

The meanings of Heaven and human nature ideology in Pre-Qin Confucianism for Moral Education in Malaysia

LIEW Foot Yuen, YAM Kah Kean
Department of Chinese Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
University of Malaya

Abstract

In Malaysia, Moral Education is a subject that is compulsory for all non-Muslim students studying in government and private schools. While non-Muslim students study Moral Education, Muslim students are taught Islamic studies. The Malaysian Chinese students must accept the concepts and values of moral education in the national education system. However, they are also influenced by the moral ethics of Confucianism in their cultural values. Will there be any conflict with these different schools teaching of thoughts? This study explores the meanings of the ideology of Heaven and human nature of Confucianism and whether it is suitable for the teaching of Moral Education in Malaysia. This study will focus on the teaching by the three great masters of Pre-Qin Confucianism who are Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi. Pre-Qin Confucianism retains the simple meaning and value of education as a cornerstone of Confucianism. It has far-reaching impact, in line with the purpose of this study. This study will first analyse the relationship between man and Heaven for the meaning of “Belief in God”. Secondly, the attribute of nature and man in Confucianism will be discussed from the view of bioethics. Thirdly, this study will analyse the significance of the relationship between man and spirits of Pre-Qin Confucianism.

Keywords: Pre-Qin Confucianism, Moral Education, Heaven and human nature

1 Background

In Malaysia, Confucian Ethics was passed down through the Chinese education since the 19th century. The Malaysian Chinese immigrants have continued to practice and promote the Chinese traditional culture seriously after they immigrated to Malaysia. Since the early Chinese education system up to now, moral education has always been the focus for the Malaysian Chinese (Zhao & Li, 2007). Before the Xinhai Revolution in 1911, Chinese education in Malaysia was following the traditional Chinese education from China. The students had to memorize and recite from the Confucian classics such as “Three Character Classic” 《三字经》, “Family Names” 《百家姓》, “Thousand Character Classic” 《千字文》 and other classics (Tan, 2000). In 1904, a Chinese school was established in Penang, and it is the first school to use the new education system, which is equipped with the new curriculum proposed by Zhang Bai Xi, Zhang Zhi Dong et al. This new education system still emphasises “self-cultivation”, “reading classic”, “preaching” and other traditional practice (Wang, 1989). The Chinese traditional ideological education still holds an important position in the Chinese education system in Malaysia today. Many Chinese schools use the Chinese traditional core values as a motto in their moral practice. Confucianism that has been disseminated through the Chinese education has imperceptibly influenced the Malaysian Chinese school.

After the independence of Malaysia in 1957, the country’s education policy has been reformed several times to meet the needs of local context. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country with different religions, beliefs and cultural traditions. It is necessary to have a common vision and to have mutual understanding and tolerance in order to achieve harmony and solidarity among the various ethnic groups in Malaysia. Therefore, moral education can no longer be based only on every ethnic’s own cultural values and ideology. Malaysia must develop an ethical value and moral education system that is suitable for all ethnic groups. The traditional cultural values and ideology must be studied deeply and synergised in a way to form a common ground for the philosophy of a multi-ethnic moral education.

In 1961, Civics Education was implemented to initiate the spirit of cooperation and harmonious relation in recognition of Malaysia as a pluralistic society. This subject has not been taken seriously, and now it is being taught as a non-examination subject to all students and has been renamed as Civics and Citizenship Education. On 13 May 1969, a race riot happened in Malaysia. Many lives were lost and all ethnic groups became suspicious of one another. Following this, the political, spiritual, and ethnic community leaders became cautions about building national integrity and harmony among the different ethnic groups (Vishalache, 2011). In 1970, the Rukun Negara (National Ideology) was introduced nationwide. In 1983, Moral Education, based on the principles of the National Ideology, was officially introduced as core subject throughout Malaysia. Moral Education is a subject that is compulsory for all non-Muslim students studying in government and private schools. While non-Muslim students study Moral Education, Muslim students are taught Islamic studies. Non-Muslim students study Moral Education from Standard 1 to Form 5 until they sit for a formal examination. This subject has been revised several times

and it has merged with the ideology from the National Philosophy of Education that was declared in 1988 and the ideology from Malaysian Vision 2020, which was developed in 1991.

Even though the Moral Education syllabus has been revised from time to time, the goals of Moral Education are still the same that is to emphasize the spiritual, familial, environmental, social, and humanitarian aspects in the total development of the individual. By achieving these goals, Moral Education has developed 16 moral values to be taught to students. The first moral value follows the first principle in the National Ideology, which is “Belief in God”. According to Muhamad Suffian (1976), the Constitution of Malaysia states that Islam is the official religion of the federation but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the federation. The constitution is the supreme law of the Federation. The validity of any law made by Parliament or the Legislature is accepted nationwide irrespective of the ethnic group they belong to. Nobody is above the law. The norms of the Malaysian society are used to formulate to a great extent what constitutes morality in Malaysia. The Malaysian Constitution provides a stable and harmonious environment for all ethnic groups to enjoy the freedom of religions, beliefs, and practice their cultural norms. These cultural norms have also been accepted as moral norms in Malaysia. This is the most effective way to maintain the unity and harmony among all ethnic groups in Malaysia.

The Malaysian Chinese students must accept the concepts and values of moral education in the national education system. However, they are also influenced by the moral ethics of Confucianism in their cultural values. Will there be any conflict with these different school teaching of thoughts? This study explores the meanings of the ideology of Heaven and human nature of Confucianism and whether it is suitable for the teaching of Moral Education in Malaysia.

