conversational PRESSURE
normativity in speech exchanges
SANFORD C. GOLDBERG
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Normativity in Speech Exchanges

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I dedicate this book, with love, to Judy. May we forever remain susceptible to the joys (and pressures) of conversation.
1

The Phenomenon of Conversational Pressure

In *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Alan Gibbard remarks that ‘conversation is full of implicit demands and pressures’ (p. 172). The aim of this book is to identify several of the most salient forms of these ‘demands and pressures’, and to theorize about their types, source, and nature.

It must be conceded at the outset that the forms of conversational pressure are many, and that it is far from clear that they constitute a single cohesive class worthy of an extended investigation. Consider the range of pressures one might feel in the course of a conversation. Focusing just on the kinds of conversations whose primary aim is to exchange information, there is (or can be) felt pressure for example (i) to attend to someone who is addressing one, (ii) to take turns in the course of a conversation (and to avoid taking up too much air time oneself), (iii) to tell others what one knows on a topic at issue, (iv) to respond to another’s speech act when it is addressed to one, or (v) to believe what another person tells one. But in addition one can also feel pressure (vi) to keep an enjoyable or fruitful conversation going, (vii) to end an unproductive or unenjoyable conversation, (viii) to raise a topic that we feel should be discussed but hasn’t been, (ix) to treat other speakers with respect and courtesy, (x) to include people who have been left out of the conversation, or (xi) to shut down a speaker who is obnoxious or bullying or aggressive. Indeed, this list, which is already motley, is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the pressures we can feel in the course of a conversation. And the types of pressures themselves are far from uniform: some of the pressures in (i)–(xi) might be described as ethical, others as social (deriving from the norms of our social practices), and still others as epistemic. It is far from clear that there is any cohesive phenomenon to be investigated here—let alone any cohesive account that can cover all of these cases.
However, it is possible to demarcate a principled subject matter here by restricting our focus on the sorts of pressures that derive from, or implicate, the nature of the speech acts that are performed in the course of a conversation. Thus, there is a difference between the pressure in (i) or (iv), for example, and that in (ix) or (x): it is plausible to suppose that the pressure one feels to respond to speech that is addressed to one is itself generated by the very act of being addressed in speech, whereas the pressure one feels to include others who have been left out of a conversation, like the pressure one feels to be respectful in conversation, is not specific to speech but rather is a generic normative dimension of our interactions with others. Once we recognize this, we are in position to limit our focus to the sorts of conversational pressures that are generated by the performance of speech acts themselves—as opposed to the sorts of pressure that derive from general features of our social life independent of whether the context is one involving a talk exchange. (That we should treat others with respect is not something that is generated by any talk exchange;¹ so too for the sense that we ought to try to include others in our activities when it is feasible.) We might think of pressures that are generated by the performance of speech acts themselves—those that are generated as a result of the nature of such acts, together with the fact that the acts have been performed and observed in the context at hand—as distinctly conversational pressure. It is pressure of this sort that will constitute the domain of the present investigation.

While I will occasionally have things to say of various types of speech act—demands, requests, promises, invitations, and so forth—most of my attention will be on the more restricted class of assertoric speech acts: statements, assertions, testimonies, avowals, reports, and tellings. This is not because I assume that such acts are central to our understanding of speech acts more generally,² nor do I assume that understanding the conversational pressure involved in assertoric acts is central to understanding conversational pressure more generally. Rather, my motivations for this restriction are partly strategic and partly ideological. My strategic motivation for this restriction is twofold: in so restricting my focus I can make this investigation manageable, and in addition doing so enables me to capitalize on my previous research on assertoric speech.³ My ideological motivation is

¹ However, the form that this respect should take can itself be shaped by the nature of the speech acts we perform; more on this in the rest of the book.
² Many authors have followed Austin (1975) in calling this into question. See Sbisa (forthcoming, 2002), and Kukla and Lance (2009), among many others.
³ See especially Goldberg (2015b).
also twofold. First, I think many authors have made errors or else have missed important data points when theorizing about the conversational pressures involved in this class of speech acts, and part of my aim in this book is to offer a better account. But second, a restricted focus on this class of speech acts best enables me to frame a big-picture question that I think has attracted less attention than it deserves: how distinct normative domains bear on one another in the context of speech exchanges. The normative domains I have in mind include the interpersonal (including but not limited to the ethical) and the epistemic. For these reasons I will focus my attention on the members of a narrow class of speech acts within the category of the assertives as this category of speech act, more than others, enables us to highlight questions at the intersection of these two normative domains.

