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Reimagining a Global Ethic

Michael Ignatieff

“Reimagining a global ethic” is a project worthy of Andrew Carnegie and of the Carnegie Council’s upcoming commemoration of his founding gift in 1914.¹ As a collaborative research project stretching forward over the next three years, it ought to be integrative and reconciliatory: that is, it must try to understand the globalization of ethics that has accompanied the globalization of commerce and communications and to figure out what ethical values human beings share across all our differences of race, religion, ethnicity, national identity, and material wealth. When human beings do disagree morally, the search for a global ethic becomes an attempt to elucidate by analysis what exactly people are disagreeing about, so that, after arguing out our differences, we can either agree to disagree or work together to find common ground. Finding common ground on large ethical matters and understanding more deeply why, in some instances, we remain at odds with each other is worthwhile in itself, but it might also further Andrew Carnegie’s original goal in founding the Council, which was to reduce the amount of conflict and violence in the world.

Reimagining a global ethic is a worthy project, but a dauntingly difficult one, especially if we accept the premise that all human beings, and therefore all cultures, religions, and worldviews, have a right to contribute to the discussion. The old exclusions—by race, class, region, nation, or religion—used to confine global ethical discussion to a manageable, largely Western, largely university-educated elite. Thanks in large measure to the global ethical revolution that accompanied decolonization, these old exclusions are discredited, but now we face the challenge of imagining and conducting a global discussion on the premise of equal inclusion. Even when we narrow the field and assume that those who will want to take part will be those who make ethical reflection their business (ethicists, philosophers, psychologists, and scientists, among others), understanding what a global conversation about ethical universals—one that fully includes North and South, East and West, secular and religious—might entail remains more than a little intimidating.

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37 We *should* be intimidated. All difficult and ambitious enterprises are intimidat-
38 ing. In this essay, however, my ambitions are modest: to fly high over the field of
39 inquiry, taking some snapshots of the ground below, so that we can begin to
40 reconnoiter a few of the challenges that lie ahead. And my initial question is
41 quite simple: Should we be talking about a “global ethic” in the singular or a “glo-
42 bal ethics” in the plural?

43 A global ethic—a perspective that takes all human beings and their habitat as its
44 subject—does exist and is flourishing in philosophy departments around the
45 world. Its function is essentially critical, rather than affirmative. Its purpose is
46 to lay bare the ethical presuppositions that underpin injustice and inequality in
47 a globalized world and to devise ideal distributions of resources and responsibil-
48 ities that would make our world fairer.

49 Since the 1960s, philosophers have developed a global ethic in the singular in
50 response to the injustice of contemporary globalization; but unlike Marxism
51 and the ideologies of colonial liberation, this critique was not conducted in the
52 name of oppressed groups or classes, nor have these philosophers sought to
53 map out a strategy of political liberation. Instead, philosophers of the global
54 ethic have sought to use purely philosophical argument to demonstrate that cer-
55 tain forms of injustice and distributions of global wealth are wrong and that those
56 in a position to do something about these wrongs have an obligation to put them
57 right.

58 The global ethic is therefore a by-product of contemporary globalization, but
59 the philosophical reasoning that it employs rests on much older foundations.
60 For as long as philosophers have used the idea of natural law to criticize positive
61 law and the idea of the rights of mankind to unmask the privileges of men, they
62 have employed universals to criticize all the forms of ethical partiality that are
63 rooted in attachments to class, identity, nation, or religion. While some of the pro-
64 blems posed by globalization feel new, a global ethic is actually as old as philo-
65 sophy itself.

66 Thanks again to the European natural law tradition and centuries of work by
67 international lawyers from Hugo Grotius onward, we also have a global ethics
68 in the plural, enshrined in the structure of existing international law: in the UN
69 Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions,
70 and the Refugee Convention, to name only the principal institutional pillars.²
71 These are legal documents, but they incarnate important ethical principles of uni-
72 versal application: the sovereignty of peoples, the rights of individuals, the rules of

73 civilian immunity in warfare, and the rights of refugees and displaced persons.
74 Here we must speak about ethics in the plural, because each of these domains
75 is purpose-designed to solve specific problems and because their ethical frame-
76 works contradict each other, most obviously in the conflict between state sover-
77 eignty and human rights. Since they are political documents, the products of
78 negotiation and compromise, some of their tenets do not square with the abstract
79 premises of a global ethic either.