This study will focus on the teaching by the three great masters of Pre-Qin Confucianism who are Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi. The Pre-Qin Confucianism text is selected because these ideologies are still based on the original ideas of Confucius, Mencius and Xun Zi. They were neither used by the ruling class, nor have they been distorted by politics (Xue, 2010). Pre-Qin Confucianism retains the simple meaning and value of education as a cornerstone of Confucianism. It has far-reaching impact, in line with the purpose of this study. This study will first analyse the relationship between Heaven and man for the meaning of “Belief in God”. Secondly, the attribute of nature and man in Confucianism will be discussed from the view of bioethics. Thirdly, this study will analyse the significance of the relationship between man and spirits of Pre-Qin Confucianism.

1. The Principle of “Belief in God” with the concept of Heaven and mankind in Pre-Qin Confucianism

According to Vishalache Balakrishnan (2011), God is a general term used and understood by practically everyone in Malaysia. However, the word God has different meanings for different faiths practised in Malaysia. For the Muslim, God refers to Allah. For the Buddhist, it refers to a higher spiritual realm. For the Christians, God is the Trinity, which is God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. For the Hindus, it is the Parathma (One God), who exists in different forms. For the Sikhs, spirituality is to understand and be aware of Waheguru (God), and for the Taoists, their spiritual guide is based on teachings by Laozi and Zhuangzi. With all these different understandings of God, the term itself is vast and complex. Yet the complexity is never a problem in the Moral Education class because when God is mentioned, every student will refer to God according to his own faith and belief.

The Moral Education syllabus is based on the National Ideology (Rukun Negara). The first principle in the National Ideology is “Belief in God” as the defined below:

The nation and ethnics groups were founded on the conviction that God exists. It is necessary to become an independent race and country through various religious beliefs. The Constitution of Malaysia states Islam as the official religion but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the federation. (Mohamad Suffian, 1976)

Therefore, “belief in God” is the first moral value in the Moral Education syllabus as states below:

Believe in the existence of God. God is the creator of the universe and we must obey its will based on everyone’s own religious beliefs and the principles of National Ideology (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, 2013)

According to the National Ideology and the Moral Education syllabus, our country attaches great importance to religious beliefs. The following discussion is about the relation between Heaven and man in Pre-Qin Confucianism, which can be applied in the principle of “Belief in God” in Malaysia.

Regarding the relation between Heaven and mankind, Confucius says, “It is only Heaven that is grand, and only Yao corresponded to it. (唯天为大，为尧则之。《论语·泰伯》)。He also mentions, “At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning. At thirty, I stood firm. At forty, I had no doubts. At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven.”(吾十有五而志于学，三十而立，四十而不惑，五十而知天命《论语·为政》) (Legge, 2015, p. 177, 29)

In the view of Confucius, “Heaven” is so high and great, even King Yao should follow it; “Heaven” is the highest, the existence of perfection. Confucius also laments that only Heaven can understand him. However, in order to understand Heaven, one must have self-cultivation step by step to achieve the level of Heaven. Therefore, he can know about the decrees of Heaven only when he was fifty, which was after he had gone through the stage of learning, standing firm and having no doubts about his youth.

Confucius also comments that in order to understand Heaven, one must not blame Heaven and man. He says:

I do not murmur against Heaven. I do not grumble against man. My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. But there is Heaven - that knows me!(不怨天，不尤人。下学而上达。知我者其天乎!《论语·宪问篇》)
(Legge, 2015, p. 319)

Mou (1998) believes that “My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high” means we must practise “benevolence” to get in touch with Heaven, to fulfil the contract between their own lives and the decree of Heaven, that is to achieve the interflow of sense between Heaven and man. This can be seen from the concept of “benevolence” emphasised by Confucius in his teaching, as Confucius says, “Benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity” (仁者人也 《中庸》) (Legge, J., 2015, p. 37). Chen (1996) proposes that this concept highlights the meaning of ethics, constituting the “practice of benevolence in life” (与命与仁) with a theory of “mutuality between Heaven and man” (天人合一), namely the combination of ordinances of Heaven and the spirit of human ethics. According to Mou (1998), this concept implicates the “immanent remote correspondence” (内在遥契).

Next, Confucius also declares, “Superior man stands in awe of the ordinances of Heaven” (君子畏天命 《论语·季氏》) (Legge, 2015, p. 367)

Mou (1998) believes that knowing Heaven will inevitably lead to a sense of awe, and awe or fear is the religious consciousness. This reverence for Heaven contains the religious meaning of “Personal God”. Mou (1998) equates this to the sense of transcendence, where “fear of Heaven” means the “transcendent remote correspondence” (超越遥契). Mou (1998) declares that Confucius is rich in religious meaning with the transcendent remote correspondence of Heaven. The transcendent remote correspondence has a serious, and sacred religious meaning, and the “immanent remote correspondence” has intimate, and clear philosophical meaning.

Mou develops the following formula:

Decree of Heaven, The path of Heaven (The classical books, eg. *The book of odes and hymns*) = Benevolence (*The Analects*) = Sincerity (*The Doctrine of the Mean*) = Creativity itself (*immanent remote correspondence*) = Principle of Creativity (*transcendent remote correspondence*).

