

Reflections on the Golden Rule for Today

*Rotary Club Breakfast
United Nations, New York City
December 12, 2012*

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It is an honor to speak to you today. Rotary Clubs inspire at personal, local and global levels. Whether it is to remind an individual business man that his decisions matter or organizing to eradicate polio, service and ethical business practices are synonymous with Rotary Club. The world needs your example.

Rotary International's motto "Service above Self" is inspiring. It is brought into practice by over one million Rotarians in tens of thousands of clubs in more than 150 countries with projects and interventions that further this ideal. Now, to effectively address the challenges of the 21st Century an international order based on universal values, such as the Golden Rule, is needed. Rotary has exemplified such values in practice for over 100 years. Thank you for letting me address you on this subject.

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Today, science, technology and sophisticated social organizational skills have gifted us with unprecedented capacities for enrichment or destruction. The imprint of actions today impact people yet to be born. I believe that there is an ethical responsibility to future generations to ensure we are not passing on a future of horrific wars or ecological catastrophe.

Each of us knows that our individual life is precious and fragile. Our capacity for existential planetary destruction reminds us that our collective existence is fragile. Nuclear weapons have made the modern age a unique age. The future of all people is interconnected as never before and we face numerous issues that can bring us together and for which we must work together to succeed. To address, among other issues, ensuring bio-diversity and ending the destruction of thousands of species; reversing the depletion of fishing stocks; controlling ocean dumping; preventing ozone depletion; halting global warming; controlling and eliminating nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; ending terrorism whether by States or non-State actors; fighting pandemic diseases; ending the tragedy of crushing poverty and lack of clean drinking water; and addressing crises arising from States in chaos we are reminded that no nation or even a small group of nations can succeed alone.

Some solutions must be universal. Chlorofluorocarbon from a refrigerant in the US or China can harm the ozone in Chile, New Zealand or anywhere. If one country allows oceanic dumping, others will follow. Viruses do not recognize religions, races or borders. New levels of human unity and cooperation are needed. Governance to address these challenges cannot be ad hoc any longer.

Wise people have been instructing us for millennia to recognize our deeper human unity and even encouraged seeing the human family as one. But, now necessity alerts us: the galvanizing power of moral global leadership cannot be postponed in deference to short-term parochial interests. Our collective challenges require principles that are uplifting, inspiring, affirmative of our highest potential and universal. They must be based on universal values that weave peace, human security, rather than divisiveness and violent competition.

Niccolo Machiavelli stated in *The Prince*: “Where the safety of the country depends upon resolutions to be taken, no consideration of justice or injustice, humanity or cruelty, nor of glory or shame, should be allowed to prevail.” This policy of “emergency” can hardly make sense as a norm if we are to be ethical beings living in community. Such so called “realists” invariably assert broadly that power in their own hands is necessary to ensure the security of their individual State. Overlooking the intricate interconnectedness of living systems, they exalt social Darwinism, despite plentiful evidence that cooperation is at the root of many species' survival. Strength is good, ultimate strength is better. In the quest for the ultimate weapon, an absurd result is obtained. The means to security and the pursuit of strength undermine the end of security. Such improved means to an unimproved end is most aptly articulated by nuclear weapons whereby the means of pursuing security undermines the end of security. This is not realistic. This is irresponsible.

They also rely on a rigid world view in which the pursuit of the good and the pursuit of the real are divisible. Some even say that only what can be measured, predicted and controlled is relevant in policy discussion. What gives our lives meaning, what makes us human, what exalts our lives, is thus not considered. They leave little room in the making of policy for conscience, love, or other immeasurable, formless, human treasures. Not the least of these treasures that give our lives meaning is compassion, the twin of wisdom.

Compassion is essential to our ethical nature and has universally guided every successful culture. It is upon the foundation of ethical principles that policies must become based.

Without compassion, law cannot attain justice, and without justice, there is never peace. When kindness and compassion guide our policies, our rules become golden.

Buddhism: “Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.”

Udana-Varga, 5:18; “A state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?”

Samyutta Nikaya v. 353.

Christianity: “All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them.”

Matthew 7:12.

Confucianism: “Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you.”

Analects 15:23; “Tsi-kung asked, ‘Is there one word that can serve as a principle of conduct for life?’ Confucius replied, ‘It is the word ‘shu’ – reciprocity. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.’” *Doctrine of the Mean 13.3*; “One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself.” *Mencius VII.A.4.*

Hinduism: “This is the sum of duty: do not unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.” *Mahabharata 5:1517.*

Islam: “No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.”

Hadith.

Jainism: “A man should journey treating all creatures as he himself would be treated.”

Sutrakritanga 1.11.33; “Therefore, neither does he [a wise person] cause violence to others nor does he make others do so.” *Acarangasutra 5.101-2*; “In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self.”

Lord Mahavira, 24th Tirthankara.

Judaism: "...thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself." *Leviticus 19:18*;
"What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. That is the law; all the rest is commentary."
Talmud, Shabbat 31a.

Native American: "Respect for all life is the foundation." *The Great Law of Peace.*

Roman Pagan Religion: "The law imprinted on the hearts of all men is to love the members of society as themselves."

Shinto: "The heart of the person before you is a mirror."

Sikhism: "I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all. *Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299.* "As thou hast deemed thyself, so deem others."

Taoism: "Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss." *Tai Shang Kan Ying Pien, 213-218.*

Yoruba Wisdom (Nigeria): "One going to take a pointed stick to pinch a baby bird should first try it on himself to feel how it hurts."

Zoroastrianism: "That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatsoever is not good for its own self." *Dadistan-I-Dinik, 94:5.*

Philosopher's statements:

Plato: "May I do to others as I would that they should do unto me."
Greece, 4th Century BCE.

