

## CURBING THE INJUSTICES BY THE MIGHTY: THE GOLDEN RULE OPTION

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### **Abstract**

*The history of mankind is replete with tales of injustice which have occurred in various forms. While the state battles against other forms of injustice, a particular type – the injustice perpetrated by the mighty – has not received the kind of attention that is commensurate with the harm it produces. The subjugation of the weak by the strong, powerful and influential persons, corporate organizations, and nations is atrocious, despicable, morally shocking. As horrendous as the injustice by the mighty is, the perpetrators are rarely apprehended or held accountable. It is so because of their possession of enormous power, finance, and influence with which they control the state, manoeuvre their ways and shield themselves from the punishment they deserve. In effect they are rarely and inadequately punished for the wrong things they do. This paper is an attempt to find a way of curbing the injustice by the mighty and its accompanying menaces. Hence, we posit the Golden Rule Principle as a veritable panacea. Using the qualitative research model the paper critically examines the subject matter and argues for the Golden Rule to be universalized. The Golden Rule – treat others as you would want them to treat you – requires the mighty to test the plausibility or implausibility of their actions by putting themselves in the position of those they oppress, subjugate and despise. The human person, possessing conscience and integrity, will curtail his doing of harm to others if he detests being harmed.*

**Keywords:** Injustice, the Mighty, the Weak, Golden Rule, Silver Rule, Platinum Rule

### **Introduction**

“Those who reproach injustice do so because they are afraid not of doing it but of suffering it.”<sup>1</sup> The above declaration was made by Plato more than two millennia ago to buttress the undesirability of injustice, yet our today's world remains a theatre of injustice of different colours, sizes and shapes with humanity suffering ceaselessly. The pertinent question here is: What should we do? Fold our hands and perish or respond with an antidote to save humanity? Reason will strongly recommend that we do something rather than fold our hands in despair and get crushed under the heavy weight of injustice. We can do something to change the narrative; we can do something to make our world just and safer for mankind. We may not be able to have a completely just society but we can attain a certain level where injustice will be minimal. What exactly should we do?

Our response to injustice is a function of the type, the perpetrator, and the victim. This matters so much because injustice is a product of power relations. By power relations we mean the relationship in which one person or group has social-formative power over another, and is able to get the other person or group to do what they wish whether by compelling obedience or in some less compulsive and even a more subtle way.<sup>2</sup> It was within the perimeter of power relations that

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<sup>1</sup>Plato, *The Republic*. Translated with notes by Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 250. Book viii. 1.344c.

<sup>2</sup>Essien D. Essien, “The Paradox of Increasing Women's Space and Influence in Public Life in Africa: The First Lady Experience,” in *Behavioral-Based Interventions for Improving Public Policies* published by IGI Global, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-2731-3.CH010>

the despoiling of Africa by European slave traders and imperialists happened. It was not outside the horizon of power relations that the destruction of Libya and Iraq by the US led coalition army took place. The devastating bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the dehumanization and brutalization of the Congolese by Belgium under King Leopold; and the corporate complicity in the exploitation, devastation, wanton abuse of human rights of the region and people of Niger Delta of Nigeria all fall within the periphery of power relation. In a similar way, the stealthy exploitation of French colonized African countries by France; the annihilation of six million Jews by Adolf Hitler's Germany, and the brutal exploitation of Latin American countries by Spain and other Europeans were all cases of power relations. Eduardo Galeano satirizes the situation thus:

the division of labor among nations is that some specialize in winning and others in losing. Our part of the world, known today as Latin America, was precocious: it has specialized in losing ever since those remote times when Renaissance Europeans ventured across the ocean and buried their teeth in the throats of the Indian civilizations.<sup>3</sup>