[天命、天道 (《诗》、《书》等古籍) = 仁 (《论语》) = 诚 (《中庸》)
=创造性自己 (内在的遥契) = 创造原理/生化原理 (超越的遥契)]

The Doctrine of the Mean also stresses on “immanent remote correspondence” by “sincerity” to understand the truth of instruction from the path of Heaven and to achieve the intrinsic remote correspondence from a long distance with Heaven. The statement is stated as below:

It is only he who is possessed of a complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can give its full development to his nature. Able to give its full development to his own nature, he can do the same to the nature of other man. Able to give its full development to the nature of other man, he can give their full development to the natures of animals and things. Able to give their full development to the natures of creatures and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion. (唯天下至诚，为能尽其性；能尽其性，则能尽人之性；能尽人之性，则能尽物之性；能尽物之性，则可以赞天地之化育；可以赞天地之化育，则可以与天地参矣。《中庸》)(Legge, 2011, p. 51).

The Doctrine of the Mean also mentions:

What Heaven has conferred is called The NATURE; an accordance with this nature is called THE PATH of duty. The regulation for this path is called INSTRUCTION. THE PATH may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be the path. (天命之谓性，率性之谓道，修道之谓教。道也者，不可须臾离也，可离非道也《中庸》)(Legge, 2011, p. 5)

The Great Learning mentions the same meaning in the first chapter from a different approach, as:

What The Great Learning teaches, is – to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people, and to rest in the highest excellence. (大学之道，在明明德，在亲民，在止於至善《大学》)(Legge, 2011, p. 3)

Zhu Xi interprets “illustrious virtue” as what man received from Heaven, and it is the virtue of spirit without ignorance. It is full of truth and can react to all things in the world. (明德者为人之所得乎天，而虚灵不昧，以具众理而应万事者也)(Zhu, 2013)

The statements of *The Doctrine of the Mean* and *The Great Learning* above declare that human nature is originated from Heaven, or the ordinances from Heaven was bestowed on man. Therefore, the path of man is from the path of Heaven, the nature of man is from the nature of Heaven and the virtue of man is also from the virtue of Heaven. Cai (1996) says, “The nature of Heaven is a moral virtue, it presented through the matter as order” (天之本质为道德，而其见于事物也，为秩序). Lei (2011) also proposes that man is not just to follow the ordinances from Heaven, but he is also following the path of man until his mind and heart can merge with Heaven. Lei emphasises the practical implementation of the moral disposition and moral behaviour from the self- awareness of conscience until he understands the ordinances of Heaven, then he will participate in all activities in between Heaven and Earth. It is the process of merging the harmony with Heaven and man from intrinsic to extrinsic practice.

Another master in Pre-Qin Confucianism, Mencius emphasises two main points about the relationship of Heaven with man. One is about the ordinance of Heaven which is dominated by Heaven; the other is the moral character within Heaven and man. At first, Mencius believes that the ordinance of Heaven is a kind of power which cannot be controlled by man. He says the ordinance of Heaven is “That which is done without man’s doing is from Heaven. That which happens without man’s causing is from the ordinance of Heaven.” (莫之为而为者，天也；莫之致而至者，命也。《孟子·万章上》)(Legge, 2011, p. 179). In other words, something that can be done without interference from man is the will of God; if the results happened without the action of people, such as natural disasters, it is fate. Mencius also says:

Thus, when Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body to hunger, and subjects him to extreme poverty. It confounds his undertakings. By all these methods it stimulates his mind, hardens his nature, and supplies his incompetencies. (天将降大任於斯人也，必先苦其心志，劳其筋骨，饿其体肤，空乏其身，行拂乱其所为，所以动心忍性，增益其所不能《孟子·告子下》)(Legge, 2011, p. 245)

This indicates that Heaven will temper people’s willpower and mind through a series of testing in order to deliver a significant responsibility to him. This means although man cannot change the domination of Heaven, he can still have the determination to work hard in order to reach a consensus with Heaven. Mencius says:

The sovereign cannot give the throne to another, Heaven gave it to him. However, Heaven does not speak. It simply shows its will by his personal conduct and his conduct of affairs. (天不言，以行与事之而已矣《孟子·万上》)

It means the throne cannot be given from the sovereign’s private will. Even though Heaven cannot give an order directly, the new ruler will be recognised through the acceptance by his people on his moral policy. Mencius cites *The Great Declaration*, which states: “Heaven sees according as my people see; Heaven hears according as my people hear.” (天视自我民视，天听自我民听《孟子·告子上》). This means Heaven will recognise the ruler who is accepted by his people. Mencius believes that the principle of Heaven originated from the heart, the heart of Heaven and the heart of man is communicated. The moral attributes of man are derived from the moral attributes of Heaven. Therefore, Mencius uses the moral attribute to differentiate between man and animals. Mencius believes that the moral attribute of man is represented by the physiological attribute of man; benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are like the limbs of man. Mencius says:

The feeling of commiseration is the principle of benevolence. The feeling of shame and dislike is the principle of righteousness. The feeling of modesty and complaisance is the principle of propriety. The feeling of approving and disapproving is the principle of knowledge. Men have these four principles just as they have their four limbs. (恻隐之心，仁之端也；羞恶之心，义之端也；辞让之心，礼之端也；是非之心，智之端也。人之有是四端也，犹其有四体也。《孟子·公孙丑上》)(Legge, 2011, p. 61)

Mencius also mentions about the moral attribute of man from Heaven as follows:

He who has exhausted all his mental constitution knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven. To preserve one's mental constitution, and nourish one's nature, is the way to serve Heaven. (尽其心者，知其性也；知其性，则知天矣。存其心，养其性，所以事天也。《孟子·尽心上》) (Legge, 2011, p. 247)

Mencius believes that “knowing his nature, he knows Heaven” to unite the path of Heaven and human nature. Mencius says, “All things are already complete in us. There is no greater delight than to be conscious of sincerity on self-examination.” (万物皆备于我矣。反身而诚，乐莫大焉。《孟子·尽心上》) (Legge, 2011, p. 248). It means human nature is completely comprehensive from Heaven, it can be known from the awareness of sincerity. Zhao (2005) also agrees that the “mutuality of Heaven and mankind” (天人合一) of Confucianism in Chinese tradition is based on practical moral values such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, filial piety, faith, and fraternal duties.

