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# The Golden Rule

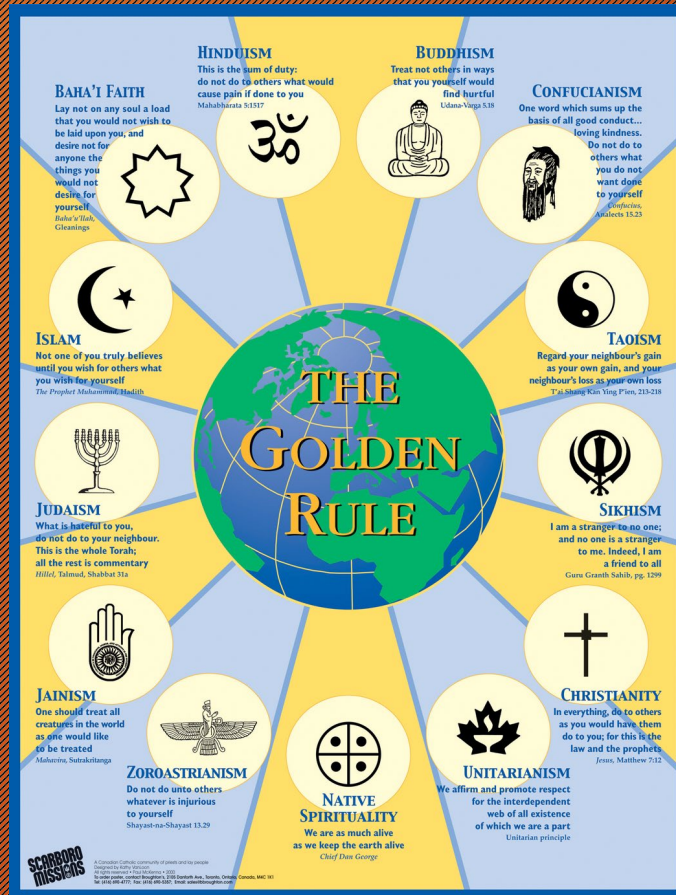
## Ethical Understanding

# The Golden Rule

- The Golden Rule is the principle of treating others as one would wish to be treated.



# The Golden Rule



- The concept occurs in some form in nearly every religion and ethical tradition.

# The Golden Rule

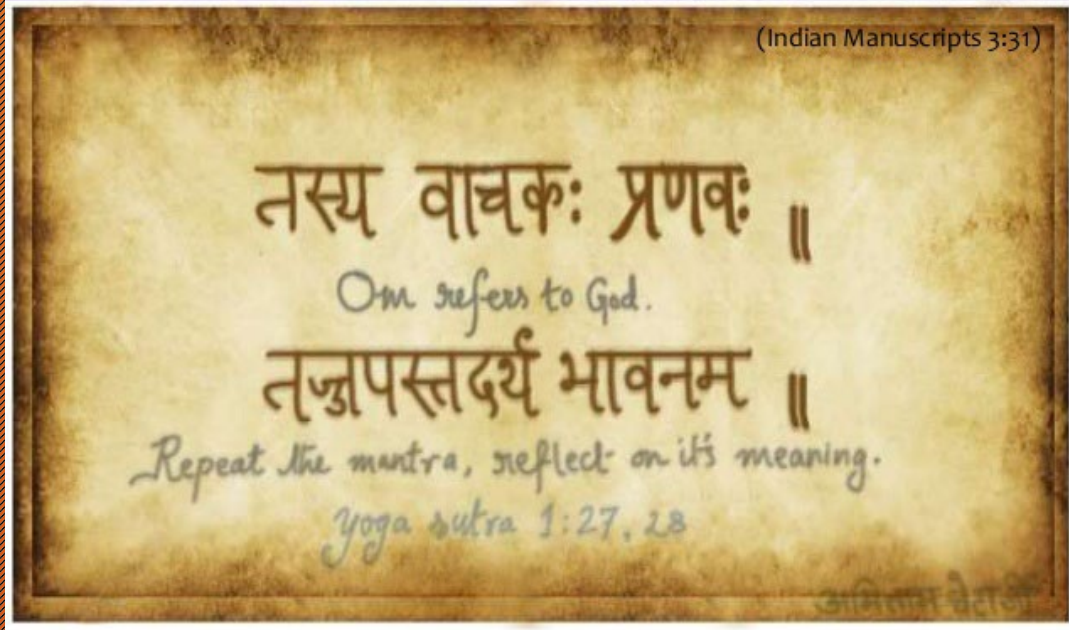
## Antiquity

- A Late Period (c. 664-323 BC) papyrus contains an early negative affirmation of the Golden Rule: "That which you hate to be done to you, do not do to another."



