

# Deweyan Conduct & Confucian Li (Ritual): A Comparative Analysis

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曾子曰：“吾日三省吾身：爲人謀而不忠乎？與朋友交而不信乎？傳不習乎？”

己所不欲，勿施于人。

子曰：“學而時習之，不亦說乎？有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎？人不知而不愠，不亦君子乎？”

## **Introduction**

It has been said that the philosophical projects of both John Dewey and Confucius are to establish philosophy as a way of life. That being said, the philosophies of Dewey and Confucius are similar in a variety of ways. In this paper, specifically, my goal is to elucidate the similarities in the ways in which they both depict the development of the individual through the context of one's social interactions – a process that is done primarily through the practice of ritual (*li*) or conduct. In addition, I argue that there are striking parallels in Confucius and Dewey's characterizations of community and communal life, and these portrayals offer rich insights into the question of how communities ought to function and thrive. These similarities mainly involve the social characterization of human psychology, as both Dewey and Confucius discuss the important role of social relations with respect to topics such as moral education and general human development. Even more specific and unique to their philosophies, however, is their focus on the practice of ritual and conduct in social life; namely, Dewey and Confucius both assert that proper conduct is essential to fulfilling and maintaining appropriate social and moral standards of one's community.

Structurally, this paper is divided into several distinguished sections. To begin, I will offer a concise literature review of the sources which will be referenced to throughout this essay. Next, I will spend a considerable length explaining Dewey's notion of conduct and Confucius' concept of ritual in extensive detail. I will then briefly cover what I understand to be the subtle difference between these two ideas. Following this, I will discuss Dewey's idea of dramatic rehearsal in comparison to the role-playing aspect of Confucian ritual. Finally, I will consider the social quality of moral education, as it is expressed in the philosophies of both Dewey and Confucius.

## **Literature Review**

There has been an innumerable amount of scholarly work produced in the field of comparative philosophy on the connections between John Dewey's pragmatism and Chinese Confucianism. This essay is concerned with the portion of literature that applies to Deweyan and Confucian insights into the ways in which individuals interact and develop in a social context. With the help of these sources, I will establish a connection between the Confucian idea of *li* with the Deweyan notion of conduct.

Thus, this portion of my essay comprises a literature review of some of the published works pertaining to these topics.

With respect to this paper's topic of inquiry, Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct* is a necessary starting point for understanding the psychological, social, and moral aspects of his pragmatic philosophy. In this book, Dewey explores several topics that he claims are interlinked, such as the evolution of human habits, the nature of social institutions, and the concept of morality. The central thesis of Dewey's book is that human nature, sociality, and morality are grounded in a dynamic and interactive relationship with one another. Dewey ultimately believes that customs, which he defines as "widespread uniformities of habit," are the primary sources of social institutions and normativity in a successful society (58). More importantly, Dewey's notion of custom relates to the Confucian concept of *li*, which is typically interpreted as "rites" or "rituals" (Van Norden, 25). In her essay, "Dewey and Confucius: On Moral Education," May Sim states that "ritual proprieties (*li*) are the social norms that regulate conduct" (86). Moreover, in *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy*, Van Norden explains that philosophical Confucianism interprets ritual in a functionalist sense, meaning it is seen as an expression of "emotions and dispositions that are necessary for the maintenance of communities" (26).

On a separate note, it's worth mentioning that David Hall and Roger Ames are some of the world's foremost authorities on the comparisons between John Dewey and Confucius. For this reason, their book, *The Democracy of the Dead*, as well as their essay titled "A Pragmatist Understanding of Confucian Democracy," serve as cornerstone pieces to this body of literature. Their work that appears in these particular sources are the most relevant to my thesis, and therefore they will be referenced to consistently throughout the remainder of this paper. The overall project of Hall and Ames can be summed up as an attempt to analyze and interpret Confucianism or Confucian democracy through a Deweyan-pragmatic lens. The work of Hall and Ames provides the most sophisticated comparisons between the thoughts of Dewey and Confucius, and as such, their sources are essential to my overall project.