The conversational demands or pressures I will be exploring are, I will be contending, of two fundamental types. One source of such pressure, I contend, is social or interpersonal in nature. Grice taught us that conversations are governed by various norms in virtue of the fact that they are rational, cooperative activities, and when one performs a speech act (or observes another do so) the expectations that derive from these norms amount to a kind of conversational pressure or demand on participants. A second source of conversational demands or pressures is rational or epistemic in nature. This sort of pressure obtains in contexts in which a speech act purports to represent how the speaker takes the world to be. It is here, of course, that the focus on assertion yields dividends. Speech is a rule-governed activity, and there are epistemic requirements on speakers who make assertions or statements (or who testify etc.). As a result, insofar as conversations are cooperative endeavours, there is normative pressure on speakers to live up to those epistemic demands when they perform the acts in question, and a corresponding normative pressure on the audience to assess those acts in the epistemic terms imposed by the rules themselves. I will be designating this sort of pressure as ‘rational’ or ‘epistemic’ pressure.

As Gibbard’s quote suggests, I am not the first person to have theorized about the various forms of conversational pressure.⁴ But—as I hinted above—I believe that a good deal of the extant theorizing has been misguided.

Some theorizing has been misguided insofar as it embodies the pretensions of reduction, aiming to reduce the various normative pressures in a

⁴ Others who have done so under this very description—‘conversational pressure’—include Ridge (2013) and Swanson (2017).
conversation to one kind of normative pressure—to what we owe, in that single normative dimension, to the various conversational participants. Part of the aim of this book is to argue that such a reductive view is untenable: we should not conflate the interpersonal pressures and the epistemic pressures generated by assertions and other testimony-constituting speech acts.

But there are other extant theories that go wrong, not by their reductive pretensions, but by their reaction to others’ reductive pretensions. Thus I worry that many epistemologists who take up these issues throw out the proverbial baby with the bathwater: in their effort to criticize single-dimension approaches to these matters, they rightly highlight that the epistemic dimension requires its own treatment, but they often fail to take account of the various other normative dimensions of speech and conversation. As many others have noted previously, such dimensions are seen in cases involving assertion itself—the speech act whose use is particularly apt for the transmission of knowledge and justified belief. Epistemologists who fail to take account of the other normative dimensions commit a sin of omission that can only encourage those with the reductive pretentions to feel as though their case has not been fully resisted, as the data they sought to account for fail to show up in many more epistemologically oriented accounts.

What is wanted, I think, is an account that accommodates the various forms of conversational pressure, and that does this in as economical and simple a way as possible. Hence the task I set myself in this book: I aim to show, first, that the various types of conversational pressure that have been at the heart of recent discussions are of two fundamental kinds (social/interpersonal and epistemic); second, that, on the assumption that conversation is a cooperative activity, these pressures can be understood using only tools from speech act theory; and third, that doing so will force us to recognize that there is a distinctively epistemic form of conversational pressure—one not reducible to any of the interpersonal forms of conversational pressure.

In bringing these claims out my guiding hypothesis is that, while there are two distinct types of conversational pressure, there is one fundamental mechanism that is responsible for each of these two types: the normative expectations⁵ that are generated by the acts, including the speech acts, that are performed in the course of initiating and participating in conversation.

⁵ By ‘normative expectation’ I understand the attitude through which we hold one another accountable to given standards. The normative expectations to which I will be appealing in my
The main theoretical task I will be setting myself in this book, then, can be framed as an exploration of the generation and subsequent effects of these normative expectations. I will be investigating a range of acts that we perform in the course of initiating or sustaining conversations. My focus will be limited to (i) the act of address wherein we aim to initiate a conversation, (ii) a restricted set of speech acts in the *assertives* family (assertions, statements, testimonies, and the like), and (iii) some of the acts we perform on observing another’s speech act. In each case, the goal is to shed light on how the performance of the act in question *generates* a set of normative expectations that speakers and audience members have of one another, and to make clear how the presence of these expectations, once generated, constitutes the various distinct forms of *conversational pressure* on speakers and audiences.

The organization of the book reflects what I regard as the three ‘loci’ or ‘moments’ of central interest to the normativity of speech exchanges: the act of address itself, the performance of the speech act, and its uptake by an audience. These three components of speech exchanges, I will argue, are normative by nature: under suitable background conditions, the corresponding acts (of address, speech, or uptake) generate mutual normative expectations between participants in the exchange, and these in turn underwrite the normative dimensions of speech exchanges.