80 If we already have a global ethic in the singular and in the plural, reimagining a
81 global ethic does not require us to start again and reconstruct its foundations.
82 These foundations may be Western in origin, but their embodiment in inter-
83 national law has been ratified by nations around the world. This gives us a mini-
84 mum framework to work with, a framework derived from the labor of many
85 minds over many centuries, what the history of philosophy and the evolution
86 of international law have bequeathed to us all. This framework—a global ethic
87 in the singular and international ethics in the plural—provides a starting point
88 for a global dialogue about what we share and do not share as human beings.

89 It must be admitted, however, that a lot of important people seem to think we
90 lack a common framework and need to start afresh. In 1993 the German theolo-
91 gian Hans Kung compiled a universal declaration of duties because he believed
92 rights talk was too individualistic and failed to capture essential features of the
93 human good.³ Islamic and Asian leaders have also published international
94 declarations of human responsibility.⁴ The language of duty and responsibility
95 is being pressed into service because the existing language of rights is held to
96 be too Western and fails to capture an individual's responsibility to, and depen-
97 dence upon, wider communities, whether they be religious, familial, or national.

98 Rights talk does have notorious limitations as a language of the human good.
99 Who does not suppose, for example, that love is an essential human good, but
100 who believes we all have a "right to love"?⁵ These problems with rights as a
101 language of the good are well known, but no better language is likely to be
102 found. The difficulty with abandoning rights talk or seeking to convert rights
103 propositions into duty language is that it discards rights' potential for juridical
104 embodiment and enforceability. What rights talk does so well is to correlate
105 specific rights holders and their claims with determinate duty holders. Rights
106 talk will remain an essential component of any global ethic, precisely because
107 the protections it affords can be demanded by actual individuals. If a global
108 ethic cannot empower discrete, identifiable individuals, in all their singularity,

109 with specific claims that they can enforce against those who oppress them, what is
110 it good for?

111 Religious leaders have also weighed in on the project of reimagining a global
112 ethic for a globalized world, using interfaith gatherings to assemble syncretic com-
113 pilations of ethical norms from the world's religions, some believing that
114 Christianity may have had too much of a say up to this point or that the language
115 of the contemporary good has abandoned its necessary religious underpinnings.⁶
116 But metaphysical underpinnings, whatever their religious source, are essentially
117 contestable.⁷ What is contestable is not merely whether the Almighty exists in
118 any form, but whether ethical systems depend for their validity on His or Her
119 commands. Many religious and spiritual systems insist that ethical duty takes
120 the form of a divine command, but not all ethical systems do. Many of the
121 human values that orient and guide human conduct have no divine or metaphys-
122 ical foundation. Spiritual yearnings are universal features of human experience, yet
123 it is not obvious why an ethic has to be grounded in these yearnings or the spiri-
124 tual claims that arise from them. An ethic can have secular foundations without
125 making final claims about the truth of these foundations. These secular found-
126 ations include indisputable facts about human beings, such as our need for
127 love and our abhorrence of undeserved cruelty.⁸ Secular grounds for the language
128 of the good are best understood not as secular trumps but as bracketing operations,
129 attempts to find common ethical ground in the absence of agreement on their ulti-
130 mate metaphysical basis. What the French philosopher Jacques Maritain initially
131 said about human rights in 1946—that we can agree we have them, and even specify
132 what they are, without agreeing on why we have them—is true of a global ethic more
133 generally.⁹ We know we have universal obligations to other human beings, even if
134 we will continue to disagree about why we have them. This intellectual strategy—
135 focusing on where we agree and bracketing infinitely contestable claims—made
136 possible the limited consensus that sustains international human rights conventions.
137 Reimagining a global ethic would have to work on the same basis, reaching out to
138 common ground where such exists, while agreeing to disagree about the claim that
139 ethical conduct must be derived from a spiritual or religious duty.

140 Another site of discussion of a global ethic is found where science and philos-
141 ophy meet. Philosophers and scientists have sought through dialogues to uncover
142 the common ground of ethics in human nature or in the latest findings in psychol-
143 ogy, genetics, or neurobiology.¹⁰ Again, it is of the greatest interest to discover
144 whether our ethical norms have a physical grounding in neurobiology or

145 Darwinian instinct, but again the connection between moral action and physi-
146 ology is complex, and essentially contestable, and it should be possible to agree
147 what a global ethic commands us to do without having to accept that neuronal
148 or biological principles explain why we behave as we do in our moral lives.

