption that JRA and KRA are *competitors*. But why do they think this? More generally: is there anything *special* about the KRA norm? Is it just one norm among many?

One possible idea would be to argue that KRA is special because it is the most *general* epistemic norm. After all, KRA predicts and explains JRA, but the converse is not true. But key to any such case would be a rejection of *stronger* possible candidate regulative norms — for example:

KKRA "One must (epistemically): assert p only if one knows that one knows p."

CRA "One must (epistemically): assert p only if p is certain for one."

Kelp & Simion do not discuss regulative norms that posit a stronger condition than knowledge; they focus on comparing KRA with weaker norms.[3] But many of the considerations they marshal for KRA appear, at least prima facie, as if they would extend to stronger norms like KKRA and CRA. For example, it feels prima facie legitimate to criticize someone on the grounds that they asserted something they weren't sure of, or under circumstances where they didn't know whether they knew what they said. Perhaps there are grounds, within Kelp & Simion's framework, on which one might argue that KRA is the most general epistemic norm, but this is neither something Kelp & Simion try to do, nor an obvious implication of their framework.

3 Evaluative Norms

A similar question about the status of potentially competing norms applies to Kelp & Simion's discussion of evaluative norms. Evaluative norms, Kelp & Simion argue, are based on evaluative functions ('e-functions'). Much of the action in Kelp & Simion's discussion of evaluative norms for assertion concerns "which" evaluative function the practice of assertion has. As in the case of the regulative norms, Kelp & Simion seem at times to be presupposing that there is *one* e-function to be identified. But once again, I am not convinced that this uniqueness presupposition is well-motivated.

Here is a passage illustrative of the uniqueness presupposition:

> A number of contributors to the literature (Graham, 2010; Millikan, 1984) have argued that assertion has the epistemic e-function of generating true belief in hearers. *We disagree.* We think that assertion has *the* e-function of generating knowledge.(Kelp and Simion, 2021, 82, emphasis added)

They go on to reconstruct Graham and Millikan's argument, then write:

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[3]Haziza (2021) motivates a norm like KKRA. (But Haziza's broader picture would not deliver the result that KKRA is stronger than KRA, since it also motivates the KK principle itself.) Kelp & Simion's omission of discussion of CRA is more surprising, as a number of theorists have defended it, along with the idea that knowledge is consistent with uncertainty. See e.g. Stanley (2008), Petersen (2019), and Beddor (2020).

> We find the above argument by and large compelling. Our only *disagreement* with Millikan and Graham is that we think that *the* e-function of assertion is stronger than they make out. More specifically, we think it consists in generating knowledge in hearers, not just true belief. (ibid., 84, emphasis added)

The use of the definition description — *the* e-function of assertion — suggests a uniqueness presupposition. So too does this general link between e-functions and being good tokens of a type:

The Evaluative Norm of Tokens with an E-Function A token of type T with the e-function of producing E is a good T if and only if it has the disposition to fulfil its e-function by functioning normally when in normal conditions. (ibid., p. 80)

This biconditional offers necessary and sufficient conditions for being "a good T," when T has a given e-function. It does not characterize goodness of T *with respect to a given e-function* — it characterizes what it is to be a good T simpliciter. If it is possible for a T to have multiple e-functions, then this statement yields inconsistent verdicts, in cases where something is disposed to fulfil one e-function, but not another.

Suppose that sweaters have the e-function to keep their wearers warm, and that they also have the e-function to make their wearers look good. Now consider a token sweater s that is warm but unflattering: it has a suitable disposition to keep its wearer warm in normal conditions, but lacks such a disposition to make its wearer look good. Kelp & Simion's evaluative norm schema implies that:

1. s a good sweater. (It is a token of type *sweater*, which has the e-function of keeping its wearer warm, and it has the disposition to keep its wearer warm by functioning normally in normal conditions.)

2. s is not a good sweater. (It is a token of type *sweater*, which has the e-function of making its wearer look good, and it lacks the disposition to make its wearer look good by functioning normally in normal conditions.)