The structure of this book reflects this orientation.

Following this introductory chapter I begin, in Chapter 2, by exploring the act of address. I construe the act-type in question as one through which one subject, S, makes it manifest to another subject (or other subjects) that S aims to initiate a conversation or other cooperative venture. In this way addresses can be seen as ‘calling’ on another (or others) to give the speaker his (their) attention, and my thesis is that when such an act is performed in a manifest effort to initiate or sustain a speech exchange, the act exerts one of the basic forms of conversational pressure. In particular, so long as the speaker’s intentions were indeed cooperative and her address was intelligible account reflect not only the mutual expectation of cooperativity in conversation, but also the norm-governed nature of the speech acts we perform in each other’s presence.
(to the audience) as the type of act it was intended to be, the audience ‘owes it’ to the speaker to give her a minimal form of attention.

By engendering the most basic of the normative expectations that frame our conversations, acts of address create the sort of context in which speech acts are performed and observed. Once we are in such a context, additional normative expectations follow suit. Thus the mutual awareness that a speech act has been performed generates additional normative expectations between speaker and audience. I discuss these in the second section of the book, Chapters 3–6. Focusing my attention on the nature of acts of assertoric speech that constitute an ongoing conversation between two or more parties, I aim to characterize how the performance of such acts entitles speaker and audience alike to have certain normative expectations of one another. My thesis is that these expectations underwrite the sort of conversational pressure that is characteristically exerted by of acts of assertion, telling, testifying, and the like. In the course of this discussion I have occasion to discuss and criticize other attempts to locate the conversational pressure exerted by these acts; my claim is that no other account captures this pressure in all of its forms.

Of course, speech acts are not acts one performs alone; they are (typically) intended for public consumption, and it is in this connection—uptake by an audience—that we encounter the final component of conversational pressure I explore in this book. Since the performance of a speech act (I will argue) calls on the audience to respond in certain ways, the normative dimension of what I will call first-order uptake is best considered in connection with the speech acts whose performance engenders the normative demands themselves. The relevant speech acts are discussed at length in Chapters 3–6, when I discuss such matters as what audiences owe to speakers whose assertions they have observed, and whether (and if so how) this can be affected by personal relationships such as friendship. In this regard, I am addressing some familiar faces of the norms of uptake.⁶

At the same time, while discussions of the norms of first-order uptake are thus familiar, it has long seemed to me that there has been a missing element in discussions of the norms of uptake. In a nutshell, the missing element concerns the norms of higher-order uptake: our uptake of another’s uptake.
(of a speech act). It should be uncontroversial that when we attend to another’s speech in contexts involving face-to-face conversations with multiple individuals present, we also typically attend to others’ attending to the same speech act(s). My contention is that this—uptake of uptake, or higher-order uptake—is an important yet often overlooked dimension of conversational pressure. This is the topic of Chapters 7–9. To model the conversational pressure involved here, my strategy is to derive further normative expectations in conversation from the fact that the norms of (first-order) uptake are common knowledge among speech participants. I argue that these further normative expectations (associated with our uptake of others’ uptake) are implicated in such matters as the potential significance of conversational silence, the harms of silencing, and the tendency of groups to exhibit belief polarization and groupthink.

If there is a single take-away point in this book, it is this: while the richness of our conversational practices—the social practices that inform (and explain various patterns we see in) our conversations—generate various kinds of conversational pressure, it is often difficult in practice to distinguish the distinctive types of pressures thereby generated. A failure to do so can result in a distortion of the various normative dimensions of our talk exchanges. I hope this book advances our understanding of these matters.

Doing so, I think, should be to the benefit of (certain parts of) epistemology, social philosophy, and speech act theory.

In epistemology, the benefits will be seen primarily (though not exclusively) in the epistemology of testimony and other parts of social epistemology. Precisely how does someone’s telling you that p relate to your coming to know or believe justifiably that p? Various views are popular in the literature. Of special interest to me here are those views which seek to link the epistemology of testimony to the normative dimensions of the act of telling someone something. Scanlon’s (1990) account of promising is one model here. He holds, first, that when S promises A that S will F, this speech act manifests to A that S is aware of the moral wrongness that would attach to S’s failure to F; and second, that in communicating this to A, S has given A an epistemic reason to believe that S will F. Some proponents of the so-called assurance view of testimony regard the act of telling as proceeding in an analogous fashion. According to such views, when S tells A that p, in
effect S offers a promise or guarantee to A that S has fulfilled all of the responsibilities A would expect her to have fulfilled (given the act she has performed), and that this generates for A an epistemic reason to believe that S has fulfilled these responsibilities. Since these are responsibilities in connection with S’s discerning whether p, in effect this is an epistemic reason for A to believe that p.

