
Professional codes of morality and the professional codes of conduct of military personnel in different countries

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Abstract

This article presents a study on moral codes and professional codes of conduct. Various professional codes of conduct were considered, including the Samurai Code of Conduct, Code of Chivalry, Pirate Code, Hippocratic Oath and Medical Oath, Red Cross Code of Conduct, Galilean Oath, Code of Apparel Industry Partnership, Ethics in Computer Programming and Software Development, Moral hacking. Special emphasis is placed on Military Ethics and the morale of the serviceman. The article recognizes the golden rule of global ethics as the most important and simple truth for distinguishing right from wrong in human behavior.

Keywords:

moral codes; professional codes of conduct; golden rule; Military Ethics; morale of the serviceman.

Article info

Received: 29 June 2024; Revised: 21 August 2024; Accepted: 22 September 2024; Available online: 15 October 2024

Citation: Petrova, E. 2024. "Professional codes of morality and the professional codes of conduct of military personnel in different countries". *Bulletin of "Carol I" National Defence University*, 13(3): 74-88. <https://doi.org/10.53477/2284-9378-24-31>



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The main goal of the article is the presentation of professional codes of morality and the professional codes of conduct of military and civilian personnel in different countries and areas of human life. For this purpose, various theoretical approaches with practical-applied elements are used, as follows – the historical approach, a review of a variety of available scientific and practical-applied literature, an etymological review of used concepts and terms, the foundation of leading world scientific dictionaries interpreting individual phenomena, content analysis. The first part of the scientific work has a mainly theoretical orientation, while the second and third emphasize the existing moral codes and codes of professional conduct from ancient times to the present day in different areas of human life. The third part of the development is oriented to military ethics and morale, which is an extremely relevant and important problem, especially as it relates to the „peace-war” situation, that modern society is faced with. At the same time, in the exposition, the author asks some scientific questions, being critical of the presented topic under consideration and looking for relevant answers.

Moral code and code of conduct – in-depth study of the concepts

Ethics consists of the standards of behavior we adhere to in our personal and professional lives. It establishes the levels of honesty, empathy, trustworthiness, loyalty, and other virtues by which we hope to identify our personal behavior and public reputation, and it sets norms for the ways in which we interact with family, friends, colleagues, and in society as well.

In the modern world, humanity's value system is under tremendous stress. The explosion of technology, knowledge and information, industrialization, globalization, aggression, consumerism, and greed lead to a polluted world of polluted values, weak moral foundations, and exposure of human weaknesses and vices.

The etymological review of the term „code” takes us back to the 13th century, when this term denoted a systematic compilation of laws, a system of laws, and a book of laws. The word originates from the Latin word „caudex”, i.e. „a systematic classification of statutory law”. The meaning „system of rules” dates from 1808 ([Online Etymology Dictionary 2001-2022](#)).

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, „a code” is ([Cambridge Dictionary 2022a](#)):

- a set of principles that are accepted and used by society or a particular group of people;
- a set of rules or laws.

A code of ethics represents the internal moral policy within an organization. This policy sets out the principles, standards, and moral expectations to which employees and third parties adhere while interacting with the organization ([Compliance Glossary 2022](#)). As a rule, moral codes are drawn up excluding any form of

punishment or reward, although in practice we find exceptions. Bearing in mind that ethics is the science of morality, we should mention that the proper name of what we usually encounter in everyday life, and in some cases in professional environments, as „ethical code” should be – „moral code”. Despite our point of view, we will comply with the use of the term „code of ethics”, since it has gained too much popularity precisely under this name, and also due to the necessary correctness when citing the actors who use it exactly this way.

The general code of ethics is a practice with a wider scope and is adopted to help members of the organization understand the difference between right and wrong thinking, right and wrong behavior, and apply this understanding to their professional decisions. A common moral code defines the values that underlie moral behavior in the organization and serves as a starting point for employees to make better and morally informed choices every day. It presents the basic guiding principles according to which employees should act in cases of moral dilemmas.