In other words, Kelp & Simion's approach to evaluative norms is contradictory for types with multiple independent e-functions; this is another reason to suppose that they may be assuming that types have only one e-function. But as the sweater example illustrates, this is not a particularly well-motivated assumption — it's prima facie plausible that sweaters *do* have both functions stipulated above.

Moreover, the fuller explanation Kelp & Simion give of evaluative functions does not imply any such uniqueness. Here it is:

E-Function A token of type T has the e-function of producing effect E in system S iff

(EF1) Past tokens of T produced E in S's ancestors

(EF2) Producing E benefitted S's ancestors

(EF3) Producing E's having benefitted S's ancestors contributes to the explanation of why T exists in S. (ibid., p. 74)

These conditions allow that types can be associated with *many* e-functions, since there can be many effects that meet those three conditions. For example, these conditions do seem

to imply, with common sense, that sweaters have (at least) the two e-functions indicated above.

Moreover, to return to Kelp & Simion's discussion of assertion, contrary to their oppositional framing, it is quite plausible that assertion has the e-function of generating true beliefs *and also* the e-function of generating knowledge. So by their own lights, rather than describing a disagreement, Kelp & Simion should think that Millikan and Graham are *correct* in positing that assertion has an evaluative function of generating true belief. This would follow if past assertions produced true beliefs in hearers among our ancestors, to their benefit, and this historical fact contributes to the explanation of the current perpetuation of the practice of assertion.

Kelp & Simion do sometimes acknowledge a multiplicity of e-functions, as when they say that "[i]f a cup of espresso ... is spilled right after purchase, it fulfilled its economic but not its culinary e-function." (ibid., p. 81) But I don't know how to square this observation with the other commitments of the framework and the general presumption of uniqueness. Is such a cup a good cup of espresso? Kelp & Simion's *Evaluative Norm of Tokens with an E-Function* implies both that it is and that it isn't, since, like an unflattering warm sweater, it is disposed to fulfil some of its e-functions, but not others.

In footnote 12 of Chapter 4, Kelp & Simion say a few words about this issue: "Are there further epistemic e-functions of assertion, besides this one? We are not sure. That said, we will not attempt to answer this question in any detail here. Rather, we simply assume that generating knowledge in hearers is the only epistemic e-function of assertion." I find this quite surprising; it makes me suspect that they have a stronger characterization of an e-function in mind than the one given in their three-condition test given above. That general characterization of e-functions makes it quite obvious, I would have thought, that assertion has many evaluative functions.[4]

I think that all of these, for instance, very plausibly meet all three criteria concerning the historial beneficial effects of the practice of assertion:

- generating knowledge of the asserted proposition in hearers

- generating true belief of the asserted proposition in hearers

- generating knowledge (of something or other) in hearers

- expressing speakers' knowledge

- expressing speakers' beliefs

- helping people understand one another's point of view

- building social links of dependence and connection

- subjecting ideas to critical examination and scrutiny

- creating common ground

- settling questions

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[4]Kelp & Simion do not say much about what makes an e-function an *epistemic* e-function; I assume that an epistemic e-function is simply an e-function that is, in some sufficiently central way, epistemic. So anything with an e-function of producing knowledge will have an epistemic e-function. I think that Kelp & Simion are making approximately the same assumption; they say on their pp. 82–3, for example, that assertion has the epistemic e-function of producing knowledge in hearers if and only if producing knowledge in hearers satisfies the criteria they posit for e-functions in general.

- motivating collective action

Why, then, does the particular e-function Kelp & Simion focus on — generating knowledge of the asserted proposition in hearers — get such a distinctive focus? Why is *this* function, rather than any of the others, the one that is used to characterize the evaluative norm? I'm not sure. As in the case of their discussion of regulative norms, I suspect that Kelp & Simion may have uncritically carried forward a uniqueness presupposition from some of the broader philosophical literature. This might be well-motivated in other frameworks — those that posit a constitutive role between assertion and particular norms, for instance. But it does not fit well with Kelp & Simion's own picture.

I turn now to some questions about the connections between the two central kinds of norms — regulative and evaluative ones. I'll continue to focus in particular on questions about how and why Kelp & Simion think their proposed norms are competitors to other norms.