I believe that such views go wrong in trying to get epistemic mileage out of what is essentially a point about the normative (in this case, ethical) demands on one who has made a promise. I am not alone in levelling such a charge. But where other critics remain satisfied simply to point out this epistemic shortcoming, I think we need to recognize the normative insight in assurance theories: the speech act of telling or assuring is essentially an interpersonal act of a very specific kind, and without understanding the normative pressures associated with the interpersonal aspect of the exchange we have not understood the nature of the act itself. The challenge is to square these normative pressures, deriving from the interpersonal aspect of these acts, with the normative pressures associated with the epistemology of testimony. While others are right, I think, in their criticisms of the epistemology of the assurance view of testimony, they leave us unsatisfied if they fail to address the normative pressures deriving from the distinctive interpersonal nature of the transaction. Without doing so, these critics leave us with the impression that the act of telling generates conversational pressures not recognized by epistemologists; and while I agree, I worry that if the impression is not addressed, many people will be tempted to draw the wrong conclusion, opting for merely revising assurance views rather than seeing them as committed to a faulty assumption about the nature of the reasons generated by the act of telling someone something. In short, epistemology stands to gain from a full reckoning of the nature of the act of testifying or telling.

In social epistemology, it is widely recognized that other people are a rich source of information in ways that go beyond their serving as informants (that is, as testifiers).⁷ In particular, we often rely on others not only as testifiers but also as consumers of testimony in their own right: we often rely on their reactions to others’ testimony as we seek to determine what to believe. The unhappy side of this, of course, is seen in such phenomena as echo chambers, belief polarization, and groupthink. But there is a happy side

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⁷ Indeed, I myself have characterized social epistemology as the systematic investigation of the epistemic significance of other minds. See e.g. Goldberg (2011a, 2013, 2015a).
too: insofar as the members of our epistemic communities are knowledgeable, our reliance on their assessment of others’ say-so is an epistemically virtuous way of distributing a demanding epistemic task. I believe that this practice emerges in real-time conversations, in both its good forms and its bad forms, and that when it does it reflects the cooperative norms of conversation itself. Social epistemology is thus enriched by attending to how norms of cooperativity in conversation can have an epistemic upshot far beyond what is often recognized in this connection.

In social philosophy, the benefits will be an understanding of how speech act norms combine with social norms to yield normative requirements bearing on our behaviour in contexts of conversation. This will bear on topics such as the normative significance of addressing another (and of being addressed) through speech, the norms of trust (and of inviting another’s trust), what we owe one another in conversations aiming at information exchange, the nature (and costs) of politeness as a normative requirement, the conditions on (and limits of) a duty to speak out, and the basis for the injunction of sincerity in speech. Most of these topics have been explored, piecemeal, by others. But even when they have been explored, it is rarely with an eye to understanding speech in all of its normative dimensions (epistemic and otherwise).

Finally, in speech act theory, the benefits are largely in application. What has been of interest to me—and what was one of the core contentions of my (2015b)—is the work that can be done when we use the insights of speech act theory to explain various familiar aspects of conversation. Here my hope is to show that (and how) speech act theory can be used to explain many of the core normative features we find in conversations aimed at the exchange of information.
PART I
THE ACT OF ADDRESS
2

Your Attention Please!

This book concerns the normative pressure we bring to bear against one another in conversation. It is perhaps fitting, then, that we should begin with the act of address itself, in which a speaker calls for another’s (or others’) attention. In this chapter I develop the claim that in so doing the speaker puts her target(s) under normative pressure to attend to her, at least for the brief period during which she indicates why she is calling for his/their attention.

Such acts are ubiquitous in our engagements with one another. They are involved in such acts as your calling out my name; my asking you the time,¹ and your telling me that it is 2 o’clock; Sally’s requesting to Frank that he stop singing; Mark’s directing Ginger to close the window; Molly’s promising Dolly that she will be back by 11. They are also involved in such things as Patricia’s casting a meaningful glance at Veronica (giving Veronica to understand that now is the time to act); Paul’s waving his arms frantically at a passerby in an attempt to get her attention (thereby trying to flag her down while he is stuck on the side of the road with a flat tyre); Francesca’s engaging Juanita’s gaze while motioning with her index finger that Juanita should join her table; and so forth.