Though some of these sources focus only on Confucian ritual, the implicit similarities to Dewey's notion of custom are easily identifiable. For example, Van Norden mentions that "rituals," in

the Confucian sense, “remind us of how we are connected with and dependent on other humans” (27). This point is consistent with Dewey’s conception of the social self; according to Hall and Ames, Dewey maintains “a sense of the self as irreducibly social” (126). Similarly, in a different source, Sor-hoon Tan mentions Dewey’s social conception of the self as it relates to custom as an embodiment of social and moral consensus (478). Furthermore, in a broader sense, it would be reasonable for one to interpret Confucius as a pragmatist. Though he does not write about pragmatism or Dewey, author Michael Puett suggests that Confucianism is distinguished from traditional philosophical inquiry in a similar way as the former. Namely, Confucius doesn’t focus on “great big philosophical questions,” but rather, he is concerned with simple, pragmatic questions that pertain to how we live our lives on a daily basis; this then leads to the Confucian emphasis on ritual and proper social conduct (2).

A major theme underlying this body of literature is that Confucius and Dewey both maintain that proper social conduct and relations are indispensable components of human development and moral cultivation. Even so, there remains some degree of disagreement about the extent to which Dewey’s pragmatism and Confucianism are in fact reconcilable. Hall and Ames argue that American pragmatism, and John Dewey in particular, offers a “productive cultural perspective” for engaging with Confucius and Confucianism, primarily in the context of understanding their insights into the topics of sociality, culture, morality, and democracy (125-126). On the other hand, certain authors focus equally on the inconsistencies between the philosophies of Dewey and Confucius. For instance, May Sim is skeptical as to whether Dewey’s philosophy is the best candidate for explaining Confucianism, arguing that there are significant differences between the two with regards to the specific topic of moral education (85). In a similar approach, Leonard J. Waks discusses both the similarities and the differences in the educational models within the Deweyan and Confucian traditions. Waks concludes his analysis in a complimentary style, however, asserting that “despite their differences, Confucian and Deweyan scholars and educators can engage in fruitful dialogue regarding educational renewal” (20).

Nevertheless, there are many similarities between Dewey’s idea of conduct and the Confucian principle of *li* that are mentioned throughout this literature. For example, May Sim notes that Dewey and Confucius are in agreement about “the importance of moral education for self-development, and

about the importance of social relations for moral education” (86). That is to say, they both believe that the morally cultivated self is one whose own good is identified with the good of others, or of society at large (Sim, 86). For Dewey, human conduct is more than simple behavior, it often involves reflection and reason. Moreover, custom serves as a principle of social organization, consisting of the various ways in which relationships are regulated (Tan, 468). Sor-hoon Tan explains that, for Dewey, customs are “social norms embodying the group’s judgment that certain rules are to be followed for the sake of the group’s welfare” (475). Thus, human habits and customs often necessitate a level of reflection, as this allows us to approach social relationships and interactions with appropriate levels of conduct. On the topic of Confucian ritual, Michael Puett discusses this same idea: “When we have learned to refine our responses, we can start to respond to people in ways that we have cultivated, instead of through immediate emotional reaction. We do this refining through ritual” (3). Ultimately, Confucius and Dewey both maintain that moral self-cultivation is directly tied to human conduct and character in the social realm.

The literature I have reviewed is made up of a collection of diverse and professional sources. Dewey’s own work, *Human Nature and Conduct*, provides an original avenue into his philosophy of social and moral conduct. Similarly, Michael Puett’s *The Path* and Van Norden’s *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy* are ample sources for understanding Confucian ritual. These foundational sources in the literature act as a primer for the remaining sources, which are comparative in nature. May Sim’s “Dewey and Confucius: On Moral Education” and Waks’ “John Dewey and Confucius in Dialogue: 1919-2019” both contribute critical thoughts to the discussion of moral education in Dewey and Confucius. Tan’s essay, “The Dao of Politics: *Li* (Rituals/Rites) and Laws as Pragmatic Tools of Government,” takes more of a political approach to evaluating the relationship between Dewey’s notion of conduct and Confucian *li*. Lastly, Hall and Ames’ work in “A Pragmatist Understanding of Confucian Democracy” and *The Democracy of the Dead* offer useful insights in to the question of how a Deweyan pragmatist perspective can enlighten an interpretation of Confucianism.

## **Deweyan Conduct (Impulse, Habit, & Deliberation)**

The purpose of Dewey's work in *Human Nature and Conduct* is to extend his pragmatic philosophical method into the fields of developmental and social psychology. Additionally, it constitutes Dewey's moral theory of development, as he essentially claims that the purpose of our value judgments is to guide human conduct. Through the attunement of our character to our moral values, humans are able to cultivate and even change their nature. Dewey proposes that there are three levels of conduct: impulse, habit, and deliberation. The first of these two aspects of conduct are referred to by Dewey as unreflective, while the third is characterized as a reflective mode of conduct.