149 In what follows I am going to bracket these metaphysical, Darwinian, and neu-
150robiological issues and focus on the global ethic we have and the global ethics
151 codified in international law, and argue that the proper work of reimagining a glo-
152bal ethic is to think harder about the conflicts of principle between them. We need
153to distinguish at least three levels at which these conflicts arise. First, we live in a
154morally pluralistic world divided into communities of action and belief, each of
155which acts upon different principles. These communities disagree with each
156other about the content of the good. Second, people within these communities dis-
157agree about what shared principles commit them to do in moral life. Third, even
158where there is agreement across different moral communities about principles
159held in common, it will be apparent that the shared principles themselves conflict
160with each other. It is this last conflict, between the principles themselves, within a
161global ethic itself, and within the competing ethical systems incarnated in inter-
162national law, that I want to turn to now.

163 I take a global ethic in the singular to mean a morality whose object is “one
164world” in which all human beings are entitled to equal moral concern and in
165which we have common responsibilities to our habitat. This starting premise
166implies a particular vantage point. This could be called the “view from nowhere”
167or “nowhere in particular.”¹¹ A global ethic seeks to defend all human beings and
168our common habitat against partialities and interests grounded in family, commu-
169nity, ethnicity, economic position, and nation.

170 The view from nowhere is not an easy one to achieve, but it is the view that we
171are trying to reach if we say, for example, that we are reasoning from behind “a veil
172of ignorance” or if we use an imaginative construction like “natural rights” to
173assess the actual rights of living beings.¹² Once embraced, the view from nowhere
174allows us to expose the partiality of views from somewhere, especially those that
175shape us in our national communities. Joseph Carens, Michael Walzer, Michael
176Blake, and Thomas Hurka, just to name a few of the global ethicists I have in
177mind, have asked why states should have the right to impose visa and immigration
178quotas on some but not all human beings, why states have the right to expel non-
179citizens, and why they so grossly favor their own citizens over people living in
180other countries in the distribution of global resources.¹³ Thomas Pogge, Henry

181 Shue, and Peter Singer have all argued that allocating global resources to individ-
182 uals on the basis of the country they happen to have been born in carries moral
183 luck too far.¹⁴ Singer and others have used global ethics to figure out a morally
184 rational way to apportion responsibility for action on climate change.¹⁵

185 The one-world perspective that emerges from the work of these philosophers
186 has provided a common moral vocabulary that drives the activism of civil society
187 NGOs everywhere. It is a philosophy in service of a sustained critique of the way
188 power is exercised by states, corporations, and national communities against the
189 common interests of mankind; and thanks to the work of these philosophers,
190 their students and those who have been influenced by them have a richer and
191 keener sense of what these common interests should be.

192 As a politics, however, the one-world perspective is failing to make much head-
193 way. States are no closer to a morally rational way of allocating responsibility for
194 action on climate change. Countries still impose immigration quotas, and few
195 countries have met their global justice obligations to the poorest on Earth. A glo-
196 bal ethical discourse flourishes in universities and civil society, but it has made
197 limited progress against the ethical practice of states.

198 Some global ethicists attribute the political failure of a global ethic to selfish
199 national interest. There is no doubt that politicians are partial, and that the political
200 drivers of state action at the domestic level are relentlessly local. The universal barely
201 registers. Yet the problem runs deeper than that. Democratic publics do not actually
202 believe the universal should trump their local interests. They believe, if asked to think
203 about it, that their own interests as a national community *ought* to prevail over assist-
204 ance to peoples in other countries, and they do not see why they are required to
205 make sacrifices in relation to such abstract issues as climate change. I would not
206 want to dignify this localism with much moral stature, but I do not want to dismiss
207 it as mere prejudice either. It is a symptom of a conflict, at least in states with popular
208 suffrage, between two principles: between democracy and justice, between the value
209 we attach to self-determination of peoples and the value we attach to abstract justice
210 for all individuals. National communities, in other words, have some good reasons,
211 as well as some not so good ones, to privilege local ahead of universal priorities and
212 interests. Giving moral priority to our own children, families, people, or society is
213 natural and defensible enough. The issue is how much of the inequality that can
214 result is defensible. The strength of a global ethic is to pose that question and to
215 force the local to defend the inequality that results. At a formal level, this is a conflict
216 between what democracy permits and what justice demands.