In all of these there was power imbalance – the mighty demonstrated its might in contrast with the feebleness of the weak. Resistance, though spirited, was not sufficient. Worse still, the mighty is rarely held accountable for all the injustices. This point and many more are, before now, well expressed by Ugwu<sup>4</sup> and Ugwu and Abah.<sup>5</sup> Typically, the human society is most often separated into two conflicting groups who differ in capacity - finance, wealth, and power or ability to exert their influence. The two opposing groups are: the rich and the poor, the superior and the inferior, the strong and the weak, the mighty and the feeble. The power relation between these two has always been one of exploitation, subjugation, oppression, suppression, and injustice by one side while the other side remains at the receiving end. It is always the mighty or stronger who exploits, subjugates, oppresses and suppresses the weak. The stratification, though may involve issues like sex, religion, and ethnicity, it is mostly about economic and political domination. It is always the economically and politically stronger unleashing mayhem on the weaker opponents.

The challenge is about how to deal with such injustices bearing in mind that the mighty has always used its power and influence to shield itself from punishment it deserves. How we deal with the injustice by the mighty and in fact, all injustices, goes a long way to determine the future of humanity and society. As it were, the state manages other kinds of injustice by punishing the perpetrators but when it comes to those injustices perpetrated by the mighty, the state seems to be incapacitated or unwilling to do the needful. Why? It is so because the mighty subtly or overtly control the state apparatuses. The law, for instance, is made to protect the interest of the mighty, though it rubs off on the rest members of the society. The law is in the interest of the powerful members of the society whose lives and property are at risk if there were no such protective mechanisms like the law.<sup>6</sup> According to Peter Joyce, the powerful minority defines what crime is; stipulate what is right or wrong, and determine the punishment for going against those laws. In all these effects from the activities of the mighty, it is paramount to point out two factors with high influences: tribe and religion.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five centuries of the pillage of a continent*, 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), 18

<sup>4</sup>Anayochukwu K. Ugwu, "A Critical Approach to the Problem of Nigeria and the Struggle for Nation Building," *Sociology Study*. Vol. 10, No. 5, 2020, 223-251. <https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5526/2020.05.005>

<sup>5</sup>Anayochukwu K. Ugwu and George O. Abah, "A Discourse on the Politics of Consciencelessness in Nigerian: An Enquiry into the Concept of Good Governance," *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2022, 10-18. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24949.65764>

<sup>6</sup>Peter Joyce, *Criminology: A Compulsory Introduction* (London: Holder and Stroughon, Ltd), 4

<sup>7</sup>Anayochukwu K. Ugwu, "Politics of Religion and Tribalism and the Fate of the Nigerian Nation," *Academia Letters Journal* (Article 3538), 2021, 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL.3538>. Cf. Anayochukwu K. Ugwu and George O. Abah, "The Role of Philosophy in Insecurity and Good Governance in Nigeria," *Sociology Study*, Vol. 10, No. 6, 2020, 287-318. <https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5526/2020.06.004>

This paper is an attempt to find a way out of the persistent and pervading injustice especially the injustice perpetrated by the strong and mighty on the weak. It is a recommendation for the universal application of the Golden Rule principle in all human related dealings.

### What is Injustice?

To facilitate the understanding of injustice, it is apposite to explain what justice means especially in the context of this paper. Justice is one of those concepts whose meaning may not possibly be pinned to one particular thing or state of affair. “An explication of justice with the view of pinning it to one generally accepted meaning is obviously impossible because there are varied notions of it. In fact every culture has its version of justice.”<sup>8</sup> This is in line with Aristotle's view that the words justice and injustice are ambiguous concepts and the most we could do is to attempt an analysis of them by highlighting their various meanings and implications. For Cephalus in Plato's *Republic* justice is telling the truth and restoring what one has received.<sup>9</sup> For Polemarchus it is to give back benefits and injuries to friends and enemies respectively. For Thrasymachus, “justice is simply the interest of the stronger.”<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Plato holds that justice is bifocal - justice in the community and justice in the soul. Hence, justice is harmony - a proper, harmonious relationship between the warring parts of the person or city.