To begin, as individuals begin life as babies, their sources of activities are made up entirely of impulses. Our impulses, which includes things like instincts, drives, reflexes, and appetites, are also referred to by Dewey as "native activities" (90). Humans are born into the world with a set of impulses, but in these early stages of their lives, they are wholly dependent beings. Adults, who have formed and established habits out of their impulses, are responsible for transferring those habits to future generations. In Dewey's own words, "the meaning of native activities is not native; it is acquired. It depends upon interaction with a matured social medium" (90). Dewey's emphasis on impulse as the original source of human conduct is essential to his theory of developmental psychology. The impulses of humans can be directed and shaped into ends that suit the values of one's social environment, chiefly through moral education. According to Dewey, "impulses are the pivots upon which the re-organization of activities turn, they are agencies of deviation, for giving new directions to old habits and changing their quality. Consequently whenever we are concerned with understanding social transition and flux or with projects for reform, personal and collective, our study must go to analysis of native tendencies" (103). The plastic nature of the ends and means of our moral development is possible because, as Dewey says, impulses are the original form of human conduct. Impulses require some direction from external sources, though; namely, they require socially refined habits that are derived from one's environment.

Habits, in the Deweyan sense, are socially shaped standards of behavior in the forms of activities or ways of responding to the conditions of the environment. However, while habits are construed on the basis of purposeful and socially valuable ideas, they still operate on an unreflective

and subconscious level. According to Dewey, the most meaningful habits are the ones that are shared amongst social groups, which Dewey refers to as customs. When impulses are successfully refined into socially acceptable habits, they eventually develop into customs which are generally recognized by the whole community. In the following passage from *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey concisely explains how social customs come to be accepted:

To a considerable extent customs, or widespread uniformities of habit, exist because individuals face the same situation and react in like fashion. But to a larger extent customs persist because individuals form their personal habits under conditions set by prior customs. An individual usually acquires the morality as he inherits the speech of his social group. The activities of the group are already there, and some assimilation of his own acts to their pattern is a prerequisite of a share therein, and hence of having any part in what is going on (58).

In other words, human beings acquire their senses of morality and social conduct by learning from others who are already accustomed to communal life. Custom, Dewey says, is attained through the eventual replacement of impulses with habits. According to Dewey, impulse and habit are conflicting notions, and this conflict is embodied in the form of combat between the impulses of children and the habits of adults (99). Thus, this point of Dewey's brings to light his emphasis on the social aspect of moral education. Moreover, custom, as it is established and derived from widespread habits, sets the general tone for the expectations of human conduct and behavior in many areas of our lives.

Yet, habit remains an unreflective mode of conduct, and so it operates subconsciously as a kind of automatic response to conditions posed by one's environment. Habits do not involve thought on behalf of the actor, and although they are essentially refined reflections of impulses, they become second-nature to our behaviors and operate instinctively. Thus, the need for reflective thought on one's conduct arises when the usual use of habit or impulse appears to be inconsistent with the circumstances in question. When actions made on the basis of impulse or habit are not appropriate to our situations, Dewey says people are led to deliberate on the problem that's been posed on them. In the ensuing statements, Dewey explains how this mode of reflective thought plays an essential role in developing moral values and norms:

Morality is an endeavor to find for the manifestation of impulse in special situations an office of refreshment and renewal. The endeavor is not easy of accomplishment. It is easier to surrender the main and public channels of action

and belief to the sluggishness of custom, and idealize tradition by emotional attachment to its ease, comforts and privileges instead of idealizing it in practice by making it more equably balanced with present needs... Thought is born as the twin of impulse in every moment of impeded habit (169-171).

The challenge of deliberation in human conduct is as such: There is a need to overcome certain habits through thought experiments that consist of judgments about the actions needed to resolve one's quandary. In other words, deliberation allows one to transcend the often-insufficient thoughts which are restricted to habit and impulse. Indeed, habits become negative limits to our thoughts because they are at first, in fact, positive agencies (Dewey, 175). Given this quality of habit, the goal of reflective thought is therefore to increase the range and variability of our habits. The more flexible our habits are, Dewey says, the more we are able to identify their discriminatory natures and present our thoughts with the help of deliberative imagination (175-176). While habit gives us a general framework for which to act in terms of conduct, it is the reflective mode of deliberation that allows us to appropriate our conduct with respect to the changing and unexpected situations we find ourselves in.

