

The Ethics of Claiming in Profession and Society

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ABSTRACT: A critical attitude forwards human societal development. But for any criticism to be constructive, seeking and proposing solutions are needed to resolve issues; otherwise, conflicts could arise that lead to “claiming.” Claiming is the result of an individual’s critical attitude. Rationally, claiming must be seen as a necessity for progress, especially social progress. Within the perspective of various ethical theories, I argue that claiming is ethically correct, but no form of claiming is ethical. However, I believe that an ethics of claiming does exist and must be considered for claiming to occur in an ethical manner. By assessing two cases of claiming in academia (one involving attitudes of undergraduate students and the other related to the behavior of a medical doctor performing research), I offer that although the idea of claiming is ethically correct, some exigencies must be followed to place claiming into an ethical framework. In fact, I advocate that for human beings to universalize this idea, they must believe a portion of John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s well-known speech, reworded as follows: “Ask not what humanity can do for you, but rather, what you can do for humanity.” Thus, criticism accompanied by proposal of solutions represents an ethical attitude related to the broader social concept of claiming, such that even if claiming is justified, it must adapt to an ethical framework if we are to remain within the realm of humanity.

KEY WORDS: criticizing, social progress, academia, research, moral behavior

I. INTRODUCTION

My fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: Ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

—John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961¹

Claiming represents a necessity of progress, especially social progress that arises from the critical attitude of any individual. Although more than 30 yr have passed since the Romanian dictator’s “departure,” Romanian society is still in a traumatic, postcommunist period. Freedom, in the context of inverted values, and as understood by many Romanians after December 1989, results in one of the representative personalities of the free world, JFK, giving some 60 yr ago a speech that today seems obsolete, even though it preserves universal validity on a human species level. It can be extrapolated for the incentive to ask not what humankind will do for an individual, but what an individual can do for humankind, limited only by one’s strength and capacity. This article is a