Justice for Aristotle is what is lawful, fair and equal. It is “that kind of state of character which makes people disposed to do what is just and makes them act justly and wish for what is just and by injustice is that state which makes them act unjustly ...”<sup>11</sup> Aristotle further distinguished between two kinds of justice - universal justice and particular justice. While the former corresponds to justice as virtue, the highest virtue; the later corresponds to distributive and remedial justice.

Reiterating the primacy of justice over other virtues, John Rawls contends that “justice is the first virtue of social institutions as truth is of systems of thought ... laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust.”<sup>12</sup> Being the first virtues of human activities, truth and justice do not compromise. The only reason for allowing injustice, according to Rawls, is when it is necessary to avoid a greater injustice. For Rawls then, justice is fairness, based on some basic principles:

- (1) The principle of equal basic liberties - that all citizens have equal rights to basic liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, and association.
- (2) The principle of fair equality of opportunities - all citizens have equal opportunities to access education, employment, and other resources.
- (3) The difference principle - social and economic inequalities are arranged so as to benefit the least advantaged members of the society.<sup>13</sup>

For the purpose of this paper, justice shall be understood as fairness, equality, respect for human rights and upholding of human dignity. The term 'injustice' is very commonly defined as the absence of justice. In other words, wherever justice is denied, injustice is affirmed. Hence, injustice could be understood to mean unfair treatment, a situation in which the rights of a person or a group of people are ignored, denied or abused; to treat someone or something in an undignified manner. According to Wikipedia, “injustice is a quality relating to unfairness.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ejike Akpa, “Justice for Peace: Analysis of Justice in Edeh's Philosophy of Thought and Action (EPTAISM),” Online Journal of Arts, Management and Social Sciences (OJAMSS); vol. 1, no. 1, September 2016, 201

<sup>9</sup>Plato, *Republic*, Bk. 1, 330<sub>d</sub>-331<sub>d</sub>

<sup>10</sup>Plato, *Republic*, Bk. 1, 338<sub>a</sub>-339<sub>a</sub>

<sup>11</sup>Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 1129<sub>a</sub>

<sup>12</sup>John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 3

<sup>13</sup>Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 53

<sup>14</sup>Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/injustice>

Undeniably, injustice is a universal human feature though the exact circumstances considered unjust can vary from culture to culture just as justice may be culturally bound. What is important however is that injustice is evil and should be condemned, avoided, discouraged, prevented; and efforts made towards correcting it because its effects are sure to bounce back on the wellbeing of man and society. No wonder Martin Luther King Jr. declares that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”<sup>15</sup>

According to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, injustice consists of the persistence, aggravation and very existence of extreme poverty which plagues the globe. Those who suffer deprivation of their fundamental human rights; robbed of their freedom; and are subjected to discrimination, poor health, vulnerability, insecurity, various abuses, and lack of personal and professional development opportunities suffer a great deal of injustice. All these represent sufficient evidence that injustice is persistent and growing in the world.

Global inequality as epitomized by the disparity in life span, mortality rate, income, access to education and health between the African/Asian/Latin American and American/Western European. The disparity illustrates the gross injustice in the world even though nature has blessed the world with enough resources to keep every person comfortable and happy. One form of injustice is inequality which is a creation of the mighty and which is ravishing the world presently. For example, the mortality rate of children under five was 26 times higher in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa than in Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development countries in 2001. Educationally, the inequality is extremely high. For instance, “the average American born between 1975 and 1979 has completed more than 14 years of schooling (roughly the same for men and women, and in urban and rural areas), while the average school attainment for the same cohort in Mali is less than 2 years, with women's attainment less than half that for men, and virtually zero in rural areas (World Bank, 2006a).”<sup>16</sup> Economically, the story is worse. Majority of African families are living below poverty level. According to March 2024 global poverty update from the World Bank: first estimates of global poverty until 2022, “an estimated 23 million more people were living in extreme poverty in 2022, compared to 2019.”<sup>17</sup> Incidentally, extreme poverty levels were lower in 2022 relative to 2019 for more prosperous regions, but not for the world. This suggests that the economic recovery from COVID 19 Pandemic was uneven and slower for sub-Saharan Africa where more than half of the extreme poor live. This is all about inequality.

