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Foundations,
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RELATIONAL LEARNING IN THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS: EXPLORING
THE FOUNDATIONS, PRACTICES AND PURPOSES OF CLASSICAL CONFUCIAN
LEARNING (260 pp.)

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The purpose of this study was to explore the conceptual strength and consistency of the

term 'relational learning' in describing the principles, practices and purposes of the

Classical Confucian learning paradigm put forth by Confucius in the Analects (*Lunyu*).

With a synthesis of Classical Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, as well as numerous English

language translations of the Analects and related scholarly discourse, several insights

about learning in the Analects are put forward. First of all, Confucius' language

concerning Heaven (*Tian*) and filial piety (*xiao)* root Confucian learning in a sincere yet

hierarchical relational dynamic that influences the learning process. Second, the daily

practice of ritualization (*li*) situates the learner as a constant observer and performer of

propriety as a coping strategy in situ, with further learning contingent on the successful

recognition and integration of concepts embedded within relational settings. Third, and

finally, Confucius suggests that the ultimate outcomes of learning rely upon the relational

capacity of the mind/heart nurtured within a given learning relationship or community.

This means higher learning is a synergistic experience involving two or more entities and

contingent on the emergence of 'dual-minded' respect (*ren*) toward the inevitable

differences and misunderstandings that arise. In this light, we move beyond the term 'self-

cultivation' and obtain a more nuanced view of Confucius as a teacher and a learner; ready to point out major areas of concern as well as potential coping strategies, but without turning into a path of learning oriented predominantly by the self or the other.