

UBC Department of Philosophy Colloquium



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Soup, Harmony, and Disagreement.

Is the ancient Confucian ideal of *he* 和, “harmony,” a viable ideal in pluralistic societies composed of people who subscribe to different ideals of the good life, and different comprehensive moral and religious beliefs? Is harmony compatible with accepting, even encouraging, difference, and the freedom to think differently, to act against the social and moral expectations of others, and to aspire to different ways of life? In my talk I identify the different dimensions of harmony, the relations between them, and their relations to difference and the freedom to express one’s differences with others. I argue that there are ways of conceiving harmony, difference, and freedom and of trying to realize them that acknowledges the tensions between them, but also their relations of mutual support. I rely on some central passages in early texts that distinguish harmony from agreement and conformity with others, and which instead suggest that harmony must accommodate and make use of difference. I discuss the Confucian uses of ritual to foster a type of harmony that can at the same time accommodate difference.

FRIDAY, March 23rd BUCH A103 4:00 – 6:00

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