In another development, Luca Ventura, in “Poorest Countries in the World 2024,” writes that “the world has enough to ensure that the entire human race enjoys a decent standard of living. Yet, people in countries like Burundi, South Sudan and Central African Republic continue to live in desperate poverty.”<sup>18</sup> No thanks to political instability and conflict, corrupt governments, history of exploitative colonization, weak rule of law, war and social unrest, severe climate conditions or hostile aggressive neighbours. To determine the poorest countries in the world, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is often the standard metric. However, to compensate for differences in living costs and rates of inflation, using purchasing power parity (PPP), can be better to assess an individual's buying power in any given country. Before COVID 19 Pandemic, living in extreme poverty meant living on less than \$1.90 a day. With the rising cost

<sup>15</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” 1963, <sup>1</sup>. Culled from [www.csuchico.edu/iege\\_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf](http://www.csuchico.edu/iege_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf)

<sup>16</sup>The International Forum for Social Development, *Social Justice in an Open World: The Role of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations, 2006), <sup>1</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Darrel Moellendorf, “Global Inequality and Injustice,” *Journal of International Development, J. Int. Dev.* <sup>21</sup>, 1125-1136 (2009), <sup>1126</sup>, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.1651>

<sup>18</sup>March 2024 Global Poverty update from World Bank. <https://blogs.worldbank.org>

<sup>19</sup>Luca Ventura, “Poorest Countries in the World 2024,” *Global Finance Magazine*, May 6, 2024. [www.gfmag.com](http://www.gfmag.com)



of living the International Poverty Line (IPL) was raised to \$2.15.

In Nigeria, with the dollar exchanging for about 1,500 Naira, not to be in the bracket of the extreme poverty would mean living on not less than 3, 200 Naira a day. The minimum wage for workers is 30, 000 Naira which is about \$20 per month (28 - 30 days) translating into 9.30 days spending at 3,200 Naira per day. If he spends his whole monthly salary within 10 days or even less, how does he survive for the remaining 18-20 days? The implication is that many Nigerian workers, including some university lecturers, are with the bracket of extremely poor people. To some extent, this injustice is traced to the mighty, powerful, and influential people who continually dominate the weak.

### **Injustice by the Mighty**

With a fair understanding of injustice, it is pertinent at this juncture to dwell on what can be identified as 'injustice by the mighty.' Who are the mighty and how do inflict injustice on the weak? The mighty is here understood as those persons, groups, or nations who wield so much power and influence such that they dominate, subjugate, and exploit others. They are able to do this because they possess the finance, influence, connections and power direct, and control government policies and personnel in their favour even from afar. In other words, they act overtly, subtly, and discreetly. They practically determine the affairs of nations and the direction of states from the comfort of their homes or conclaves. They include those powerful individuals, nations, multinational and transnational corporations whose ubiquity accord them presence nearly everywhere and who significantly control global affairs especially economically and politically. The mighty here does not include terrorists and other clandestine groups that do not enjoy any form of legitimacy. The latter may have, and exercise some power, but such is not recognized by law.

What may be classified as injustice by the mighty are the harms, injuries, deprivations, discriminations, and unfair treatments meted on persons and groups that are comparably weaker. The injustice transcends borders, race, gender, and religion. It is often motivated by economic and political gains. The classification of countries of the world into developed, developing, and underdeveloped; first, second and third world is the consequence of economic and political policies motivated by the greed of the powerful nations, groups, and individuals whose goal is to subjugate, dominate, control and exploit the less powerful nations and individuals.

