

Global Ethics

in research, education, and training

Prof. Sara L. Uckelman
Durham University
s.l.uckelman@durham.ac.uk
@SaraLUckelman

Ethics, Society, Education
11 August 2026

What do we mean by Global Ethics?

What do we mean by Global Ethics?

- 1 Ethics beyond Anglo-European traditions/contexts, ethics that is situated in a specific (regional?) context.

What do we mean by Global Ethics?

- 1 Ethics beyond Anglo-European traditions/contexts, ethics that is situated in a specific (regional?) context.
- 2 Ethics for global issues: climate change, war, migration, human rights, (AI?)

Ethics beyond the Anglo-European

Ubuntu/Hunhu
Indigenous (Métis) Kinship ethics
Filipino virtue ethics

What role do these play in:

- their local cultural contexts?
- in global philosophical discussions?

Ethical problems across national boundaries

How can we:

- discuss these problems across differing cultural contexts?
- ensure we do not impose the supremacy of specific ethical views?
- pay attention to lessons learned from decolonizing efforts?
- integrate culturally sensitive ethics into global conversations?

Integrating global ethics into philosophical research, education, and training

What are our goals?

- To develop moral/ethical individuals
- To develop moral/ethical societies and social structures
- To develop critical reasoning/thinking/questioning skills
- To move from the abstract to the real, from the general to the particular.

Exploring the conceptual space

- What moral concepts exist where?
- What concepts conflict with each other and how?
- How do we identify alternatives?

Importance of consequences

- What ethical theories allow for what kinds of action?
- What ethical theories allow for what kinds of change?
- What ethical theories allow for what kinds of outcomes?

Importance of consequences

- What ethical theories allow for what kinds of action?
- What ethical theories allow for what kinds of change?
- What ethical theories allow for what kinds of outcomes?

These are *logical* rather than *moral* questions!

Translating theory into practice

- 1 Thought experiments
- 2 Writing philosophical fiction

Thought experiments

Advantages:

- Clearly definable
- Allow exploration of conceptual space
- Avoid unnecessary complexity
- Make logical consequences explicit:

Thought experiments

$$\begin{array}{l} \Diamond C \\ T \supset (C \Box \rightarrow W) \\ C \Box \rightarrow \neg W \\ \hline \neg T \end{array}$$

(Häggqvist 2009, p. 63)

Thought experiments

Drawbacks

- Sometimes too theoretical
- Sometimes too simplified, too abstract
- Still focused on the general not the particular

Real life is messy and complex!

Fiction writing

Advantages

- Focuses on the individual
- Exploration of lived experiences/impact of theory on real life
- Situated “models” provide more fine-grained results
- Taps into the affective side of experience.
- Easy! Fun! Explorative and creative.
- Unjustified starting points

Fiction writing

Drawbacks

- Not generalizable
- Trades simplicity for complexity
- Not backed by argument—how to make results persuasive?

Fiction writing

But:

- We are situated, embodied feeling beings, more often persuaded by examples, emotions, and feelings than by facts, reasons, and evidence.
- Still useful as a mental exercise that develops our abilities to imagine change/other possibilities and to explore in detail and specificity the impact of ethical choices on individual situations.
- A way to identify moral red lines.

Bringing things back to global ethics

- Story-telling is global: Every culture tells stories, and uses stories to teach, educate, challenge, and develop imagination.
- Story-telling is also *local*: Every culture has their own stories, their own way of telling stories, their own language for telling stories.



Sara L. Uckelman, “Fiction Writing as Philosophical Methodology,”
Principia 28, no. 3 (2024)