217 Isaiah Berlin observed long ago that absolute values such as these conflict absol-
218 utely. All good things cannot be had at once.¹⁶ Justice versus democracy is only
219 one of such conflicts. Others, including justice versus mercy, or liberty versus
220 equality, are just as familiar. Given these antinomies, it is not obvious how a global
221 ethic can be an internally consistent non-contradictory rank ordering of moral
222 goods. Instead, a global ethic is better understood not as a series of propositions,
223 but as a site of argument in which the particular is called to the bar of justification
224 before the universal. A global ethic creates the possibility of a process of recurrent
225 adversarial justification. It is not itself immune from the obligation to justify.

226 We can see what this means in relation to justice and democracy. Democratic
227 communities have the right to balance what they owe to their own members
228 against what they owe to strangers beyond their borders. Because politics every-
229 where is local, a global ethic, privileging universal rather than proximate duties,
230 may prevail at certain moments but will never trump in practical politics.
231 Democratic choice will be ordered by the preferences of citizens, and free debate
232 among citizens will determine the distribution of scarce resources between dom-
233 estic and international claims to them. What this means in practice is that demo-
234 cratic peoples have the right to be wrong about justice.¹⁷ Not indefinitely so. Like
235 all rights, this right of sovereignty is not unlimited. If the sovereign in question is a
236 constitutional democracy, the right to be wrong about justice will be constrained
237 by the rights guarantees that constrain all constitutional exercises of power. If the
238 sovereign is not constitutionally bound from within, it will have to be constrained
239 from without by international opinion and by the community of states.¹⁸

240 While the present distribution of global resources grossly privileges citizens of
241 rich states at the expense of those of poorer ones, it does not follow that it would
242 be just to privilege strangers at the expense of citizens. It is all a matter of finding a
243 balance between duties to citizens and strangers and between democratic self-
244 determination and universal justice. Finding that balance is the province of
245 politics.

246 It is a fact of politics that the interests of democratic citizens will be shaped pri-
247 marily, though not exclusively, by the view from where they sit, and only sec-
248 ondarily, if at all, by the view from nowhere. Changing this will take time. Global
249 ethicists have sought to respond to the claims of national self-interest by casting
250 their arguments in terms of what John Stuart Mill called “self-interest properly
251 understood.” What has to be properly understood by democratic electorates, the
252 philosophers argue, is that in relation to climate change, for example, there will

253 be no “somewhere” to defend unless they elect governments that factor in, to an
254 important degree, the universal interests of our habitat.¹⁹

255 This may be true, but the main political obstacle to climate change action is no
256 longer public disbelief as to whether adverse climate change is occurring or even
257 disagreement as to whether states have a duty to do something about it, but rather
258 how to solve the problem of the penalties—in economic competitiveness—that
259 first-mover states believe they will incur. So an appropriate further task for a glo-
260 bal ethic in the singular will be to reason out the incentives necessary to solve
261 these first-mover problems. A global ethic will have to pass from philosophy to
262 policy.

263 There are no trump cards of justice to play in policy or politics, but the entry of
264 a global ethic into political debate will subject all particularistic claims to a
265 demand of justification. Hopefully, this will set in motion a process by which
266 national policy becomes more globally justifiable over time. The view from
267 nowhere has put everyone’s self-justifications to the test, and if the powerful
268 sleep less well at night so much the better.

269 A second function of a global ethic is to criticize the value systems of different
270 *faiths and groups* and oblige them to justify themselves. Religious, ethnic, and
271 linguistic differences help constitute our moral loyalties, and these loyalties are
272 bound to be partial: we privilege the claims of those who are like us over those
273 who are not like us. The issue then becomes how a global ethic negotiates with
274 the moral partiality that is constitutive of human attachments.

275 What status do we give a global ethic in a pluralistic world that, as a matter of
276 fact, is composed, ethically speaking, of competing moral universes? Once you dis-
277 card, as a global ethic must, the idea that certain moral values trump others by
278 virtue of their association with religious authority—indeed, if we discard the
279 idea that any one value trumps another by virtue of its association with any
280 kind of authority—then we are left with the need for justification and persuasion
281 by reason. All those who reason are equal, since we are all human beings, but some
282 reasons turn out to be better than others. The test of which are better depends on
283 how persuasive they are in argument. On this rough-and-ready model of adversar-
284 ial justification, the particular faces off against the universal—but neither plays as
285 trumps; neither is privileged with any authority other than reason and both are
286 obliged to justify themselves.