A peep into the history of man and the world reveals that many great atrocities that have been committed against humanity were by the organized society. As it were, those atrocities have legitimacy in the laws. Interestingly too, the Church and organized religious groups, which ordinarily should condemn and stand against all forms of injustice, find ways of supporting those evils either openly or covertly by their silence and inaction. Till today, Africa still bleeds as a result of the 400 years of slavery and nearly a hundred years of colonialism. The two events were carefully planned, rationalized and executed by civilized European governments, businessmen, politicians, royalties and religious leaders. It is on record that from 1619 when the first twenty Negroes were sold as slaves at Jamestown from a Dutch vessel, till January 1, 1863, when Abraham Lincoln officially made the Emancipation Proclamation to officially end slavery in America, Africa lost millions of able-bodied men and women. An estimated "total number of slaves exported from Africa during the four centuries amounted to some fifteen million; in addition, the trade caused the death of perhaps thirty to forty million others in slave raids, coffles, and barracoons."<sup>20</sup> It was incredibly cruel and incredibly costly in human life.

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<sup>20</sup>Paul Hanly Furfy, *The Respectable Murderers: Social Evil and Christian Conscience* (New York: Herder and Herder Inc., 1966), 33

There were also issues of the atrocities perpetrated in Congo by King Leopold of Belgium, the obnoxious policies of French in the French colonized states. The present indigent status of most African states is traced to the injustices embedded in the economic and political policies of the colonial masters before, during and after colonialism. In the words of Walter Rodney, “in the period of the notorious 'Scramble for Africa', Europeans made a grab for whatever they thought spelt profits in Africa ... The gap that had arisen during the period of pre-colonial trade gave Europe the power to impose political domination on Africa.”<sup>21</sup>

The human (especially children) and material losses that accompanied the Nigerian civil war, and government and corporate complicity in the devastation of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria are just a few examples of the injustice by the mighty on the weak. The Amnesty International in one of its 2005 publication, “Claiming rights and resources: Injustice, oil and violence in Nigeria” noted that “ten years after executions that horrified the world, the exploitation of oil in the Niger Delta continues to result in deprivation, injustice and violence.”<sup>22</sup> Liberia and Sierra, Rwandan, Sudanese crises, and the many massacres and genocides (Algeria, 8th May, 1945; Angolan, 15th March, 1961; Benin, 1897; Congo, 1885-1908; Ethiopian, 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1937; Guinea Bissau, 3rd August, 1959, Kenya, 1905 and 1952, Libya, 23th October 10, 1911, Madagascar, 29th March, 1947)<sup>23</sup> and many more that dot the continent are permanently stuck to the memories of Africans and men of conscience. They were planned and executed by legitimate authorities, not by miscreants, burglars, and pick-pockets.

Mention must also be made of another huge inhumanity and moral callousness - the slaughter of the European Jews. During the Nazi persecution of the Jews, spanning from 1933 to 1945, that is, from the period of harassment to the period of annihilation, some 5,100,000 European Jews - Polish, Germans, French, Czechs, and Slovaks were slaughtered under Adolf Hitler's Germany.<sup>24</sup> There are other such genocides and massacres in history such as the millions of Armenians and Greeks who lost their lives under the Turkish persecution of 1914-15, extremely bloody Stalin's great purge of 1937-38, and the millions of persons who were put to death in Communist China. During the two World wars millions of combatants and non-combatants were slain. One cannot forget in a hurry the obliteration bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the invasion and plundering of Iraq and Libya, and the ongoing destruction of Ukraine.

It is a similar or near similar case in Latin America where centuries of confrontation of cultures has led to massive “human suffering, destruction, oppression and the death of millions.”<sup>25</sup> Francesco Moreno is very succinct when noting that “for Latin American people and history, the culture of European modernity (humanism, Enlightenment, progress, technology, science, etc.) projected the dirtiest and least attractive image: slavery, exploitation, dependence, marginalization, and extermination of great numbers of people.”<sup>26</sup> In all these injustice, the perpetrators are often not held accountable not because they are not known but because the power and influence they wield. But why would they not be held accountable and treated the same way ordinary people are treated when they do not have any special immunity? Jason Brennan notes that “the state does not have special immunity so as not to be punished for her

