

Ice Cream and Confucian Philosophy

“Should I have another scoop of ice cream?”

The Chinese philosopher Confucius proclaimed that he would rather give up food than trustworthy conduct (*Analects* 12.7).

Among the three great Eastern traditions – Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism – it is Confucian Philosophy that speaks most about managing everyday activities, often with reference to “authority” and “propriety”. Thus, the answer would seem obvious: everyone knows that ice cream is not good for you: better control your indulgence. But wait: by what measure does one decide what is good or bad in the first place? Confucius’s teaching concentrates on the concrete, the sensuous, and the things that look simple but can generate profound meaning. It is based on an attitude of honesty and authenticity, and through that, it has significant influence on matters large and small in many Asian societies – and the West.

Self-denial is not one of its values, on the contrary: there can be no authentic, sincere conduct without self-discovery. So indeed: have your scoop of ice cream if you enjoy it. But be sure your joy is sincere.

We explore what it means to learn, to live and to love in a *joyful* way in the new Subject [“PHIL 11-106 Confucian Philosophy: A Philosophy for the Self”](#), offered from this semester at Bond University (Queensland, Australia) by Dr Yi Chen, Assistant Professor of Confucian Philosophy, at the Faculty of Society and Design. Please contact Yi Chen at ychen@bond.edu.au