Socrates: "Do not do to others that which would anger you if others did it to you."
Greece, 5th Century BCE.

Seneca: "Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your superiors."
Epistle 47:11 Rome, 1st Century CE.

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This principle of reciprocity is the ethical and moral foundation of all the world's major religions. Multilateralism is the logical political outgrowth of this principle. An international order based on cooperation, equity and the rule of law is its needed expression.

Where this rule of reciprocity is violated, instability follows. The failure of the nuclear weapons states to abide by their pledge, contained in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, to negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons is the single greatest stimulus to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. For some to say nuclear weapons are good for them but not for others is simply not logical or sustainable.

The threat to use nuclear weapons on innocent people can never be ethically legitimate and this taint is not cleansed by the self-righteousness of the few possessing the weapon. Imagine the affront to equity and logic if someone proposed that the Biological Weapons Convention should be amended to say that no country can use polio or smallpox as a weapon but that nine countries can use the plague to maintain international peace and stability through a deterrence model. The incoherence of this

proposition is patently offensive, but it is logically identical to the current posture of nuclear weapons. There is a moral and practical imperative for their abolition.

Equity and good qualities in policy bring benefits and bad qualities exacerbate problems. For example, the reparations of World War I led to the chaos that birthed Nazism. The generosity of the Marshall Plan led to trading partners, stability and national well deserved pride. Moral coherence leads to success and stability. The Millennium Development Goals represent a Global Marshall Plan's beginning. History shows us what really works.

Ethical values work on every level. I would like to add two new rules for Nations.

First, the Rule of Nations: **“Treat other nations as you wish your nation to be treated.”**

Second, the Rule of the Powerful: **“As one does so shall others do.”**

We are faced with a moment of collective truth: the ethical, spiritually based insights of the wise coincide with material physical imperatives for survival. The value of the love of power must give way to the power of love. In today's world, leadership must be guided by the duty to love one's neighbor as oneself. This includes the duty to protect the weakest neighbor. And, today, the whole world is one neighborhood – a moral location, not just a physical one.

What was once an admonition as a personal necessity for inner growth has now become a principle that we must learn to utilize in forming public policies. The rule is offended by ethnic and religious exclusivity and prejudice, nationalistic expansionism, economic injustice and environmental irresponsibility. How should we view the security of people?

May I suggest that Timothy Wirth, when he was United States Under-Secretary of State for Global Affairs, was correct when he stated that a productive focus of multilateral security should begin with people:

Security is now understood in the context of human security. Human security is about the 1 billion individuals who live in abject poverty. It is about the 800 million people who go hungry every day -- the 240 million malnourished. The 17 million who die each year from easily preventable diseases fall into this definition of security, as do the 1.3 billion people without access to clean water and the more than 2 billion people who do not benefit from safe sanitation.

Is this not similar to Jesus' admonition to see the presence of God in the least amongst us?

Failure to change our flawed paradigm in which security is pursued primarily through violence reinforces the brutality inflicted upon millions of daily lives destroyed by conventional weapons, including small arms and anti-personnel land mines. And we cannot overlook the exorbitant economic waste and social costs of militarism – more than ten trillion dollars since the end of the Cold War.

If we do not quickly get over the ridiculous excessive attachment to that which divides us, we will fail to establish effective institutions and policies in the present, and we will fail to treat future generations as we would be treated. Such failure cannot be accepted by any parent who has looked into the eyes of their children.

We have developed excessively sophisticated technologies for destruction. For our survival, we require appropriate social and human technologies to ensure cooperation and disarmament. They are required for our very humanity.

Angaangaq Angakkorsuaq is an Eskimo-Kalaallit Elder. At the Millennium World Peace Summit, held at the United Nations, he said that his peoples' history goes back thousands of years and only now are we finding lakes in the Arctic ice cap. He questioned, "You have technology that is melting the ice. When will we develop a technology to melt the human heart?"

Living the Golden Rule is that technology. Yes, there is a there bottom line and it should not be ignored. Yes, there is also a human ideal and it must be continually pursued and lived. States must begin to do it and each of us must do it.

May we be ones who demonstrate those human values in action.

Postscript:

The threat posed by the existence of over 20,000 nuclear weapons and policies of nine states that claim that their use is legitimate is unacceptable.

The nine states with these horrific devices -- India, Pakistan, Israel, Russia, China, U.S., U.K, North Korea, and France -- will not make sufficient progress in disarmament nor can they successfully ensure the constraint of proliferation without credible progress on nuclear disarmament, which requires enormous public pressure. Trying to stop proliferation while holding fast to policies that exalt the value of these weapons is incoherent and unsustainable.

The vast majority of countries have eschewed nuclear weapons and 114 are in nuclear weapons-free zones. Yet, the threat is not abating as those with the weapons are either expanding their arsenals or modernizing them, despite disarmament pledges in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, at the level of rhetoric at the highest positions of state power, and the unanimous ruling of the International Court of Justice to negotiate nuclear weapons elimination.

A coalition of parliamentarians, experts, diplomats, physicians, professionals such as lawyers and business people could make a significant contribution to the eradication of nuclear weapons and help achieve "a global public good of the highest value," to quote Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Such movement will help create the cooperative security environment so needed to address protecting the climate, the oceans and the rainforests and eliminating poverty. Without a new common or cooperative security system, one without nuclear weapons and the irrational threat of total annihilation, success in obtaining many necessary global public goods, such as a healthy climate, is unlikely. Pursuing nuclear weapons elimination will highlight our common interests and the value of cooperation, consistent with an integrated global economy and culture of peace.

The Global Security Institute and its programs are dedicated to this purpose believes strongly in the need for collaboration with other organizations interested in a sustainable future.