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<sup>21</sup>Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Abuja: Panaf Publishing, 2009), 163

<sup>22</sup>Amnesty International. *Claiming Rights and Resources: Injustice, Oil and Violence in Nigeria* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2005), 2

<sup>23</sup>World Council of Churches. “Massacres Committed in Africa During Colonial Times.” <https://www.oikumene.org/resources/documents>. Accessed 25/08/21

<sup>24</sup>Furphy, *The Respectable Murderers*, 50

<sup>25</sup>Francesco Moreno, *Moral Theology from the Poor* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1988), 53

<sup>26</sup>Moreno, *Moral Theology from the Poor*, <sup>54</sup>

crimes and injustices.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, multinational/transnational corporations, powerful individuals and organizations should not be treated as if they have any special immunity so as not to be punished for the injustices they met on others. They should rather be made to face the consequences of their unjust actions. Unless a society is “paramoral,”<sup>28</sup> (a society where, by a strange perversion, crime is the badge of decency), there ought not to be tolerance of injustice, not even of the mighty. The mighty might be the respectable citizens, often at the helm of leadership (in reference to individuals), yet justice requires that they are not exempted from punishment if they commit acts of injustice.

### **The Golden Rule Option: Towards Curbing the injustice by the mighty**

As a result of the power and influence of the mighty, they do harm to people and go free. This is because of the absence of the means with which to hold the mighty responsible, that is, the inability to punish them; hence, something else has to come into play. This paper, thus, posits the Golden Rule. One may ask: why Golden Rule instead of the Platinum Rule, or Silver Rule? An explication of the silver rule will be followed by that of platinum rule and finally the golden rule.

The Silver Rule is basically the 'negative' of the Golden Rule. “It is the golden rule without gold.”<sup>29</sup> It says: “do not treat others the way you would not like them to treat you” or “What you do not wish done to you, do not do to others.” The silver rule sounds like the principle of reciprocity – “what you give is what you get back” - if you steal, you will be stolen from; if you kill, you will be killed; whatever you do to someone will be done to you in return. The silver rule forbids one from stealing another's purse because such is hateful to him/her but if he/she finds a purse in the parking lot, the silver rule is mute on what the person should do, the person simply minds his/her business, that is, “I care not attitude” or “it has nothing to do with me attitude.” Meanwhile, the right thing to do would be for him/her to report the discovery so that the rightful owner could reclaim it. Incidentally, many persons live by the principle of the silver rule: mind your business Golden Rule says 'treat others the way you would like them to treat you', or 'do not treat others the way you would not like them to treat you', or 'what you do not wish done to you, do not do to other'.

The Platinum Rule favours the other person more than the self. It says: 'Treat others as they would like to be treated.' In this case, how you want to be treated is not as important as how the other person wants to be treated. But if we adopt that as our guide in dealing with crime, the judge will not punish the criminal since he (the criminal) would wish that he is not punished even though he has done something that deserves punishment. If we should apply that principle in all cases, we would be encouraging all sorts of untoward acts and since the person only benefits but does not give or forfeit anything in return, he might not change to a better person. A more serious problem is in knowing how the other person would want to be treated. It will require that he says how he wants to be treated.

The Golden Rule states thus: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' It expressly enjoins us to look into ourselves and use ourselves as the standard for dealing with others. At the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus declared thus: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ...”<sup>30</sup> Jesus is simply urging people to treat other people the way they would want other people to treat them. By implication, we should only do to

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<sup>27</sup>Jason Brennan, *When All Else Fails: The Ethics of Resistance to State Injustice* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), 206

<sup>28</sup>Furfy, *The Respectable Murderers*, 21

<sup>29</sup>Wayne Jackson and Christian Courier, *Gold, Silver, and Iron: Three Rules of Human Conduct* (Fortify Your Faith Foundation, Inc. 2023). <https://christiancourier.com/articles/gold-silver-and-iron-three-rules-of-human-conduct>

<sup>30</sup>Gospel of St. Mathew, Chapter 7 verse 12

others those things we would accept when done to us. If we would be comfortable with our money being stolen, then we would be justified to steal. If you will be comfortable with being enslaved, marginalized, exploited, discriminated against, or maltreated in any way; you are at freedom to do same to others; but if otherwise, don't do them to others. The human person being what he/she is, most time wants to be treated well; in compliance with the golden rule, he/she should treat other people well. Hence, the golden rule is practically appropriate to guide the action of humans in their relationships and dealings with their fellows.