### **Confucian *Li* (Ritual)**

The Confucian concept of *li* (ritual) was briefly elaborated on in the literature review portion of this paper, but it will be helpful for us to establish a thorough understanding of the term, prior to further demonstrating the ways in which it is comparable to Dewey's notion of conduct. To begin with, however, it will be useful for us to understand a little bit of Confucian philosophy in general, as well as the philosophical methodology of Confucius himself. Confucius' magnum opus is the *Analects*; this classical Chinese text is widely accepted as the most reliable source of Confucius' doctrines (Chan, 14). As Wing-tsit Chan points out in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, the primary concern of Confucius is a respectable society based on satisfactory government and harmonious human relations (15). The latter point, in particular, is most relevant to our current discussion of ritual. For society in general, Confucius stresses the need for proper conduct within our interpersonal and social relations. In *The Democracy of the Dead*, Hall and Ames offer an excellent summarization of the concept of *li*: "*Li*, often translated as 'rites' or 'propriety,' is an enduring yet always malleable syntax through which the human being can pursue refined and appropriate relationships" (35). Thus, in Confucianism, *li* encompasses the standards that are required to maintain social order and a sense of community.



The Chinese character *li* originally referred to rites of sacrifice, but Confucius expanded the scope of its application to include other things, such as the norms that govern one's expected behavior toward others. In fact, the use of *li* is even more broad in the *Hsun Tzu*, in which *li* appears to be used almost interchangeably with *li-yi* at times (Shun, 458). In this text, *li-yi* is often used to refer generally to the social standards and norms governing human conduct, relative to one's social position (Ibid). According to Kwong-loi Shun, what unites the variety of notions that have come to be included in the scope of *li* is the Chinese term *ching*, which is typically translated as "reverence" (458). It is not entirely clear what the precise scope of *li* is in the *Analects*, but it is evident that *li* (ritual) is often accompanied by *ching* (reverence); for example, Confucius says one is supposed to have reverence toward spirits when performing sacrificial rites, and toward other people when observing the norms of polite behavior and the responsibilities one has with regards to the treatment of others (Ibid). For the purpose of this comparative essay, *li* will be interpreted more narrowly than broadly; specifically, *li* will be hereto after understood and referred to as ritual.

There is much more to be said about *li*, particularly with respect to how it characterizes ritual. At this moment, we might take a step back and consider what we think of when we hear the term "ritual." Rituals are typically thought of as involving formal activities or ceremonies, ones that are often held for special occasions such as marriage or funerals. However, the Confucian notion of ritual goes beyond this; ritual also includes matters of what we would describe as etiquette, such as the appropriate manner in which to greet or say farewell to a guest (Van Norden, 25). That is to say, the importance of ritual can be found in everyday instances of custom or propriety, even though we may not realize it. Moreover, at the communal level, rituals encompass social and political institutions; it has even been asserted by Hall and Ames that rituals are the language through which Chinese culture is expressed (205). Ultimately, for Confucius, the significance of ritual is captured in what it does for the people performing it, in a beneficial sense, for all parties involved.

### **Confucian Ritual and Deweyan Conduct: A Subtle Contrast**

Before continuing further, it is worth elucidating the subtle difference between Deweyan conduct and Confucian ritual. To do so, I suggest that we appeal to a distinction made by Freya Mathews between two fundamental modes of cognition: theory (*theoria*) and strategy (*strategia*).

Mathews says that theory consists of abstract and universal representations of reality, constructed in the human mind and presented solely for the subject as an internal viewer (5:30). Strategy, on the other hand, focuses on the immediate experiences and concrete particularities that are received from one's interactions with their environment (Mathews, 9:00). In the context of conduct and ritual, Dewey and Confucius both imply that the moral growth and developmental psychology associated with these concepts involve both theory and strategy in cooperation. The way in which they differ on this note, though, really boils down to a matter of emphasis. Dewey's notion of habit (an unreflective mode of conduct) appears to fall in the cognitive category of strategy, while deliberation (the reflective mode of conduct) involves the method of theory. That is to say, Dewey sees deliberation (i.e., theory) as a way to reconstruct habit (i.e., strategy). Confucius, in slight contrast, seems to imply that humans start off with ritual habits (i.e., strategy) and then are eventually led to establish deliberative thought (i.e., theory) as a result of performing the rituals with sincerity. All things considered, Confucius and Dewey are mainly in agreement that both strategy and theory are needed for the full development of proper moral and social conduct.