Xunzi does not deny the existence of Heaven either. He believes that a wise man who knows himself and understands fate should not resent others and Heaven. Therefore, Xunzi says:

Those who know themselves do not resent others; those who know fate do not resent Heaven. Those who resent others are bound to fail; those who resent Heaven do not learn from experience. (自知者不怨人，知命者不怨天；怨人者穷，怨天者无志《荀子·荣辱篇》) (Knoblock, 1999, p. 75)

Xunzi also says:

Not to act, yet bring to completion; not to seek, yet to obtain – this indeed may be described as the work of Nature. In such a situation, the ‘Perfect’ Man, however profound, does not apply any thought to the work of Nature; however great, does not apply his abilities to it; and however shrewd, does not apply his acumen for inquiry to it. This indeed may be described as “not competing with Nature in its work. (不为而成，不求而得，夫是之谓天职。如是者，虽深、其人不加虑焉；虽大、不加能焉；虽精、不加察焉，夫是之谓不与天争职。《荀子·天论篇》) (Knoblock, 1999, p. 535)

Xunzi believes that Heaven has its responsibility and ability, which is beyond the ability of sages. Having wisdom, the sages will not suspect the ability of Heaven, and they will not take over the responsibility and ability of Heaven.

1.1 Belief in human nature is originated from Heaven to strengthen the unity of all ethnic groups

From the expositions of Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi on Pre-Qin Confucianism about Heaven, this research finds that Pre-Qin Confucianism definitely believes in God as they believe the moral attribute of human nature is originated from Heaven. With the moral nature from Heaven, mankind can rule and educate the world. This concept has great values for our Moral Education. First of all, this concept can be used for moral education for all ethnic groups from individual cultivation to family, society, and country. It can break the different racial, religious and cultural barriers. From a religious perspective, Pre-Qin Confucianism promotes the religious consciousness by “fear of Heaven” with the transcendence remote correspondence (超越遥契). From the perspective of the moral attribute, Pre-Qin Confucianism has a philosophical meaning and that is to maintain the harmony between mankind and nature. This philosophy is suitable for everyone with or without religious belief. The ultimate goal of this philosophy is to guide people in the practice of moral ethics. Therefore, this research will show that the ideology about the unity of mankind and nature of Pre-Qin Confucianism can be accepted by all races in Malaysia. It is beyond the different religious beliefs and national culture. With scientific and modern values, the concept is acceptable and pursued universally. Pre-Qin Confucianism emphasises that Heaven, man, and all things are inter-related. The most important are a man must realise that the quality of “benevolence” comes from Heaven, and mankind must implement “sincerity” to fulfil the remote correspondence with Heaven. Heaven can be defined as God according to the belief of different religions and races. Heaven can also be defined as the creator of the world from the point of view of the atheist.

1.2 Belief that everyone can practise morality to build confidence in students

Secondly, the concept of a moral attribute of human nature from Heaven is encouraging and motivating to students in learning morality in our country. Students are taught that moral virtues originated from Heaven. It serves to increase the confidence of students in the practice of morality and helps to build their consciousness of moral attributes. Everyone can practise morality. As long as they are trying the efforts of “studies lie low” (下学), but “penetration rises high” (上达). This is the driving force for the students. Students are taught to always remind themselves of “Heaven” in their heart, listen to God’s will, and naturally build up the awe-inspiring heart. This will help to reduce the students’ bad attitudes by vigilance of prudent fear.

1.3 Belief in benevolence as human nature from Heaven to develop self-awareness of moral consciousness

This research finds that this heart implanted imbued with “benevolence” from Heaven should be the core concept for Moral Education in order to inspire students’ self-discipline and moral consciousness. According to Pre-Qin Confucianism, everybody possesses benevolence, and everybody can practise benevolence. It is very important that Moral Education should neither be a one-way inculcation of dogma to students nor let the students be blindly obedient to achieve its objectives. The students should be inspired to achieve their inner self-consciousness and self-discipline.

Benevolence is related closely to human nature in Pre-Qin Confucian ethics. According to *The Doctrine of the Mean*, “Benevolence is the characteristic element of humanity” (仁者，人也《中庸》) (Legge, 2011, p. 37) “Benevolence” can be defined as “mankind”, or original character born of a man, or human nature.

Confucius says:

Is any one able for one day to apply his strength to virtue? I have not seen the case in which his strength would be insufficient. Should there possibly be any such case, I have not seen it. (有能一日用其力於仁矣乎？我未见力不足者。《论语·里仁》) (Legge, 2015, p. 75)

This means the power of “benevolence” is not from the outside, but from the people themselves. In other words, the pursuit of “benevolence” is from the inherent strength, or it is of the human nature. Pre-Qin Confucian ethics believes that benevolence is naturally born in everybody. It means everybody can practise benevolence. Therefore, all students can also practise benevolence.