# The Golden Rule

Sanskrit



Ancient India  
Sanskrit tradition  
“.....by self-control  
and by making  
*dharma* (right  
conduct) your main  
focus, treat others as  
you treat yourself.

# The Golden Rule

## Ancient Greece

The Golden Rule in its prohibitive (negative) form was a common principle in ancient Greek philosophy. Examples of the general concept include:

"Avoid doing what you would blame others for doing." -  
Thales (c.624-546 BC)



# The Golden Rule



## Religious context

### Judaism

A rule of altruistic reciprocity was first stated positively in a well-known Torah verse (Hebrew: ואהבת לרעך כמוך):

"You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk. Love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD"

# The Golden Rule

## Religious context

### Christianity

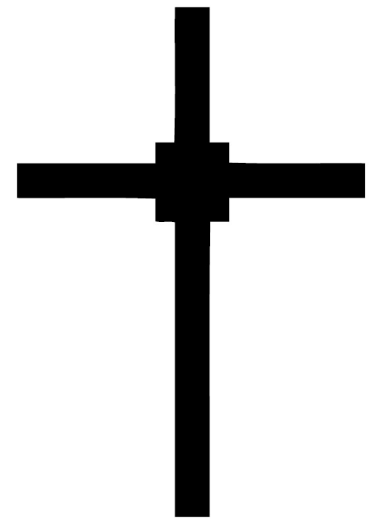
Jesus taught the Golden Rule during the Sermon on the Mount.

The "Golden Rule" was given by Jesus of Nazareth, who used it to summarize the Torah: "Do to others what you want them to do to you."

## Christianity

**In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets**

*Jesus, Matthew 7:12*



# The Golden Rule

**Islam:** Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself. (The Prophet Muhammad, Hadith)



## Religious context

### Islam

The Arabian peninsula was known to not practice the golden rule prior to the advent of Islam.

"Pay, Oh Children of Adam, as you would love to be paid, and be just as you would love to have justice!" Qur'an 83:1-6

# The Golden Rule

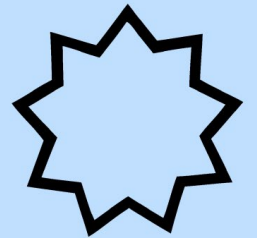
## Religious context

### Bahá'í Faith

The Writings of the Bahá'í Faith encourages everyone to treat others as they would treat themselves and even prefer others over oneself:

“O SON OF MAN! Deny not My servant should he ask anything from thee, for his face is My face; be then abashed before Me.”

**Baha'í Faith:** Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.  
(Baha'u'lláh, Gleanings)



# The Golden Rule

**Hinduism:** This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you. (Mahabharata 5:1517)



**Religious context**

**Hinduism**

One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of dharma. Other behaviour is due to selfish desires.

# The Golden Rule

## Religious context Buddhism

Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama, c. 623-543 BC) made this principle one of the cornerstones of his ethics in the 6th century BC

*Hurt not others  
in ways that you yourself  
would find hurtful.*  
*Buddhism*



# The Golden Rule

**Jainism:** One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated. (Mahavira, Suttrakritanga)



## Religious Context Jainism

The Golden Rule is paramount in the Jainist philosophy and can be seen in the doctrines of Ahimsa and Karma.

# The Golden Rule

## Sikhism

Precious like jewels are the minds of all. To hurt them is not at all good. If thou desirest thy Beloved, then hurt thou not anyone's heart.

— *Guru Arjan Dev Ji 259, Guru Granth Sahib*

## 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



# The Golden Rule

己所不欲，勿施于人。

论语

What you do not want done to  
yourself, do not do to others.

Analects

[www.writtenchinese.com](http://www.writtenchinese.com)