4 Reliability and Connections between Regulative and Evaluative Norms

As Kelp & Simion point out, it is prima facie surprising to combine the prescriptive norm KRA with their function-first evaluative norm. Although both norms emphasize knowledge, they do so in quite different ways, and will evaluate some assertion tokens differently. Chapter 4 argues that it is possible to separate these norms in this way. Chapter 5 argues that KRA derives from the evaluative norm. I'll focus on the Chapter 5 argument.

Kelp & Simion focus on the class of types with e-functions that also have the following features:

Reliability It matters that tokens of the type fulfil their e-function reliably.

Variation There are a number of ways of producing tokens of the type which differ in the degree of reliability with which the tokens produced fulfil their e-function.

Humanity Tokens of the type are produced by human agents who are criticism-averse. (ibid., p. 110)

For such types, Kelp & Simion say, it 'makes sense' to regulate activities within them by rules that 'contribute to ensuring that they reliably fulfil their e-function'. (ibid., pp. 111–12) And they argue that assertion is such a type, and that KRA does contribute to ensuring such reliability. I turn now to a consideration of that latter claim.

In general, a type's reliability is its ratio of successes to attempts, for some specified universe of actual or hypothetical attempts. For example, an NBA player's free-throw reliability is characterized by this ratio:

$$\frac{\text{token shots made}}{\text{token shots attempted}}$$

Discussion of reliability in epistemology is most familiar from the discussion, deriving especially from Alvin Goldman, of the truth-reliability of a belief-forming method.[5] According

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[5]For this tradition, see especially Goldman (1979), Goldman (2011).

to epistemic reliabilists, beliefs are the relevant 'attempts,' and true beliefs are 'successes'. The reliability of a belief-forming method, then, is:

$$\frac{\text{true beliefs produced}}{\text{beliefs produced}}$$

Generally, the degree to which an e-type T reliably fulfils e-function F will be:

$$\frac{\text{number of tokens of } T \text{ that are } F}{\text{number of tokens of } T}$$

In the case of assertion, if the e-function of assertion is to generate knowledge in hearers, the degree to which assertion reliably fulfils its e-function is:

$$\frac{\text{number of assertions that generate knowledge of the asserted proposition in their hearers}}{\text{number of assertions}}$$

I'll call this ratio *Ratio A*. The higher Ratio A is, the more likely assertions are to fulfil the e-function Kelp & Simion identify.

Kelp & Simion argue that their evaluative norm for assertion explains KRA as a regulative norm. The argument centers primarily around the idea that enforcing the regulative norm KRA contributes to increasing the reliability of assertion in fulfilling its e-function — i.e. Ratio A. They give two arguments to this effect. One of them seems reasonable, if not totally conclusive:

> In the vast majority of cases, a hearer acquires testimonial knowledge that p only if the speaker knows that p also. That is to say, cases in which testimony transmits knowledge predominate and cases in which testimony generates knowledge are rare exceptions. (Kelp and Simion, 2021, p. 114)

It follows that at least typically, violating KRA will increase the denominator of Ratio A without increasing the numerator, thus lowering the ratio and decreasing reliability. So enforcing KRA could be expected to increase Ratio A.

This isn't totally conclusive because it could be that violations of KRA might systematically be exceptions to the generalization, or enforcing KRA may have additional effects that work against Ratio A. But I agree with Kelp & Simion that it's at least prima facie plausible that KRA might tend to increase Ratio A for this reason.

But I am more suspicious of Kelp & Simion's second argument:

> When S asserts that p and H_1 criticises S by saying: 'You don't know that!', H_2 will, typically at least, not acquire the belief that p based on S's testimony. Since, in the vast majority of cases in which S doesn't know that p if H_2 does acquire a belief that p based on S's testimony, H_2's belief will not qualify as knowledge, H_1's intervention will very likely have contributed to improving the ratio of assertions that generate knowledge in hearers compared to assertions that don't. In this way, KRA contributes towards ensuring the reliability of assertion's fulfilling its e-function. (ibid.)