The word “virtue” is another translation of benevolence by James Legge. The above statement shows that Confucius believes everybody should have the ability to practise benevolence. Mou Zhong San finds that the “benevolence” ideology of Confucius is to inspire the original morality of human nature, and can be practised immediately. From this point of view, Yang (2000) advocates that moral education is not teaching students new moral knowledge, but to inspire their original morality of human nature. This research emphasises that it is very important to inspire moral consciousness of students in primary school. Moral education is not instilling dogma, nor setting rules and regulations to force students to accept and obey. If the students can be guided to consciously understand their own nature of benevolence, they will have full confidence to practise well. In addition, they will adhere to their inner moral consciousness, not affected by the environment.

Mencius also believes that human nature is “kindness” and “benevolence”. Mencius says, “Benevolence is man’s mind, and righteousness is man’s path.” (仁者，人心也《孟子·告子上》) (Legge, 2011, p. 220)

Furthermore, the four principles mentioned by Mencius are human nature, as he says, “Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge are not infused into us from without. We are certainly furnished with them.” (仁义礼智，非由外铄我也，我固有之也《孟子·告子上》) (Legge, 2011, p. 212)

The statement above clarifies that the feeling of mankind, which consists of commiseration, shame, dislike, modesty, complaisance, approving and disapproving is natural morality, or defined as “human nature”. Hence, “benevolence” and “human nature” are considered synonyms. “The feeling of commiseration” advocated by Mencius stresses

on the original good heart of man, and strengthens the significance of moral education to students, especially the students of the primary school who have a pure heart, as Mencius says, “The great man is he who does not lose his child’s heart.”(大人者，不失其赤子之心者也。《孟子·离娄下》)(Legge, 2011, p. 150). “赤子之心” refers to the heart of a new born child who is straightforward, innocent, loving life, curious, imaginative, and full of energy. Mencius believes that a man who always maintains a heart of a newborn child can be a great person. Laozi also says, “He who has in himself abundantly the attributes (of the Dao) is like an infant” (含德之厚，比于赤子《老子道德经·第五十五章》)(Legge, 1959, p.147). Rousseau (1889) says that a child was born like a piece of white paper. Therefore, the primary school students who have not been polluted by social pollution has an innocent and pure heart. The purely innocent heart is the best time to accept the influence and inspiration of moral education.

Xunzi believes that people should follow the moral action of ancient kings by implementing humanity or benevolence and righteousness as a foundation. Once we can implement benevolence and righteousness, then the propriety education will be carried out smoothly. Xunzi says:

If you would take the Ancient Kings as your source and the principle of humanity and justice as your foundation, then ritual principle will rectify the warp and woof, the straightaways and byways of your life.(将原先王，本仁义，则礼正其经纬蹊径也《荀子·劝学》)(Knoblock, 1999, p. 17)

The above analysis shows that benevolence is the core moral value of Pre-Ain Confucian ethics, and it can also be considered as “consciousness”. From the analysis of Mou (1998), the most important characteristics of Confucius’s benevolence ideology is “consciousness”. This “consciousness” does not refer to senses or feelings, but refers to one laden with sorrow, or sad at heart. It is also the same as the feeling of being worried that was mentioned in The Analects (《论语》), as well as a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others or the feeling of commiseration mentioned by Mencius as above.

The Chinese idiom “māmù bùrén” (麻木不仁) means no feeling, or unconsciousness, unsympathetic or insensitive without benevolence. Therefore, the four principles, namely benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom will only be practised when people has self-consciousness or is sympathetic. The above Chinese idiom points out that human characteristics are sensible rather than numb. A person may have a strong sense of feeling in money and material things, but he may still be insensitive, even though he is so powerful and wise. Han (2000) also emphasises that the moral education in Pre-Qin Confucian ethics is to inspire consciousness. The following section analyses the consciousness of benevolence.

The principles of Pre-Qin Confucian ethics such as “benevolence and loyalty” (忠恕), “wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others.” (己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人), “to subdue one

self and return to propriety (克己复礼), “What you do not want to be done to yourself, do not do to others.” (己所不欲, 勿施于人), “When we cannot deal with others, we must turn inwards, and examine ourselves” (治人不治, 反其智) etc. These are all emphasise in the self-conscious. If a student lacks self-consciousness, it is very difficult for him to learn from other people’s advice and persuasion. This should be included as the core concept of Moral Education. The theory of good nature emphasises by Pre-Qin Confucianism can also help to encourage students to know themselves and to display their inner good. Meanwhile, the theory of evil nature helps to remind students of self-denial and to encourage the students to be educated. Therefore, it is inseparable from the nature of Heaven and man, all practised consciously as the spindle to turn a person’s moral thinking, and moral awareness in order to practise the correct moral behaviour. This research generalises the mutuality of Heaven and man, and the human nature theory as the core concept for Moral Education. It helps the moral educators and the students to achieve the self-awareness of moral consciousness.