My thesis is that the very act of addressing of another person puts normative pressure on the addressee to direct his attention (if sometimes only briefly) to the source herself. By speaking of ‘normative’ pressure here, I mean to be highlighting the prospect that targets of an address who resist the pressure to attend to the person who is addressing them end up wronging that person. The basic phenomenon is easy to appreciate, at least in outline form. Suppose it is manifest to the various people around Paul that he dropped his phone and is having trouble retrieving it. If Francesca, manifestly aiming to offer Paul her help, tries to catch Paul’s attention by saying

¹ In each case, italics are used to emphasized the core act of address.
‘Excuse me’ to him several times in a way that is clearly directed at him, and he fails so much as to acknowledge her doing so, he has wronged her (unless there are further relevant conditions).² Another case: if Melissa, manifestly looking Sam in the eyes, asks for the time, and Sam refuses so much as to acknowledge that he has been addressed, Sam wrongs Melissa. The wrong that is perpetrated in these cases is not merely that the target does not respond to the act that is addressed to him; it is also that the target fails to acknowledge having been addressed in the first place. To be sure, if circumstances are normal, then the one of whom a request is made owes a response to that request. But in this chapter I am interested in the normative pressure generated by the act of address itself.³ My claim is that being addressed puts one under some pressure to do something—namely, attend to the speech act itself—which, when one does it competently, can have additional downstream effects of putting one under further sorts of normative pressure.

The sort of normative pressure generated by an act of addressing another, I will argue, derives from the nature of cooperation itself, and from the sorts of expectations we, as creatures who are social by nature, are entitled to have of one another in this regard. In particular, I submit that when one person (the speaker) addresses another (the addressee) in speech, where this is a would-be initiation (or is itself a part) of a cooperative exchange, the speaker’s doing so generates a reason for the addressee to attend to the speaker.⁴ This chapter aims to identify the source, nature, and scope of these address-generated reasons.

2 This description is based on an actual scene I witnessed some time ago.
3 That is, I am interested in the normative pressure of the address itself, independent of the speech act (in this case, the request) that is addressed to one.
4 In an attempt to maintain a rough gender equity in the use of pronouns, I will normally use female pronouns when speaking of the speaker, and male pronouns when speaking of the addressed audience. However, I will occasionally vary from this when doing so is unlikely to cause confusion.
than one subject is *cooperative* in the relevant sense when it is structured around a common interest (often, though not always, a jointly accepted aim), such that having this common interest gives each party reasons to act in certain ways and not others at various points throughout the activity itself. Conversation is a cooperative activity in this sense, as it is structured around a common interest in communication (and so in attaining communicative aims). Obviously, conversation is not the only, or even the most basic, of cooperative activities. Other such activities include: making dinner together (something that can be done wordlessly), helping another person to fix a flat tyre, deciding together where we should eat dinner, playing one’s role on a team, and playing a competitive game (where the common interest is in playing the game to its proper conclusion, even if one’s interests diverge from those of the other party in that one wants one’s side to be the winner).

Our abiding interest in cooperation gives us an abiding interest in coordinating with one another as well, as cooperation is a practical impossibility without coordination. But to coordinate, we must be able to initiate—and having initiated, to sustain—various acts of coordination (including planning and other joint actions). Language use is central to these acts of coordination. But coordination (whether through language or in some nonlinguistic way) cannot even get off the ground unless we have some way to capture and sustain one another’s attention: we need to do so not only at the point at which we hope to initiate a cooperative activity, but also at crucial points throughout the activity. Attention capture and sustainment is so important to coordination, and hence to potential cooperation, that having a way to accomplish this is not something that can be left to chance and ability. Rather, a tool has evolved whose use enables us, as rational and social subjects, to ‘call for’ another’s attention⁵—to make the giving of one’s attention (and of the subsequent paying of attention) something that is owed to us. One subject ‘calls for’ another’s attention when she performs an act, manifestly directed at the individual(s) in question, whose salient social significance is to make manifest her intention to capture their attention, and therein to initiate a (possibly very brief) cooperative action with them, where these results are intended to be achieved by way of the target’s

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⁵ Lance and Kukla (2013) use the term ‘call’ to pick out the range of second-personal addresses in such acts as requests, entreaties, and imperatives. They write, ‘...second-person addresses...[are] speech acts that call upon “you to give uptake to specific normative statuses by acting in some range of ways. We refer to these generically as “calls”’ (2013: 457).
recognition of this intention. To perform an act which one manifestly intends to be taken as having this profile is to address another person.