I think this reasoning is mistaken. I grant that KRA will tend to promote this kind of interaction, and that when it happens, H_1's intervention may well save H_2 from forming a non-knowledgable belief. But this is not relevant to Ratio A, whose denominator is the

number of *assertions*, not the number of *beliefs on the basis of assertion*. As far as Ratio A is concerned, it doesn't matter whether H_1 believes that p or not — all that matters is that S asserted it and that H_1 doesn't know it. H_2-style interventions won't change either the numerator or the denominator of Ratio A.

I suspect that at this point in their discussion Kelp & Simion were thinking about reliability in a somewhat different way from what I've outlined above. I suspect, perhaps influenced by widespread Goldman-style invocations of reliability in epistemology, they may have been thinking of what I'll call Ratio B:

$$\frac{\text{knowledge on the basis of testimony}}{\text{belief on the basis of testimony}}$$

Or, to better match the format of Ratio A:

$$\frac{\text{number of assertions that generate knowledge of the asserted proposition in their hearers}}{\text{number of assertions that generate belief in the asserted proposition in their hearers}}$$

Ratio B is an interesting number — it measures how reliably one attains knowledge by accepting testimony. But it is not a way to measure the reliability of the practice of assertion in fulfilling the e-function Kelp & Simion posit for it. It's a distraction, for present purposes.

The harmony Kelp & Simion see between their evaluative norm for assertion and KRA comes from the idea that KRA promotes Ratio A. And perhaps it does. But how tight is that connection? Is there any reason someone who accepts Kelp & Simion's evaluative norms should accept KRA in particular, compared to other candidate norms?

5   Other Regulative Norms

What kinds of norms, besides KRA, might be conducive to the reliability of the practice of assertion in generating knowledge of the asserted proposition in the hearer? (I.e., what kinds of norms would tend to increase Ratio A?) KRA probably has some modest value for these purposes, but it is far from the most obviously effective candidate. If I were designing a system to promote reliability in this matter, I would aim to target all the ways — or at least most of the the most common ways — that assertions can fail to result in the hearer's knowledge. Kelp & Simion focus on only one: when one asserts what one doesn't know, one's assertion is unlikely to result in the hearer's knowledge. That's their function-derived motivation for KRA. But once this motivation is put into this format, it is clear that it is but one instance of a much broader schema. Let's consider other ways assertions might fail to result in knowledge. What alternative norms might they commend?

Here's one: one cannot spread knowledge that p by asserting that p, when p is already known to one's audience. Doing so inevitably reduces Ratio A, and thus decreases the reliability of assertion with respect to the e-function Kelp & Simion identify for it. Their function-first approach to assertion, therefore, seems to commend a norm like this one:

"News" Rule of Assertion One must (epistemically): assert p only if one's audience doesn't already know p.

Such a norm arguably exists; it is prima facie legitimate to criticize an assertion by complaining that it's old news. And following such a norm would certainly contribute to the reliability of assertion in generating knowledge. The case for this is in fact even stronger

than their corresponding case for KRA, since KRA violations only *usually* fail to generate knowledge; NRA violations are guaranteed to do so. So perhaps, by Kelp & Simion's lights, even if KRA is *a* norm motivated by their function-first approach, NRA deserves stronger and more preferential normative status.

Another way assertions might not result in knowledge is that one might not be believed. This might motivate a 'Credulity' regulative norm:

Credulity Rule of Assertion One must (epistemically): assert p only if one's audience will thereby come to believe that p.

The case for CRA, given Kelp & Simion's framework, looks just as strong as that for NRA. Like NRA (and unlike KRA), violations of CRA *entail* reductions in Ratio A, since knowledge entails belief. And like KRA and NRA, CRA is arguably a norm that exists in practice; "I don't believe you" is prima facie a legitimate challenge to an assertion.[6]

In a different context — focused on questions about constitutivity — Kelp & Simion discuss a rule suggested in García-Carpintero (2004, p. 156):

"Position to Know" Rule of Assertion One must (epistemically): assert p only if one's audience comes thereby to be in a position to know p.