In praise of the golden rule, Robert MacIver remarks thus:

There is no rule that can prescribe both my values and your values or decide between them. There is no universal rule, and only that can be laid down, on ethical - that is, apart from the creeds of particular religions and apart from the ways of the tribe that falsely and arrogantly universalize themselves. Do unto others as you would have them do to you. This is the only rule that stands by itself in the light of its own reason, the only rule that can stand in the naked, warring universe, in the face of the contending values of men and groups.<sup>31</sup>

The golden rule can be easily grasped intuitively. “It has such an immediate intelligibility that it serves as a ladder than anyone can step onto without a great stretch. I know how I like to be treated; and that is how I am to treat others. The rule asks me to be considerate of others rather than indulging in self-centeredness.”<sup>32</sup>It strikes the average person as intuitively true. We know its truth effortlessly. “The beauty of the golden rule is that instead of attacking the will that is in other men, it offers their will a new dimension.”<sup>33</sup>It redirects their actions towards a more mutually beneficial course. It takes place in an ethic of relationship and construes action, first and foremost, not as a quest for self-actualization, nor as a theme for reasoning, nor as determined by social structures, but as interaction with fellow human persons. “The rule is primarily designed for relationships. The agent identifies with the recipient and acts in the light of that identification.”<sup>34</sup>

The golden rule is a philosophy of living as it sets the standard for the conduct of one-to-one relationships between human persons in line with the fact that humans cannot thrive in isolation with cooperation and interaction with others. Nature, in fact, abhors isolation. Since we must be in relationships, as human beings, we must relate well for “if there is righteousness in the heart, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, the nation will well governed. If the nation is well governed, there will be peace in the world.”<sup>35</sup> The golden rule brings out the sense of equality between the agent and the recipient such in accord with the understanding that a relationship is basically a relationship between equals. Within the framework of human equality, the golden rule is fully compatible with leadership and teamwork, so long as teamwork is voluntary and leadership is understood as functional matter, not a matter of display of superiority. The golden rule invites leaders to lead as they would like to be led, and invites team members (the led) to give the quality of teamwork or followership they would want if they were leading. Pertaining to justice, it is noteworthy that the taproot of justice and the entire foundation of equity consist in not doing another what you would not endure yourself. By measuring your own feelings by those of your neighbour enables you realize whether you are acting justly or

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<sup>31</sup>Robert M. McIver, “The Deep Beauty of the Golden Rule,” in *Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, edited by John R. Burr and Milton Goldfinger (New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited, 2012), 211

<sup>32</sup>Jeffrey Wattles, *The Golden Rule* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3

<sup>33</sup>McIver, “The Deep Beauty of the Golden Rule,” 212

<sup>34</sup>Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 171

<sup>35</sup>Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 172



unjustly. Putting yourself in the position of another enables you know and judge your actions better and perhaps prevents you from hurting another. How could one inflict on another the kind of hurt he/she would be bitter about if inflicted on him/her?

The golden rule prescribes the spirit with which we should treat others, and that is the spirit of neighbourliness, humanness, and compassion. If the society operates on that principle, criminals would not crimes, and if they do, the punishing agents would not treat them inhumanly but with some sense of humanity and compassion in sight. That does not necessarily mean letting them go unpunished. The golden rule, put in operation, would prevent the state, the wealthy, and the ruling class – the mighty – from perpetrating all the injustices they met on the weak. It would significantly reduce if not complete eradicate exploitation of man by man. It would as well, guard against inhuman treatment of fellow human beings and the tendency to subjugate and humanize others. The golden rule recognizes and respects the dignity of man irrespective of race, status, or whatever other profanities that plague our world. From economic angle, the golden rule has the capacity to transform capitalism into a humanistic phenomenon devoid of unhealthy competition, greed, and exploitation.