If this sort of view is correct, an act must have several features in order to count as an act of address. First, it must be manifestly directed or targeted at another person or persons. Second, it must be manifestly performed with the intention to capture their attention, and therein to initiate a (possibly very brief) cooperative action with them. And third, it must be readily recognizable by the targets as having these features.

I propose to account for the normative dimension of address in terms of these features, as they constitute the basis of the idea that in addressing another one ‘calls for’ their attention. In light of the manifest rationality of the speaker (the producer of the address) and the mutual (objective) interest all rational social creatures have in cooperation, one who performs an act with this profile is owed respect. Among other things, this respect mandates that her act be acknowledged by the target(s).

Proper acknowledgement involves recognizing the act as manifesting the actor’s intention to capture the addressee’s attention, and therein to attempt to initiate a cooperative action. A speaker who is entitled to expect this acknowledgement thereby generates a reason for her audience to attend (or to continue attending) to the speaker—at least long enough to discern the nature of the would-be cooperative activity that the speaker proposes to engage in. This reason to attend reflects the respect and acknowledgement that are owed to a rational subject who performs an act of this sort. This, I submit, is the basis of the claim that in addressing someone the speaker has a claim on the addressee’s attention.

This model will allow us to say several things about the nature of the address-generated claim on the addressee’s attention. Insofar as this claim is underwritten by the subject’s status as a rational, social being with an

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6 Compare Gilbert (1989: 218) and Gilbert (2011: 280). Talking about acts intended to initiate joint mutual recognition (a precondition for indicating joint readiness to act), Gilbert (1989) writes, ‘What one needs is some way of attracting the other person’s attention, and then, or at the same time, engaging in whatever behavior will communicate willingness jointly to acknowledge co-presence.’ She adds—and I agree!—that ‘[i]t is not obvious that the only means of doing this will depend on social convention.’

7 Here I have in mind something like what Gilbert (1989: 191-7) called the ‘openness’ condition on common knowledge. And among cooperative actions I include what Gilbert (1989) and others call a ‘joint’ action as a special case.

8 I borrow both the terminology of a ‘call’, and the conception of an act as a kind of calling for something, from Kukla and Lance (2009).

9 ‘The point that acknowledgement is owed to one who addresses you is stressed by Darwall (2006) and Kukla and Lance (2009).
abiding interest in cooperation, the claim on the addressee’s attention is generated whenever the action which the speaker is aiming to initiate is indeed a cooperative one. This is for a very simple reason: when the act of address is part of a legitimate attempt at a cooperative engagement with the addressee, it is an essential ingredient in the life of social creatures like us. But I will argue that there are cases in which the act of address is not as it purports to be—cases in which practice of address is abused. These are cases in which the producer makes as if she is performing an act of the profile specified above, but in actuality she intends to initiate an action that cannot reasonably be regarded as a legitimate attempt at cooperative engagement. In such cases, the address itself is degenerate, and the speaker is not entitled to expect the sort of respect that I associate with non-degenerate acts of address. Accordingly, the act doesn’t generate any reason for the addressee to attend, and so doesn’t generate any claim on the addressee’s attention. Or so I will be arguing in what follows.

My topic, then, is the normative pressures arising out of the act of address. What I am after is an account of the source, nature, and strength of the claim on another’s attention generated by the act of addressing him (whether in speech or in some other fashion). I regard such an account to be a crucial first step in any theory which purports to illuminate the sort of pressures generated by conversational participants. Before developing my account, however, I want to make clear both why I regard this as an important topic, and why the topic is not exhausted by work in speech act theory that explores the effects of addressing particular speech acts to an audience. I will take these up in order.

Not everyone will see the significance of the normative dimension of address. In particular, those who pursue empirical theories of speech and communication might well have doubts about the significance of the normative demands engendered by acts of address. They might argue that once we have an empirically grounded account of how the act of address secures uptake, we have no need for an additional account of the normative dimensions of the address and its uptake. Such a view might be motivated by the thought that any competent act of address will succeed in capturing the attention of the addressee, and that any addressee whose attention has been