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Assertion

I approach assertion (along with other members of what I call the *assertive family*) as products of cultural evolution. This perspective justifies us in being skeptical that there must be single correct account of the norm(s) governing assertion and its kin. Yet even if evolution leaves an ambient indeterminacy in the norms governing assertoric practice, it does seem undeniable that asserting requires undertaking of a commitment. I elucidate this idea of commitment with the notions of liability, frankness, and fidelity, as well as with the notions of strong and weak illocutionary entailment. Finally, I address recent work by Jary (“Assertion and the Declarative Mood”) and Stainton (“Full-On Stating”) who argue that assertion is a convention-bound activity, and I show that neither author's argument succeeds.