As an antidote to both small and big crimes, the golden rule invites us to put ourselves in the positions of the other person as a test for the acceptability or non-acceptability of our actions. When I do that, I will be very reluctant to inflict any form of harm, hardship, or pain on any other person because I will not want harm to be inflicted on me by others. I do not want to be murdered; therefore, I should not murder another. I do not want my spouse to commit adultery, my property to be stolen, deprived of my freedom, or unjustly imprisoned; therefore, I should not commit adultery, steal, deprive any other person of his/her freedom, or unjustly imprison another person. At all times, I should treat others with comparable consideration. Since others have comparable interests, the rule calls me to treat the other as someone akin to myself. Given the highly favourable disposition of the golden rule to humanity one might think that it would not be criticized. That is not the case because there is no principle, or system that can be so good that it would not be criticized. Dave Kerpen points out that magnificence of the golden rule but that it is limited by the differences between people and situations. For him in *The Art of People* the golden rule is “a splendid concept except for one thing: Everyone is different, and the truth is that in many cases what you'd want done to you is different from what your partner, employee, customer, investor, wife, or child would want done to him or her.”<sup>36</sup> Kerpen would then propose the Platinum Rule which says: do unto others as they would want done to them, as a better option. He perceives the platinum rule to be more difficult than the golden rule because it is easy to know what you want but much harder to put yourself in another person's shoe, walk around in them, and understand that person's perspective. In spite of the harder nature of the platinum rule, Kerpen thinks that it is more powerful in business and in life. He further states: “The Golden Rule, as great as it is, has limitations, since all people and all situations are different. When you follow the Platinum Rule, however, you can be sure you're actually doing what the other person wants done and assure yourself of a better outcome.”

One would agree with Kerpen that differences between persons and situation might limit the golden rule but it does not diminish its effectiveness in checkmating wanton perpetration of injustice. It is not that injustice will be eradicated completely, that is not possible in a human world but supposing that the rule is universalized and truly observed; only few persons would still perpetrate injustice. Meanwhile, our argument is that the universalization and adherence to

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<sup>36</sup>Dave Kerpen, *The Art of People: 11 Simple People Skills that Will Get You Everything You Want* (New York: Crown Business, 2016), 90

the golden rule would curb the injustice by the mighty still stands even in the midst of differences. No man would choose to be enslaved, tortured, defrauded, exploited, denigrated, oppressed, if he can help it. Invariably, what the mighty would do for the recipient, supposing he applies the platinum rule, will still remain that which he, the agent, would not want done to him - injustice. It is also valuable to point out that adherence to the platinum rule would be dangerous to the society. A criminal for instance, would not want to be punished for his crime, rather he would want to be set free and allowed to continue his criminal life. A lazy man would want to be taken care of without making any effort of his own. An average worker would want to be paid the salary of a highly skilled professional. No wonder, another name for platinum rule is asymmetrical (irregular) rule.

### **Conclusion**

With the proven culpability mighty in infliction of injustice on the weak, the need for holding accountable cannot be overemphasized. It is inconsistent with sound reasoning that those who enslaved and treated their fellow human beings like articles of trade; those who plundered other nations and massacred the citizens at the same time; and those who have kept their fellow human beings in perpetual poverty, servitude and misery; are not made to pay for their crime. Rather than punish the real offender it is the victim that is punished. It may sound audacious yet it is the right thing to do - to compel the mighty account for the crimes they commit. Finally, as we aspire to have a world where justice rather than injustice will prevail, it is appropriate the golden rule is made the principal guide to all human relationships. We should always be guided by the injunction: only do to others what you would accept if done to you.