A code of conduct is a set of rules of conduct that employees follow within an organization, especially regarding their professional conduct. A code of conduct informs employees of the company’s expectations of morality and moral behavior and acts as a standard to which employees must conform. A code of conduct reviews the organization’s goals, values, mission, vision, and philosophy, and links these ideals to standards of professional conduct.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary „a code of conduct” is ([Cambridge Dictionary 2022b](#)):

- a system of numbers, letters, or signals used to represent something in a shorter or more convenient form;
- a set of rules that are accepted as general principles, or a set of written rules that say how people in a particular organization or country should behave;
- a set of rules that members of an organization or people with a particular job or position must follow.

Often confused with a general moral code, a code of conduct refers to the expected behavior of those working in an organization, while a general moral code provides guidance on moral decision-making skills when faced with moral dilemmas.

Some of the elements that would be included in a code of conduct are:

- values;
- philosophy;
- hierarchy and status;
- communication and communication channels;
- due regard;
- dress code;
- delays/absences;
- exit policy;

- vacation policy;
- discrimination;
- conflict of interests;
- bullying;
- misuse of company resources and property;
- whistleblowing;
- privacy.

The subject of professional ethics includes practices designed to solve moral problems that arise in a certain profession. Professional ethics tries to solve three main problems. The first is related to the need to specify general human moral norms in the conditions of professional activity. The second takes into account the requirements that exist within the profession, tying them to external links and relations. Thirdly, professional ethics is the bearer of correspondence between the values of the profession and the interests of society itself, and from this point of view, it expresses the relationship between social responsibility and professional duty.

But what are the most important characteristics of professional ethics?

First, professional ethics is expressed in the form of requirements addressed to representatives of a given profession, and its normative image is laid down in the form of comprehensively formulated declaration codes.

Second, all codes of professional ethics are filled with the conviction that the values professed by the profession are not only completely obvious but also obligatory, arising from an analysis of the activities of the best representatives of the particular profession.

Professional ethics is considered the oldest of the three ethical fields – applied ethics, metaethics, and normative ethics. In reality, it originates in human everyday working life, in human practice. It is traditionally believed that the first set of professional rules was compiled by the ancient Greek physician Hippocrates (460 – 370 BC), which is also one of the prerequisites for the separation of medicine as a separate science. Hippocrates did not formulate the physician's oath himself but summarized various vows made by Greek priests to the god of healing Asclepius. This oath is the prototype of the modern medical code of ethics. The history of professional ethics can also be traced from the documents, charters, and oaths of various institutions and organizations in the ancient world, for example, the professional associations of Ancient Rome.

The moral code of the profession is adopted by and for the representatives of a given profession, industry, or sector. It includes professional duties and responsibilities, discussions of difficult issues and difficult decisions, and provides accurate information about what behavior is considered moral or as correct in a given profession. Failure to comply with the code of professional practice may result in the

exclusion of the individual from the professional branch or industry, or revocation of the rights to practice a profession.

The International Guide to Good Practice for Defining and Developing an Effective Professional Code provides the following definition for „professional code”:

„A professional code includes principles, values, standards or rules of conduct that guide an organization’s decisions, procedures and systems in a way that contributes to the well-being of its key stakeholders and respects the rights of all those affected by its activities” (IFAC PAIB Committee 2007).

Professional moral codes

Samurai code of conduct. Bushido is a moral code regarding the conduct and lifestyle of the samurai. Bushido is used as an umbrella term for all the codes, practices, philosophies, and principles of samurai culture. Bushido affects countless aspects of Japanese society and culture. Bushido is the basis of the ideology of industrial harmony in modern Japan. This enabled the country to become a world economic wonder and the economic leader of Asia in the post-war 1950s and 1960s (Cleary 2008). Business relationships, the close relationship between the individual and the group, and the notions of trust, respect, and harmony in the Japanese business world are based on bushido.

Principles such as honorable poverty encourage those with power and resources to share their wealth, directly influencing the national economy and public welfare. According to Fujimura: „Bushido is a part of the foundation of a sense of national identity and belonging – an ideal that shows that the Japanese are one people.“ (Cleary 2008) In addition to impacting performance in combat, martial arts, health protection, socially responsible activities, and entertainment, the code promotes ethical corporate conduct.