### **Dramatic Rehearsal and the “As-if” Mindset**

For both Dewey and Confucius, reflective and imaginative thought is absolutely necessary to one's moral development. In Dewey's philosophy, he claims that deliberation is the mode of conduct that ties together impulses and habits with intelligence. When deliberative thought is applied to any given representation of customary habit, one's general conduct is continuously refined and improved through this ongoing process. As habits are subject to deliberation, they in turn grow into more flexible and adaptive versions of their original forms, ones which have taken into account our imaginative thoughts. Moreover, Dewey's notion of deliberation is built on his idea of dramatic rehearsal, which is concisely summarized in the following passage from *Human Nature and Conduct*:

Deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action. It starts from the blocking of efficient overt action, due to that conflict of prior habit and newly released impulse to which reference has been made. Then each habit, each impulse, involved in the temporary suspense of overt action takes its turn in being tried out. Deliberation... is an experiment in making various combinations of selected elements of habits and impulses, to see what the resultant action would be like if it were entered upon (190).

In characterizing deliberation as a dramatic rehearsal of potential outcomes of action, Dewey is effectively arguing that proper conduct is attained largely through the conscious practice of imagining various versions of future situations. In our movements into unknowable situations, preexisting habits provide vague expectations of what we are going towards; when those habits are organized and focused through intelligent deliberation, however, the confusion of the unknown is cleared up and those situations are more suitably approachable (Dewey, 180). Thus, in order to fulfill the expectations for proper conduct, Dewey argues that we must become comfortable with escaping the rigidity of our habits in order to accommodate for unfamiliar and unknown conditions.

The emphasis on reflective thought with respect to one's conduct is equally as important in Confucian ritual, too. Confucius believes that we must ask ourselves why we engage in the actions we perform – including actions that constitute ritual practice. Rituals often come across as customs, or social conventions that we've been taught to adhere to, and as such, they are often taken for granted and performed beneath the levels of our conscious minds. In regards to the Chinese character of *li*, Confucius describes ritual in a novel and distinguished manner; namely, he believes that rituals allow us to create short-lived alternate realities that return us to our regular lives in slightly altered ways (Puett, 5). Rituals are significant in this regard because, much like with Dewey's notion of deliberation, they provide a way for us to take on imaginative roles and momentarily adopt different perspectives on situations.

Drawing on some particular Confucian phrasing as it appears in the *Analects*, Michael Puett posits the idea that practicing ritual allows us to live in an "as-if" world for a brief moment (5). In early China, Puett explains, people believed that spirits of deceased ancestors roamed around the world with resentment toward the living (5). To combat the persistent negative energies of the dead, people created ritual acts – the most important of which was ancestral worship – to satisfy the haunting ghosts (5). For Confucius, whether the rituals actually affected the ghosts, or if the ghosts were even there at all, was hardly relevant. Rather, the ritual act was significant because of what it did for those participating in it, since even acting *as if* the ancestors were really there brought about a change in the participants of the practice (6). The ritual of sacrificial rites is not only a way for people to imagine

what it would be like to be someone else, but is also a way to imagine what an ancestor would say if they were still amongst the living.

More importantly, the ritual practice of ancestral rites also positively changed the feelings of the living toward one another (6). Broadly speaking, this is true for all types of ritual practices, not just those which are formal or traditional. Of course, rituals – as well as the role playing associated with them – always end, but each time the rituals are returned to and practiced, they gradually help improve relationships and create healthier connections among family members. In addition, these effects go beyond just familial bonds; the practice of ritual has implications for the strength of the community as a whole. For Confucius, ritual plays an essential role in the advancement and maintenance of community. The Confucian notion of ritual as a communal discourse is all-embracing, consisting of all the various roles, relationships, and institutions that bind and foster community (Hall and Ames, 204). Participating in ritual gives one the opportunity to adopt uniquely personal perspectives, and those in turn can be reflected into the workings of society in general. That is to say, ritual action involves an ongoing re-creation of community from the unique perspectives and judgments of each individual coming together as members of the collective.

