

**Li Zehou's Reconception of Classical Confucian Concept of Autonomy and Personhood:
With a Focus on His *Reading the Analects Today***

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Li Zehou advocates guanxism (relationalism) as a reconception of classical Confucian ethics encompassing both human relation and personhood, and social role and autonomy. Li asserts that the core theme of the *Analects* is “learning to become a person,” which is a consummate person of realizing both social responsibility and individual worth.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, a dominant opinion of scholarship was that Confucian ethics lacks the notion of self, subjectivity, and autonomy. In recent decades, a number of scholars have confirmed the Confucian notion of self and explained it as mainly constituted by relational role, social obligation, and communal values, which insightfully reveals a fundamental feature of Confucian ethics. Meanwhile, in the 1990s a few scholars explored the Confucian moral person as a self-responsible autonomous being who exercises more than just fulfilling assigned social role and obligation. Since the beginning of the 21st century, more and more scholars have applied the notions of personal self, autonomy, and even individualism in a general sense for discussions of their presentation in Confucian ethics.

Against this background of scholarship, Li Zehou's plentiful, sophisticated discussion of classical Confucian notions concerning emotion, autonomy, personhood, and self-realization in his *Reading the Analects Today*, published in 1998 and absorbed his many ideas presented in his works of 1980s and 1990s, appears pioneering and inspiring in this regard and therefore merits a detailed discussion.