



COLLOQUIUM SERIES

## **What is Global Ethics?**

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Over the past 15 years, global ethics has come to be conceived in different ways. Two main tendencies can be distinguished. One asks from whence global ethics comes and defines 'global ethics' by its characteristic issues or problems, namely ethical issues or problems arising from globalization. The other tendency is to ask whither global ethics must go and thus defines 'global ethics' as a destination, namely arriving at a comprehensive global ethic. I will note some types of discussion that may have been wrongly excluded from the scope of global ethics by one or the other. In addition, I take notice of recent debates and concerns about risks that global ethics may become a neo-colonial activity. These concerns raise further conceptual questions. Should 'global ethics' be defined in a normative fashion, so as to exclude neo-colonial approaches that may be damaging to the credibility of global ethics? Or should it be defined in a more descriptive way, so as to include all approaches, the good and the bad alike?

In response to this pair of alternatives – whence vs. whither, descriptive vs. normative – I will propose a middle way. I begin by defining 'global problems' as those that will cause harm in the absence of cross-border cooperation. In a descriptive sense, any ethical statements about global problems should be included within the scope of global ethics. On the other hand, I will propose a more specific normative conception of the central task of global ethics: seeking reasonable and responsible agreement on global problems, agreement based on possibly diverse moral grounds.

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**1201 River Building**

***All are welcome!***