287 In a globalized world, the fact of adversarial justification is unavoidable because
288 the particular and the universal do not live in disconnected bell jars. The reality is

289 constant permeation between the membranes of one body. The particular and the
290 universal, the local and the national, the rural and the metropolitan, are all in con-
291 stant interaction. Ethical systems, whether local or global, are also heavily com-
292 petitive, since they are constantly bidding for adherents, seeking to hold on to
293 doubters and to ward off attacks. Moral universes are no longer closed to each
294 other, if they ever were, and each is in justificatory dialogue with the other.

295 Let us look more closely at how a global ethic interacts with local practice in a
296 specific case, female genital cutting (FGC). Western NGOs promoting health and
297 voice rights in developing societies have learned over time that local “buy-in” is
298 crucial if this practice is to be eliminated. We can contrast “buy-in” with conver-
299 sion. Missionaries seek conversion. They seek the soul. Buy-in is not about the
300 soul. It is an exchange in which one side offers to change a practice in return
301 for the respect of others. Buy-in requires lengthy negotiation between the particu-
302 lar and the universal, community by community, and power on the ground lies
303 more with the former than with the latter. The universal takes the form, often
304 enough, of a humanitarian aid worker or public health nurse. The local takes
305 the form of a village political system in which power is held by elders and
306 where women may or may not have voice or influence.

307 Female genital cutting will not stop simply because Western health workers
308 point out the septicemia statistics. It has not been stopped by top-down legislative
309 bans. The tradition stops when village women decide they can substitute alterna-
310 tive initiation rituals that safeguard their girls’ health without lowering their value
311 to the families as brides.²⁰ When there is successful buy-in, the particular practice
312 changes, and fewer girls die of septicemia. But the universal changes, too: women’s
313 rights advocates acknowledge the importance for women of supporting local mar-
314 riage customs, even when these fall short of Western standards of gender equality.
315 Buy-in implies trade-offs on both sides. Female mortality declines, while polyg-
316 amy and patriarchy may endure. Yet that is not the end of the story. Once the dia-
317 logue between the particular and universal has been joined, more buy-in may
318 occur and more change may happen in subsequent iterations.

319 To summarize: a global ethic defends the universal interests of mankind and the
320 planet; its purpose is to engage all forms of ethical particularism in adversarial jus-
321 tification; and the rules of these encounters, flowing as they do from the starting
322 premise of human equality, preclude coercion and mandate tolerance.

323 The FGC example could be supplemented by others from societies such as
324 Afghanistan. Since the Soviet invasion in 1979, and now with the more recent

325 NATO presence, Afghan traditional society has come face-to-face with moral uni-
326 versalism and female equality via the National Solidarity Program and other
327 Western attempts to promote female education, political participation, and
328 reduced female mortality rates.²¹ What these encounters reveal is that female sub-
329 ordination is not just one value among many in a local patriarchal culture; rather,
330 it is held to be the very condition for the survival of these communities as such,
331 since their members, even female ones, cannot conceive of the community apart
332 from its patriarchal structure. All the same, despite the deeply rooted local attach-
333 ment to female subordination, change does occur. Women do begin to participate
334 in village councils, young girls do go to school, female mortality does decline.

335 What we need to understand better is how universalist claims to advance women
336 are negotiated, case by specific case, in conditions of inequality. We need an anthro-
337 pology of this buy-in process between local and universal ethics on the ground in
338 order to understand how better to promote a global ethic, especially in relation to
339 women's rights, that is freely chosen by those affected and that follows from a pro-
340 cess of reciprocal justification and exchange. Reimagining a global ethic means
341 understanding the anthropology of this encounter, in society after society, between
342 the local and the global, between the tribal/familial and the universal.

343 If the first two functions of a global ethic are to interrogate particularism in the
344 nation-state and at the community level, its third function is to interrogate the
345 universalism of international law itself.

346 The universal is embodied in four basic pillars of international law, erected
347 between 1945 and 1952:

- 348 • The UN Charter, guaranteeing the inviolability and equality of sovereign
349 states.
- 350 • The UN Declaration of Human Rights and the ensuing system of cove-
351 nants, including the Genocide Convention, guaranteeing the rights of
352 individuals.
- 353 • The Geneva Conventions, guaranteeing civilian immunity in time of war.
- 354 • The Refugee Convention of 1952, protecting persons with a well-founded
355 fear of persecution.