2. Bioethics and the Attribute of Nature and Man

In the structure of Pre-Qin Confucianism, the relationship between nature and mankind is closely tied to the moral attributes. The concordance of all things depends on the “mean” (中), “harmony” (和) and “sincerity” (诚), especially “sincerity” (诚) is the communication between Heaven and mankind. By this, mankind has his own role and responsibility, all living things live in peace and grow endlessly, achieving the harmony between Heaven, human beings, and the environment. This is Confucianism’s concept of achieving “Coherence and cohesion between Heaven, Earth, and mankind” (通天地人), as Fang says: “The real Confucian should live in coherence and cohesion between Heaven and mankind” (真正的儒应该是“通天地人, 曰儒”) (Fang, 2005). This idea is applicable in the concept of coexistence between mankind and the environment today, especially in facing environmental pollution and the greenhouse effect, where mankind needs to use their “sincerity” (诚) to achieve the “equilibrium” (中) and “harmony” (和) with the environment.

In the 1960s, a new discipline concerning the development of the European “bioethics” was established in the United States. Bioethics mainly involves the studies of moral issues of biomedical and behavioural research, such as the environment and moral problems in the population, animal experiments and plant protection ethics problems, ethical issues in human reproduction, fertility control, inheritance, eugenics, death, euthanasia, organ transplants etc. Bioethics is the thinking and understanding of the ethical problems caused by application of science and technology in life science and medical fields (Ni, 2007). Broadly understood, bioethics, includes environmental ethics, ecological ethics and other human life and survival ethics. Its core meaning is about life and death, human nature and nature (Shen, 2003).

The contents of Moral Education in the primary school textbook emphasises the importance of protecting the natural environment. Students are reminded to cherish what is given by God by protecting the environment and ecology. They are also guided towards the right conduct of environmental protection activities, such as garbage sorting, recycling, cleaning up and other activities. By instilling environmental knowledge and the actual implementation of the action, the students are taught to be “sincere” to the earth and protect it constantly.

Undoubtedly, the attribute of nature and mankind advocated by Pre-Qin Confucianism has been the pioneer in the studies of bioethics. First of all, Confucius believes that the world exists naturally, that Heaven does not need to say anything. The world is governed by the law of nature where the four seasons run smoothly and everything is growing. Confucius says:

Does Heaven speak? The four seasons pursue their courses, and all things are continually being produced, but does Heaven say anything? (天何言哉? 四时行焉, 百物生焉, 天何言哉? 《论语·阳货》) (Legge, 2011, p. 391).

The Doctrine of the Mean emphasises that man can participate in transforming and nourishing the world by implementing “sincerity” as stated before. Meanwhile, the idea of the doctrine of the equilibrium is the foundation for reproduction of all things in the world, and also the harmony of human society. The “Equilibrium” is the best balance between heaven and humanity. *The Doctrine of the Mean* states that:

This EQUILIBRIUM is the great root from which grow all the human acts in the world, and this HARMONY is the universal path which all should pursue. Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and will flourish. (中也者, 天下之大本; 和也者, 天下之达道也; 致中和, 天地位焉, 万物育焉。《中庸》) (Legge, 2011, p. 5)

According to the above statement, “Equilibrium” (中) refers to the balance as base for all growth, and “Harmony” (和) means the principle that everyone should follow. If the world achieves this level of “equilibrium and harmony”, then everything is stable in its position, all living things are growing. Mencius also mentions, “They who accord with Heaven are preserved, and they who rebel against Heaven perish.” (“顺天者昌、逆天者亡” 《孟子·离娄上》) (Legge, 2011, p. 131). It means man must obey the will of Heaven or the good fortune of nature, then he may have the vigour and exuberance, but if he disobeys Heaven’s will or nature, then he will perish.

This point of view in Pre-Qin Confucianism is also in line with the content of Moral Education in the primary school. In the first chapter, the topic of belief in God, the content and learning standards in Primary One are as follows:

Students should understand the mysteries of nature, explain the living environment of the situation and the various things created by God. They should be educated to cherish the gift of nature, to participate in landscaping activities and to cultivate the natural behaviour as a gift from God. (Translated by researcher from Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah, 2013)

In summary, the concept of the attribute of nature and man contains the basic concept for bioethics and it is time students were educated through Moral Education.

3. Importance of understanding the relationship between mankind and spirits

Confucius believes in the existence of ghosts and spirits and believes that was indispensable, and the praying had to be done sincerely. Confucius says:

He sacrificed to the dead, as if they were present. He sacrificed to the spirits, as if the spirits were present. The Master said, "I consider my not being present at the sacrifice, as if I did not sacrifice." (祭如在，祭神如神在。子曰：“吾不与祭，如不祭。”《论语·八佾》)(Legge, 2015, p. 57)

The “sacrificed” means praying in this context. The above statement means if we cannot participate in the praying ceremony but instead appoint others to attend on our behalf, it would lack a sense of sincerity, as if not having prayed at all. However, Confucius is not superstitious. Confucius does not talk about the mysterious and strange things. Confucius says, “The subjects of which the Master did not talk, were—extraordinary things, feats of strength, and spirit beings.”(子不语怪、力、乱、神《论语·述而》)(Legge, 2015, p. 149)

He refuses to answer whether spirits exist and what comes after death. Confucius says, “While you are not able to serve man, how can you serve their spirits” “While you do not know life, how can you know about death?” (未能事人，焉能事鬼、不知生，焉知死(《论语·先进》)(Legge, 2015, p. 231)

The view of the relationship between mankind and spirits in Pre-Qin Confucianism is in line with the content of Moral Education in school. It can be said to be absolutely rational, it even has appropriate conditioning in humanistic spirit and emotion. There is no way to scientifically demonstrate the existence of ghosts and spirits since ancient times, Pre-Qin Confucianism held a neutral position in this belief, that is neither believing nor disbelieving. Pre-Qin Confucianism uses the spirits and worship ritual to cultivate awe and sincerity of heart in people, and ultimately train people in upholding what are considered moral and ethical. This is an important practice in reality. The main doctrines of all religions lead the people away from gambling and stealing, to live peacefully, be helpful and to have gratitude. The benefit of carrying out the doctrine of religious belief is to guide the students in the correct worldview, outlook on life and values, and thus promote harmony and stability of the nation.