East Asian religions  
Confucianism

己所不欲，勿施於人。  
*"What you do not wish for  
yourself, do not do to  
others."*

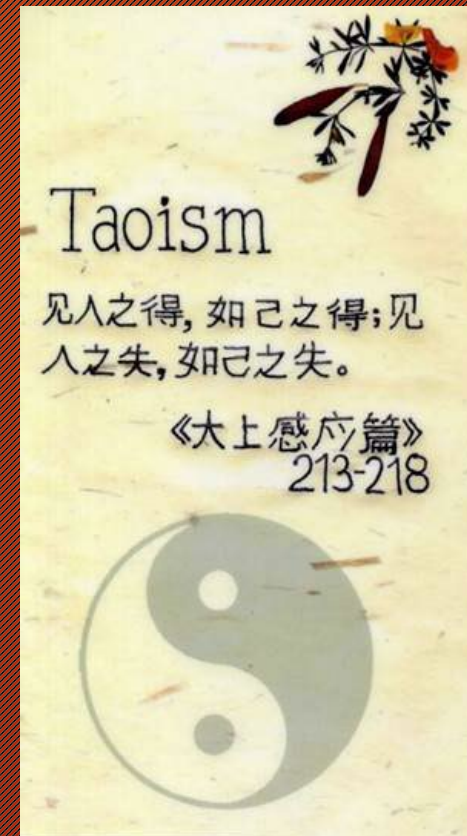
# The Golden Rule

East Asian religion

Taoism

The sage has no interest of his own, but takes the interests of the people as his own. He is kind to the kind; he is also kind to the unkind: for Virtue is kind. He is faithful to the faithful; he is also faithful to the unfaithful: for Virtue is faithful.

— Tao Te Ching, Chapter 49



# The Golden Rule



## Scientology

The Way to Happiness expresses the Golden Rule both in its negative/prohibitive form and in its positive form. The negative/prohibitive form is expressed in Precept 19 as:

19. Try not to do things to others that you would not like them to do to you.

– *The Way to Happiness, Precept 19*

# The Golden Rule

Secular context

Global ethic

The "Declaration Toward a Global Ethic" from the Parliament of the World's Religions (1993) proclaimed the Golden Rule ("We must treat others as we wish others to treat us") as the common principle for many religions.



# The Golden Rule



**Secular context**

**Humanism**

Many different sources claim the Golden Rule as a humanist principle:

Trying to live according to the Golden Rule means trying to empathise with other people, including those who may be very different from us.

# The Golden Rule

## Existentialism

When we say that man chooses for himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men.



# The Golden Rule



## Criticism

Philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche, have objected to the rule on a variety of grounds. The most serious among these is its application. How does one know how others want to be treated?

# The Golden Rule

## Differences in values or interests

Shaw's comment about differing tastes suggests that if your values are not shared with others, the way you want to be treated will not be the way they want to be treated.



# The Golden Rule



## Differences in situations

Immanuel Kant famously criticized the golden rule for not being sensitive to differences of situation, noting that a prisoner duly convicted of a crime could appeal to the golden rule while asking the judge to release him, pointing out that the judge would not want anyone else to send him to prison, so he should not do so to others.

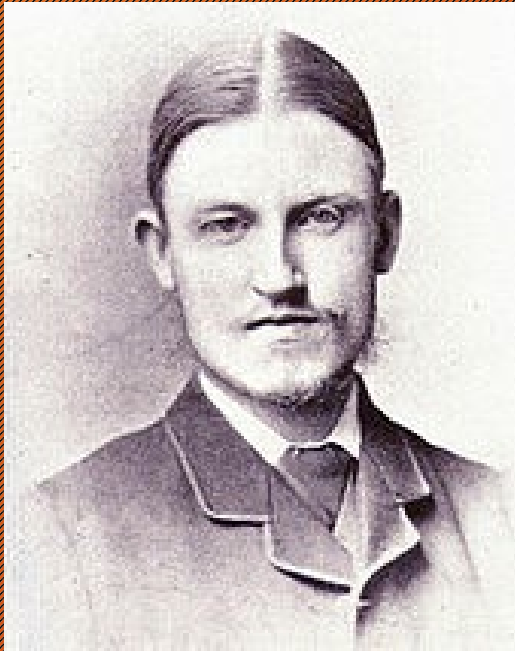
# The Golden Rule

Cannot be a sole guide to action

In his book *How to Make Good Decisions and Be Right All the Time*, philosopher Iain King has argued that "(although) the idea of mirroring your treatment of others with their treatment of you is very widespread indeed... most ancient wisdoms express this negatively - advice on what you should not do, rather than what you should."



# The Golden Rule



## Responses to criticisms

Walter Terence Stace, in *The Concept of Morals* (1937), wrote:

Mr. Bernard Shaw's remark "Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may be different" is no doubt a smart saying. But it seems to overlook the fact that "doing as you would be done by" includes taking into account your neighbor's tastes as you would that he should take yours into account.

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- Wilson John Albert "The Culture of Ancient Egypt", p. 121, University of Chicago Press, 1956, ISBN 0-226-90152-1"Now this is the command: Do to the doer to cause that he do"
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