The Chivalric Code is a varying code of conduct developed between 1170 and 1220, closely related to the medieval Christian institution of chivalry. The ideals of chivalry were popularized in medieval literature, through the accounts of the legendary companions of Charlemagne and his warriors, the legend of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table (Weatherly and Coulton 1911). The code of chivalry, which originated and developed in medieval Europe, has its roots in earlier centuries. It arose in the Carolingian Empire as a result of Charlemagne’s idealization of cavalry and included the qualities: of military bravery, individual training, and service to others (Gautier 1891).

Some basic commandments that were included in these moral codes were (Gautier 1891):

1. Protect the Church.
2. Respect the weak.

3. Love the country where you were born.
4. Strictly fulfil your feudal duties.
5. Never lie and stay the true.
6. Be generous to everyone.
7. Everywhere and always be a champion of right and good against injustice and evil.

The chivalric code as it existed in the Late Middle Ages was a moral system that combined the qualities of a warrior, chivalric piety, and courtly manners, creating the image of honor and nobility.

The Pirate Code is an agreement of conduct that includes rules for discipline, division of loot, and compensation for injured pirates. Each crew member signs or affixes his stamp or mark to the codex, and then takes an oath of allegiance. The first recorded pirate code belonged to George Cusack and it was in effect from 1668 to 1675 (Fox 2013).

The Pirate codes usually included the following elements ([Arcadian Venture LLC 2022](#)):

- duties to the captain, quartermaster, doctor, mate, gunner and boatswain;
- penalties for misappropriation and concealment of loot;
- penalties for cowardice in performance of duty;
- gambling penalties;
- injury promises;
- accommodation;
- rewards for well-done duty.

The Hippocratic Oath is an oath to the moral practice of medicine traditionally taken by physicians. It is widely believed that the oath was written by Hippocrates, the father of medicine, in the 4th century BC or by one of his disciples ([Temkin 2002](#)). The Oath is the earliest expression of medical ethics in the Western world, establishing several principles that remain paramount today. These are the principles of medical confidentiality and non-maleficence. It is often pointed out that the Latin phrase „Primum non nocere” which translates to „First, do no harm” is part of the original Hippocratic Oath. The physician is also sworn to guard the sacred things of medicine within the medical community ([Potter 1995, 295–315](#)).

Some of the elements that the Hippocratic Oath includes are ([Hippocrates of Cos 1923](#)):

- respect for the teacher in the profession;
- duties to the teacher in the profession;
- obligation in the medical education process;
- care for the sick people;
- waiver of intentional unfairness;
- observance of professional secrecy;
- preserving the purity of life.

The Hippocratic Oath has been changed many times. One of the most significant revisions was drawn up in 1948 in Geneva. The Geneva Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly of the World Medical Association in Geneva in 1948. It is a declaration of the physician's commitment to the humanitarian goals of medicine, which is particularly important in view of the medical crimes that were committed in the German-occupied countries. The Declaration of Geneva was intended as a revision of the Hippocratic Oath to formulate moral truths concerning medicine that could be understood and recognized in modern times. During the post-World War II era, immediately after its founding, the World Medical Association (WMA) showed concern about the state of medical ethics, taking responsibility for setting moral guidelines for physicians worldwide. This is how the modern wording of the ancient Hippocratic Oath was prepared. The medical oath was called the Geneva Declaration. This document states that as a member of the medical profession the oath takers will dedicate their life to the service of humanity, the health and well-being of the patient will be their priority, they will respect the autonomy and dignity of the patient, they will show respect for human life without discrimination, they will respect the secrets entrusted to them, they will exercise their profession conscientiously and with dignity and in accordance with good medical practice, etc. ([World Medical Association 2008](#)).

Red Cross Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct for the Red Cross and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief was drawn up in 1992 by the Humanitarian Response Committee and aimed to set out uniform ethical standards for organizations involved in humanitarian work. The code was adopted in 1994. The basic guidelines of the code regarding humanitarian aid emphasize the importance of humanitarian aid; the delivery of humanitarian aid regardless of the race, creed, or nationality of the recipients and without any distinction; respect for the culture and customs of those in need of humanitarian aid; etc. as the main objective of aid is to reduce vulnerability to future disasters as well as meet the basic needs of the community ([ICRC 1994](#)).