The Moral Education in our country also mentions the importance of sacrifices. It guides the students to observe and follow their family’s religious rituals, comprehend the importance of respecting family religious rituals, practise religious etiquette together with their family, and also recognise and respect other religions, rituals, religious festivals, food, and faith. The content of the course allows students to understand the positive teaching in all religions.

In *The Analects of Confucius*, there is a story which states that:

The Master, when he entered the grand temple, asked about everything. Someone said, “Who say that the son of the man of Zou knows the rules of propriety! He has entered the grand temple and asks about everything.” The Master heard the remark, and said, “This is a rule of propriety.” (子入太庙，每事问。或曰：“孰谓鄒人之子知礼乎？入太庙，每事问。”子闻之，曰：“是礼也。”《论语·八佾》)(Legge, 2015, p. 59)

This shows that Confucius uses propriety to respect the ritual in every sacrifice or praying ceremony, and this Pre-Qin Confucianism ethical ideology is very much applicable to the multicultural society in Malaysia.

4 Conclusion

Based on the three analyses above, the mutuality of Heaven and mankind ideology in Pre-Qin Confucianism can be summarised in the following figure:

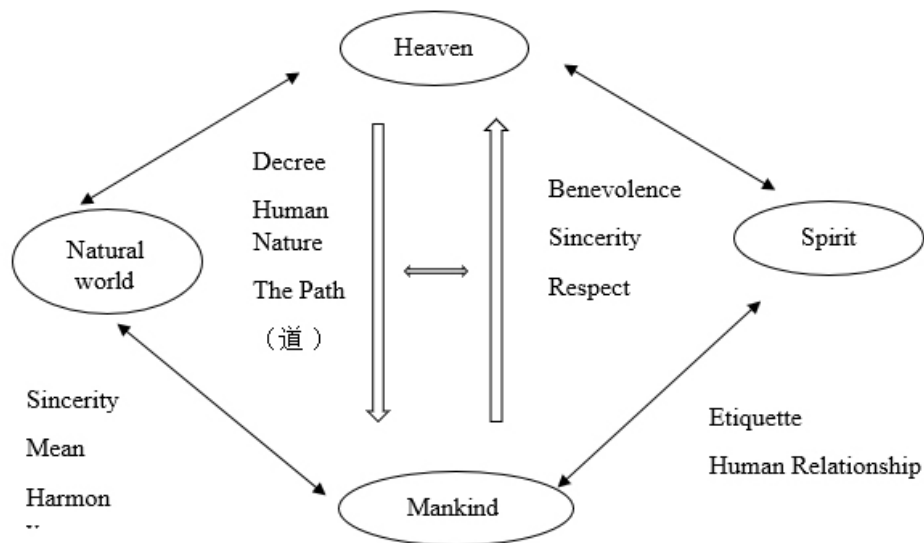


Figure 1: Summary of The Mutuality Of Heaven and Mankind Ideology in Pre-Qin Confucianism

The figure 1 above shows several characteristics of the mutuality of Heaven and mankind ideology in Pre-Qin Confucianism. First of all, the decree from Heaven is transferred into man as human nature. When man implements the human nature, it is called the Path (道), as a road of moral virtue. If a man can fulfil the virtue of Heaven which is benevolence, sincerity, and respect to Heaven, then, man can “reach” Heaven. In other words, it is to achieve the objectives of Heaven (下学上达). Secondly, man and nature coexist through sincerity, the mean and harmony to achieve the perfect coordination of all things. Thirdly, Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi never deny the existence of spirits. They develop the praying etiquette based on the principle of ethics in human relationship. They used the praying etiquette to pray to Heaven, earth, and spirits in order to cultivate sincerity and respect in a man. In this system of mutuality of Heaven and ideology, moral ethics serve as the bridge between heaven and mankind. A man with moral ethics participates in ruling this world, as the leader of all things. In addition, Pre-Qin Confucianism also illustrates the responsibility of man towards Heaven. Confucius believes that it is the responsibility of Heaven to deliver moral decree to man. Confucius says: “If my principles are to advance, it is so ordered. If they are to fall to the ground, it is so ordered.” (道之将行也与，命也。道之将废也与，命也。《论语·宪问篇》)(Legge, 2015, p. 321)

The “mandate” (命) means the decree from Heaven. Therefore, a man cannot control whether the right way or moral nature will be delivered from Heaven, it all depends on the decree from Heaven. Confucius also think that the right way from Heaven is incomparable. Confucius says, “If a man in the morning hears the right way, he may die in the evening without regret.” (“朝闻道，夕死可矣”《论语·里仁篇》)(Legge, 2015, p. 75)

It proves that Confucius strongly respects the right way that can be heard from Heaven, even more, valuable than life. Confucius’ student Tse-kung also comments that it is not easy to hear about the way of Heaven, he says, “The Master’s personal displays of his principles and ordinary descriptions of them may be heard. His discourse about man’s nature, and the way of Heaven, cannot be heard.” (夫子之文章，可得而闻也；夫子之言性与天道，不可得而闻也《论语·公冶长》)(Legge, 2015, p. 99)