Indeed, Puett acknowledges that the ritual of ancestral rites does not offer any real-life direction for how to behave in the real world, but that is not its purpose (6). For Confucius, ritual is a social and communal activity; its value is found in the fact that each participant plays a role different from the one that they normally occupy. Although the Confucian example of ritual in terms of ancestral worship and sacrificial rites is distinct from Dewey's notion of deliberation, the underlying point is the same in both ideas: Ritual and deliberation help cultivate one's conduct, because the person performing these practices imagines what situations would be like from perspectives outside of one's own.

### **Social Quality of Moral Development**

One important point that links the philosophies of Dewey and Confucius is their assertions that conduct and ritual, specifically in relational terms of morality and sociality, plays an essential part in the process of fine-tuning human nature. For Confucius, humans become generally better in a social

context through the practice of proper conduct in their relations with other human beings. Likewise, Dewey maintains that humans are capable of modifying their impulses and developing them into habits, which thereby enhances the conditions for ideal social and moral life. Both Dewey and Confucius see human nature as plastic and malleable, and they both consider the cultivation of the individual as vital to overall societal betterment. As Hall and Ames point out, “the Confucian sense of social order assumes that personal and communal realization are mutually interdependent” (209). Confucius does not entertain the notion of the individual being separate from the collective social body; rather, the individual is grounded and intertwined in the social sphere, primarily through the various roles associated with one’s obligations to the groups which they belong to.

As Dewey illustrates in the following excerpt from *Human Nature and Conduct*, he also finds the isolation of the individual to be problematic:

Settled and regular action must contain an adjustment of environing conditions; it must incorporate them in itself. For human beings, the environing affairs directly important are those formed by the activities of other human beings... The traditional psychology of the original separate soul, mind or consciousness is in truth a reflex of conditions which cut human nature off from its natural objective relations. It implies first the severance of man from nature and then of each man from his fellows (84-85).

Dewey is critical of both the traditional dualism between mind and body, as well as the distinction between the individual and the community. Indeed, American pragmatists such as John Dewey part from the classical liberal notion of individualism, instead offering a distinctly *social* characterization of experience (Hall and Ames, 126). Dewey believes that the experience of the individual can only be satisfied in full by participating in the community of which they are a part of. Thus, Dewey’s communal understanding of experience suggests that the actions and moral obligations of individuals must contribute to the betterment and overall harmony of the community. For Dewey, this sense of moral development in a social context is ultimately achieved through proper conduct and presentation of character toward others.

On the whole, Confucius and Dewey both consider the social roles one adopts to be an indispensable and necessary part of their moral development. In May Sim’s words, “[Dewey and Confucius] agree that a cultivated self is an expanded self who identifies his own good with the well-

being of others. Dewey sees moral development as an expansion of one's ends and the reconstruction of his character. Everyone is a social being who occupies various social positions that call for certain modes of action" (86). Both Dewey and Confucius believe that the boundaries between the individual self and others are nuanced and not easily distinguishable, contrary to the way tradition would have it. More notably, the importance of propriety and conduct directly attests to these points, as this is ultimately what holds together the relationship between the individual and other members of society. In short, Dewey's notion of conduct and the Confucian concept of ritual appear to be nearly identical, precisely in the sense that they both hold morality and sociality in an interconnected relationship with one another.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Confucian concept of *li* and the Deweyan notion of conduct are remarkably comparable. Both Confucius and Dewey seek to ground the importance of moral education and self-cultivation in the context of sociality. In both philosophies, the notion of the individual is deeply connected with and reliant on communal relations. Likewise, the social roles that humans occupy play an essential part in the social and moral development of both the individual and the community as a whole. For Dewey, these roles are understood in terms of conduct; for Confucius, they are expressed in the form of ritual. In both schools of thought, human psychology is social; the customary habits and rituals we adopt are grounded in our social interactions with others. Furthermore, Confucius and Dewey both avoid the pitfalls of mind-body dualism in which thought and action are separate, suggesting instead that our outward demonstrations of conduct are intertwined with our internal selves. On a reflective level, then, the conventional behaviors we develop through deliberation and role-playing help establish the normative standards and expectations for human conduct in the social realm. In the last analysis, the comparable insights of John Dewey and Confucius highlight the importance of conduct and ritual in the context of our social and moral development.

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