Galilean Oath. In the winter of 1564, Galileo Galilei was born in Pisa. The future genius physicist, astronomer, mathematician, and philosopher was born in the family of a famous and wealthy musician. At the age of 17, he was sent to study to be a doctor. At the university, he got acquainted with geometry and Galileo was fascinated by this science. In 1609, Galileo Galilei constructed the first telescope ([IMSS 1995-2010](#)). In 1632, after almost 30 years of hard work, Galileo published his main work *Dialogues on the two main systems in the world – the Ptolemaic and the Copernican*, where he defended Copernicus' theses, and claimed that the Earth is mobile and it is not a center of the universe ([Finocchiaro 1997](#)).

The Galilean Oath is part of the ceremonies at higher education institutions in Europe. All graduates take a solemn pledge, an expression of a moral act by which each undertakes to keep his oath.

„I, the graduate of University
entering the ranks of the intelligentsia, I swear:

- to keep the name of the university that revealed to me the world of science;
- to adequately defend my professional training;
- to use my scientific knowledge only for good, for progress and humanization of the world;
- to contribute to the elevation of man as the highest criterion for all scientific and social activity;
- to affirm in myself and in society the basic principles of human morality;

faithful to people, to contribute with my work to their better future;

- to be a worthy citizen of my Fatherland!

I SWORE!“ ([University of Plovdiv 2020-2024](#))

The Code of Apparel Industry Partnership (AIP) represents one of the most important international steps to address the issue of labor standards and working conditions in the apparel industry. It is a voluntary standard that was developed by the US Department of Labor and includes a number of US companies. The AIP Code came into force in 1997. The Partnership Code includes ([Visser et al. 2010](#)):

- prohibition of employment of persons under the age of 15;
- prohibitions against violence, harassment, and discrimination of workers;
- recognition and respect of workers' rights;
- requiring employers to pay at least the minimum or industry prevailing wage;
- providing a safe and healthy working environment;
- limitation of mandatory overtime work to 12 hours per week or 48 hours;
- requiring overtime to be compensated with the premium required in the country.

An important element of the code of partnership in the apparel industry is that independent external observers: conduct reviews of the policies and practices of participating companies; provide company employees with communication channels to report cases of non-compliance; audit production records and practices; conduct employee interviews and site visits ([Visser et al. 2010](#)).

Ethics in Computer Programming and Software Development. The American scientist Norbert Wiener, professor of mathematics and engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, laid the foundations for a new type of ethics in the mid-1940s. He observed that innovations and advances in science and technology, along with the fast-growing computer industry, necessitate the emergence of a new type of professional code of ethics. The increasing use of computers and other technologies raises new moral issues that must be analyzed carefully using new ethical guidelines. In 1976, Walter Maner proposed the term „computer ethics” based on Wiener’s ideas and defined the field as the study of moral problems created, transformed, or aggravated by computer technology ([Bynum 2001](#)). Professional

ethics relating to computer programming and software development include moral guidelines that software developers are expected to follow and apply. The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) has its own code of ethics and a set of ethical principles that are endorsed by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) as a standard for teaching and practicing software engineering. These are – the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and the Code of Ethical Software Engineering and Professional Practice.

The code of ethics and professional conduct of the association states ([ACM 2018](#)):

1. Contribute to public and human well-being.
2. Avoid hurting others.
3. Be honest and trustworthy.
4. Don't use someone else's intellectual property.
5. Respect the privacy of others.
6. Respect confidentiality.

Moral hacking. Organizations must find solutions and take measures to protect their information resources and technologies. Moral hacking is the deliberate penetration of a system or network in order to discover vulnerabilities and assess the system's security. Organizations can hire morally responsible hackers precisely for the purpose of discovering the security problems and vulnerabilities of the information system.

The problem with defining morality in hacking is that morality is really a matter of perspective. Hypothetically speaking, a hacker located in China who attacks government systems in the United States might be seen as one of the good guys for the Chinese government, while that same hacker would be seen as one of the bad guys for those living in the United States ([Wilhelm and Andress 2011](#)). However, although this dilemma is confusing, there is definitely a solution. After reviewing ethics, the various ethical schools, moral practices, the concept of corporate social responsibility, religious views of morality, and the „golden rule”, it is now quite easy to find a solution. And that is that any action that causes harm is immoral.

