

# The Golden Rule, Humanity, and Equality

## Confucius's *Shu* 恕-Formula and its Later Reformulation



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### Abstract

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Based on his published papers on this subject, Lee will explore, first, the correlation between *shu*(恕) and *ren*(仁) in Confucius' teachings, particularly showing that whereas the golden rule is premised on equality between agent and recipient, Confucius' correlation of *shu* with *ren* might conflict with the given asymmetrical social condition. He will address it by demonstrating that the golden rule can effectively induce an agent's viewpoint to shift from existing sociopolitical asymmetry to one-to-one human equality.

Next, Lee will move to revealing the relation and differences between Confucius' original *shu* and a series of post-Confucius reformulations, especially, showing that Confucius' followers had to reformulate Confucius' original *shu* in order to adapt the quality-based structure of *shu* to specified asymmetrical relationships, which led to the advent of the post-Confucius formula, especially "the measuring square" in the *Great Learning*, which was devised to guide one to infer universalizable rules of conduct for various roles in diverse relationships.

### About the Speaker

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Junghwan Lee is Associate Professor of the Department of Aesthetics at Seoul National University. He obtained his B.A. and M.A. from the same institution and received his Ph.D. from the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University. His research primarily focuses on Korean History, Chinese History, and East Asian Buddhism. His work has been published in reputable journals, including *Dao*, *Contemporary Aesthetics*, and *Acta Koreana*. His most recent publication, titled "Recharacterizing the Confucian Golden Rule: The Advent of the Post-Confucius Formula and a Shift of Focus from *Ren* to *Li*," appeared in *Dao*.