Kelp & Simion give an objection to Garcia-Carpintero's suggestion that this rule identifies a *constitutive* link to the practice of assertion. (In this respect, they argue that it and their preferred KRA are alike.) Kelp & Simion do not, however, evaluate the actual content of GOPK as an alternative, competitor, or addition to KRA. Like CRA and NRA, however, it looks like it would serve their preferred e-function excellently. Following this norm will certainly tend to increase Ratio A.

Indeed, the same would obviously go for a regulative norm that directly enjoins speakers to make good assertions:

Knowledge Transmission Rule of Assertion One must (epistemically): assert p only if one's audience comes thereby to know that p.

All of these norms would contribute more obviously and directly to the reliability of assertion in generating knowledge than KRA would. Indeed, a case could be made that insofar as KRA is valuable for this purpose, that value would be 'swamped' by these latter rules. (NRA and CRA, by contrast, seem to have a more peer-like relationship to KRA, whereby each could independently increase assertion's reliability in spreading knowledge — although I argued above that they too will contribute to Ratio A more directly than KRA will.)

I'll add one more set of candidate norms to the list — this one of a quite different kind. All the norms we've seen so far place necessary conditions on permissible assertion. They improve assertion's reliability by decreasing the denominator of Ratio A. We've examined no norms that *require* one to assert. But some such norms could contribute to assertion's reliability, by increasing both the numerator and the denominator, in a sufficiently high ratio.

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[6]Some theorists might worry that these are inappropriate norms, because it can be hard to know how to follow them. One doesn't always know in advance whether one's audience already knows that p, for example, or whether they will believe one's assertion that p. Such a worry is worth considering, but it is not particularly relevant in the present context, since Kelp & Simion's knowledge norm also obviously has this feature. I agree with Kelp & Simion that this isn't ultimately a problem for the knowledge norm; indeed, the potential worry, such as it is, is one that extends to every possible norm. See e.g. Srinivasan (2015).

Spread Belief One must (epistemically): assert p if one believes p and one's audience doesn't.

Try to Inform One must (epistemically): assert p if one knows p and one's audience doesn't.

Spread Knowledge One must (epistemically): assert p if one's audience would come thereby to know that p.

All three of these norms will tend to increase the numerator of Ratio A. Whether or how much they would contribute to Ratio A depends on (a) how often the assertions they motivate would result in knowledge, and (b) the baseline value of Ratio A, abstracting away from the putative norm. They are listed here in increasing order of their tendency to increase Ratio A. But even the least reliability-conducive of these, *Spread Belief*, I think, is pretty likely to increase it, at least if one accepts — as I do, and as I think Kelp & Simion do too — that knowledge is the typical case for belief.

Belief that falls short of knowledge is anomalous; typically when one believes something, one knows it.[7] This is so even when one's audience does not believe it — it is quite common for knowledge to be private in this way. Much of my current perceptual knowledge, for example — concerning the location of my dog, the state of my home office, what I'm wearing, etc. — is not currently believed by the people I might assert to. So, in the cases where *Spread Belief* requires assertion, the audience (probably) doesn't know p. So the assertion that p in such cases will give assertion a strong chance to fulfil the e-function.

The case for *Try to Inform* is even stronger — it does not depend on the assumption that belief is typically knowledge, and it does not require assertion in cases where one believes but doesn't know — cases where, as Kelp & Simion point out, spreading knowledge is unlikely. And it is trivial that following *Spread Knowledge* guarantees increasing Ratio A, compared to not following it.

So as far as I can tell, the relationship Kelp & Simion describe between their function-first account of assertion and KRA is one that KRA shares in common with *all* of the alternative norms introduced in this section (and with JRA, for that matter). And many of them draw a tighter and more central connection than KRA does. So, is there something they think is special about KRA that distinguishes it from all these other rules? If so, they haven't told us what it is. (As mentioned above, they reject one common answer: that being governed by KRA is definitive of the practice of assertion.) If not, the book's focus on KRA seems somewhat misleading. Their evaluative norm — the main original contribution of the book — motivates only the idea that KRA is one among myriad regulative norms on assertion, without any special role to play.

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[7] For more on this theme, see Ichikawa (forthcoming, ch. 3).

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