Is a ‘global feminist ethics’ possible? I take this phrase to mean that the principles upon which this ethics is to be based need to be universal and justified, while taking the problem of difference into account. The problem of difference challenges the assumption that individuals are fundamentally alike, and emphasizes the risk of taking one’s own experiences as general, thus making false generalizations. Hence, the challenge to feminist theory is: Are there principles that can respond to the problem of difference, while still having critical potential in the sense of being universal as well as objectively justified?

I will answer this question positively using a Kantian theory. Kant’s universality test differs in structure from a universality test that uses the idea of, for instance, a benevolent impartial spectator; the former does not rely on reversibility of perspectives while the latter does. This difference in structure is crucial but it has often been neglected in feminist criticism of traditional moral philosophy. This neglect has the implication that universalism seems to be incompatible with taking the problem of difference into account. But, with this structural distinction in place, I show that the problem of difference is not a problem for Kant’s version, i.e., the problem of difference does not threaten all kinds of universalistic theories, but only some versions. Hence, Kant’s theory, and thereby at least one universalistic theory, can be shown to be compatible with the problem of difference.

If I am successful in defending a Kantian basis for a global feminist ethics, then this means, ironically, that the solution is taken from the severely criticized Western tradition of moral philosophy (“the master’s tools”). But, more importantly, it shows that a universal ethics is compatible with the problem of difference. Thus, that a global feminist ethics, in this respect, is possible.