Military ethics and morale

Military ethics, broadly speaking, is an interdisciplinary study involving moral dilemmas about the conduct of war; decisions about how and when to engage in military operations; issues related to moral psychology and the care of those who serve, for veterans of military service; the political and moral philosophy of international conflicts; when the use of military force is justified; the law of armed conflict and the international humanitarian law. Military ethics focuses on the core values and moral principles that are exercised by the men and women serving in the military forces of different nations around the world. In light of the prevailing global

context, the domain of military ethics has ascended to a position of paramount importance, marking a period of intensified military engagement reminiscent of the era subsequent to the Second World War (Pashov 2022). This escalation reflects a complex interplay of geopolitical dynamics that necessitates a rigorous examination and reevaluation of ethical frameworks guiding military conduct.

Most armies around the world have developed their own set of regulations that define and clearly outline what is expected of their members.

Some common military values are:

1. Discipline.
2. Loyalty.
3. Courage.
4. Honesty.
5. Respect.
6. Mission.
7. Friendship.
8. Tradition.
9. Hierarchy.

The U.S. Armed Forces Code is both a code of conduct and a moral guide that always applies to all members of the U.S. Armed Forces. The Code of Conduct was established on August 17, 1955, by President Eisenhower. The code says:

"I am an American fighting in the forces that guard my country and our way of life, I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

...

If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information nor take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades.

If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

...

I will never forget that I am an American fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles that made my country free.

I will trust in my God and in the United States of America." (AUSA 2024b)

The Soldier's Creed of the United States of America emphasizes service to country, non-acceptance of defeat, camaraderie, discipline, physical and mental toughness, expertise and professionalism, preservation of liberty, and the preservation of the American way of life (AUSA 2024a).

In France the soldier's code of conduct emphasis on (Yakovleff 2007):

- the will to win, at the risk of one's own life;

- respect for the enemy and the enemy's population;
- obeying orders while respecting the law;
- adaptation to any circumstances;
- keeping in excellent intellectual and physical shape;
- honor and loyalty;
- attention to people;
- openness to the world and respect for differences;
- cautious expression;
- pride in the regiment, the army, and France.

The Code of Honor for the legionnaires in the Foreign Legion requires a demonstration of cooperation with all legionnaires through a strict solidarity that binds members of the same family; respect for tradition, devotion to leaders, discipline, camaraderie, courage, and loyalty; pride in the status of a legionnaire, dignified and humble behavior; following a strict training regimen. It says:

„In battle, you will act without passion or hatred; you will respect the vanquished enemy and never abandon your wounded or dead, and under no circumstances surrender your arms.” ([The French Foreign Legion 2024](#))

In the German Army all military personnel know that they are defending the dignity of the human being, the rule of law, and freedom, if necessary, by military means. First-hand experience in the non-violent resolution of conflict, as it happens every day in a democratic state, is of valuable support in mediation between parties to a conflict and during peacekeeping operations ([Yakovleff 2007](#)).

In the British Army, the servicemen swear by Almighty God that they will be faithful to their rulers, incl. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs, and successors will defend them in dignity against all enemies, will observe and obey all orders of Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, and the generals and officers placed above the serviceman himself ([Yakovleff 2007](#)). The values emphasized in the oath are selfless commitment, courage, discipline, integrity, loyalty, respect for others, professionalism, and leadership.