356
357 When we say we do not have to rebuild the foundations of global ethics, we
358 mean that there already exists this legally codified fabric of ethical conventions
359 that has been ratified by peoples around the world and that to some degree con-
360 strains the behavior of states.

361 While it is conventional to think of this structure of international law as a
362 mutually reinforcing and interlocking structure of obligation, it is important to
363 notice how each of these self-contained ethical systems conflicts with the others:

- 364 • The Charter prioritizes state sovereignty, which contradicts the UDHR's
365 prioritizing of human rights.
- 366 • The Geneva Conventions prioritize civilian protection in war, while the
367 UDHR prioritizes the pacific principle of a universal right to life.
- 368 • Refugee conventions balance protection for refugees while conceding the
369 moral priority of citizens' rights. The privilege accorded by states to the
370 rights of their own citizens is not easy to reconcile with the idea of the uni-
371 versality of human rights, and hence the equality of human beings regard-
372 less of citizenship.

373
374 Each purpose of these conventions—to protect sovereignty, to promote human
375 rights, to civilize war, to save refugees—defines a particular ethical framework. So
376 we have a global ethics in the plural as a matter of institutional and legal practice,
377 while in philosophy departments we have a global ethic in the singular.

378 There are contradictions at the heart of the ethical systems institutionalized in
379 international law. The most obvious is between state sovereignty and human
380 rights. Sovereignty itself incarnates an important moral principle: the equality
381 of peoples and the right of the weak to defend themselves against the strong in
382 a world of unequal state power. If we want a world in which strong states do
383 not have the right to dictate to the weak, we have to guarantee the inviolability
384 of states in law, and if we do this, we have to accept the likelihood that some
385 will exploit sovereignty to oppress their own people. Our international legal struc-
386 ture values two competing ethical goals, and a morally adequate international sys-
387 tem has to seek reconciliation between principles at variance with each other.

388 What we can do—and what the International Commission on Intervention and
389 State Sovereignty has in fact done—is to propose that sovereignty be made con-
390 ditional on two basic responsibilities: respect for the sovereignty of other states
391 and responsibility to provide basic security for one's own citizens—that is, to
392 refrain from subjecting them to massacre, genocide, or ethnic cleansing. This
393 sets the bar of responsibility low, but it also defines the moral conditions that
394 would justify intervention by another state.²² Sovereignty as responsibility, in
395 other words, can be understood as a conceptual bridge between two competing
396 ethical systems: the Charter system of sovereignty and the human rights

397 conventions. Yet the contradictions between the two will endure and will force
398 hard choices on all actors in the international system. Ethicists can elucidate
399 these choices, but they cannot eliminate the burden of decision that necessarily
400 falls on political actors.

401 This high-altitude view of the field tells us there is a global ethic as a discourse
402 on the one hand and a global ethics as institutional practice on the other. The for-
403 mer exists in part to criticize the latter. We do not need to invent a new global
404 ethic so much as understand the deeper contradictions within the ethical systems
405 that already guide the action of states, individuals, and leaders. Professional ethi-
406 cists have a job to do: to understand the contradictions between democracy and
407 justice, the self-determination of peoples versus survival of the planet, and the
408 value of sovereign equality versus human rights. Understanding these contradic-
409 tions will help us to negotiate them in practical politics. My key point is that the
410 real function of a global ethic is to force such contradictions out into the open
411 light of public debate and to force political excuses for injustice to justify
412 themselves.

413 Moral life is a process of justification—giving reasons for opinions, reasons for
414 conduct—to those who do not share our point of view and then altering both our
415 opinions and our conduct when we discover our justifications failing us. The
416 essence of moral life is this process of recurrent, repeated, behavior-changing jus-
417 tification. The process needs standards—a global ethic provides the view from
418 nowhere, global ethics provides a view from somewhere—and if sides in dispute
419 accept the standard, they argue with each other, not past each other, and if they
420 accept the standard, then they are more likely to accept the obligation to change
421 when justification fails.

422 It is vital for philosophers and others working in this field to elaborate further
423 the view from nowhere. Without it, the view from somewhere will not be faced
424 with the burden of justification. And without this burden, without the test of argu-
425 ment, we will not change, and it is change that matters.

427 NOTES

428 ¹ This essay began life as a lecture to the Global Ethics Fellows, Carnegie Council on Ethics and
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431 agining a global ethic is an initiative to commemorate the centenary of the founding of the Council in
1914 by Andrew Carnegie.

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