The Moral code of the Bulgarian soldier from the Kingdom of Bulgaria says:

- „1. Remember that on earth, in the sea, and in the sky, alive or dead, you are always a soldier of Bulgaria.*
- 2. The throne, the banner, and the honor are given by God. Protect them, sparing nothing earthly.*
- 3. Never ask „For what?” and „Why me?. Just you! – and nobody.” ([Lentata.Com 2024](#))*

The moral code of the Bulgarian soldier from the time after the liberation of the country from Ottoman rule emphasizes respect for Bulgaria, respect for the throne, the flag and honor, respect for the commander, effectiveness, brotherhood, cooperation, humane treatment of the enemy, noble treatment of women, children and the elderly, protection of weapons, uniforms, and military property, assistance

and mutual aid, action in battle without manifestations of fear, etc. ([Lentata.Com 2024](#))

In 2010, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria drafted the Code of Ethical Behavior of Military and Civilian Employees of the Ministry of Defence, the Structures of Direct Subordination to the Minister of Defence, and the Bulgarian Army. The main purpose of the document is to indicate the principles of accepted and expected behavior of all employees in the Ministry of Defence (military and civilian), in relation to business contacts, in workplace relationships, to prevent corrupt practices and the creation of conflicts of interest. The employees of the Ministry of Defence shall ([Department of Defence of the Bulgarian Army 2010](#)):

- not to accept or facilitate the acceptance, either for themselves or for others, of gifts, travel, hotel accommodation, hospitality, discounts, loans, or other benefits or favors that result in influencing their official actions;
- not to use their position to gain benefits;
- not to give or offer gifts or other favors that result in influencing the official actions of the recipient;
- to prevent the existence or occurrence of a conflict of interest.

In 2021, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria prepared an Ethical code of conduct for military personnel, which defined the rules for the moral behavior of military personnel in the Ministry of Defence, the Bulgarian Army and the structures directly subordinated to the Minister of Defence. According to the code, servicemen perform their military service in compliance with the following principles of conduct: legality; loyalty; good faith; equality; responsibility; political neutrality; integrity; confidentiality; collegiality, and courtesy ([Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021](#)).

According to the Ethical Code of Conduct for Military Personnel, there are some rules for the moral conduct of military servants - military personnel ([Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021](#)):

- protect the good name of the institution;
 - encourage people to respect the laws of the Republic of Bulgaria by setting a personal example;
 - provide assistance to any person in danger in case of fires, disasters, accidents, and emergency situations;
 - respect the rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens;
 - respect every person's right to life and dignity;
 - do not discriminate;
 - provide professional assistance to colleagues in the performance of official duties;
- set a personal example of professional, impartial, and efficient performance of official duties;
- strive to avoid conflict situations;
 - respect the dignity and authority of superiors;
 - protect the life, physical, and mental health of the military personnel.

In the Ethical Code of Conduct for military personnel Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria also specifies rules for moral behavior in the military education system, as follows: „The academic community of the military education system accepts and upholds the highest values of higher education in the Republic of Bulgaria, and in its activities follows basic principles such as: legality, professionalism, responsibility, loyalty, openness, criticality, impartiality and accountability. The main violations of academic ethics in the scientific sphere are: plagiarism; fictitious authorship; fictitious co-authorship; mock review; falsification of empirical data; unrealistic assessment, etc. (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021)

In case of non-observance of the rules of the code, military personnel bear disciplinary responsibility according to the Law on Defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Conclusion

Ethics involves systematizing and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior. Its focus is often the „good life”, the life that is worthwhile, or the life that is fulfilling. In most religions there is invariably a moral component, often arising from a supposed supernatural revelation or guidance given to us from above.

The Declaration of Global Ethics by the Parliament of the World's Religions (1993) proclaims the Golden Rule of Ethics:

„We should do unto others as we would have others do unto us.” as a universal principle (Parliament of the World's Religions 2024).

The original declaration was signed by 143 leaders from all the world's major religions, including Brahmanism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Native Americans, Sikhism, Taoism, etc.

Trying to live by the Golden Rule means trying to empathize with other people, including those who may be very different from us. Empathy is at the heart of kindness, compassion, understanding, and respect – qualities we all value, no matter who we are, what we think, and where we come from. Although it is not possible to fully understand the other, it is not difficult to imagine what would cause us suffering and to try to avoid causing suffering.

The Golden Rule is perhaps the greatest and simplest moral truth that mankind has ever devised. It is the most essential basis for the modern concept of human rights, for separating right from wrong behavior, and for the morally responsible treatment of others.

Acknowledgment: *The article is a result of the scientific work on the National Scientific Program – Security and Defence of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria.*

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