However, from the view of man, the Path can still be achieved by implementing the human nature. Confucius says, “The path is not far from man. When man tries to pursue a course, which is far from the common indications of consciousness, this course cannot be considered THE PATH.” (道不远人。人之为道而远人，不可以为道《中庸》)(Legge, 2011, p. 19)

“THE PATH” means the right way from Heaven. Confucius has stressed that people should bear the responsibility of implementing the right way or human nature. He says, “A man can enlarge the principles which he follows; those principles do not enlarge the man.” (人能弘道，非道弘人《论语·卫灵公篇》)

His student Tsang also says:

The officer may not be without breadth of mind and vigorous endurance. His burden is heavy and his course is long. Perfect virtue is the burden which he considers it is his to sustain;--is it not heavy? Only with death does his course stop;--is it long? (士不可以不弘毅，任重而道远。仁以为己任，不亦重乎，死而後已，不亦远乎《论语·泰伯章》) (Legge, 2015, p. 169)

The figure of mutuality of Heaven and man ideology in Pre-Qin Confucianism is based on the combination of moral virtue from Heaven and man. Although man has to receive decree from Heaven, man can still achieve the Path of Heaven by implementing moral virtue and participating in all things of the world.

Pre-Qin Confucianism advocates the theory of mutuality between man and nature, which covers the virtues of man decreed by Heaven, the coexistence of nature and human beings and the world of ghosts and spirits. Confucianism has repeatedly stressed on Pre-Qin religious awareness, but it was not limited to a single ritual and dogma and it contains the philosophical and rational logic of human spiritual accomplishment. All faith and worshiping rituals are not external forms and blind superstition. The main practice is to cultivate sincerity, and coupled with the objectivity of fear of the unpredictable law of the universe and the master (Heaven) in order to achieve the harmony and coexistence between Heaven, earth and all things. It is to be admired that our National Ideology and Moral Education emphasise on the principle of belief in God, the importance of religion which is also acceptable to official Islam and the inclusion and respect of all religious beliefs. However, this principle marginalises those who have no religion or atheists. Pre-Qin Confucianism is able to make up for this shortcoming. Zhu Xi says: “If Confucius was not born, the night is eternal” (天不生仲尼，万古如长夜) (Zhu, 2013). It means that Confucian philosophy brightens up the life of man in the world.

References

- Cai, Y.P. (1996). *Zhongguo lunlixue [The Ethics of China]*. Beijing: Dongfang Press.
- Chen, G.J. (1996). *Rujia lunli zhexue [The Philosophy of Confucian Ethics]*. Beijing: Renmin Publishing House.
- Fang, D.M. (2005). *Yuanshi rujiadaoxue zhexue. [The philosophy of primitive of Confucian and Taoism]*. Taipei: Li Ming Cultural Enterprise Co., Ltd.
- Han, Z.W. (2003). *Xianqin rujia jiaoyu zhexue sixiang yanjiu [The philosophy of educational study on Pre-qin Confucianism]*. Jinan: Qi Ru shushe.
- Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah (2013). *Pendidikan Moral, Tahun Satu – Tahun 6*. Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia.
- Legge, J. (Trans.).(2015). *Du lunyu xue yingyu [The Analects of Confucius]* (H.T. Lin, Eds.). Taipei: Cite Publishing Ltd. .
- Legge, J. (Trans.). (1959). *The Text of Taoism* (D.T. Suzuki, Introduction). New York: The Julian Press, Inc.
- Lei, Z. (2011). *Zhongguo chuantong rujia lunli de luoji [The Logic of ethics in Chinese traditional Confucian]*. Doctoral Thesis, Heilongjiang University, Harbin, China.
- Mencius (2011). *Mengzi* .[The works of Mencius] (J. Legge, Trans.).Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching And Research Press.
- Mohamad Suffian, H. (1976). *An introduction to the Constitution of Malaysia.2nd edition*. Kuala Lumpur: Government Printers.
- Mou, Z.S. (1998). *Zhongguo zhexue de tezhi [Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy]*. Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Press.
- Ni, S.X. (2007). *Lunlixue jianlun [The Ethics]*. Wuhan: Wuhan University Press
- Rousseau, J.J. (1889). *Emile; or Concerning Education*. (Worthington, E., Trans.). Boston: D.C. Heath & Company.
- Shen, M.X. (2003). *Shengming lunlixue. [Bioethics]*. Peking: Higher Education Press.
- Tan, H.C. (2000). *Malaxiya ruxue yanjiu zhi huigu yu qianzhang [The Review and Prospect of Confucianism Research in Malaysia]*. *Heqin fuwugang jiaoshou bazhijinliu rongqin xueshu lunwenji*.

- Vishalache, B. (2011). *Real-Life Dilemmas in Moral Education*. Kuala Lumpur: University Malaysia Press.
- Wang, X.N. (1989). *Dongnanya jiaoyushi dagang. [The outline of Southeast Asia Education History]*. Singapore: Dongnanya yanjiu zhongxin. .
- Xue, S.P.(2010). *Xianqin rujia daode jiazhi sixiang ji qi xiandai yanjiu [The Value of Confucian Ethics and Its Modern Implications Study]*. Doctoral dissertation, Hebei Normal University .
- Xunzi (1999). *Xunzi* (J. Knoblock, Trans.). Hunan: People's Publishing House.
- Yang, H.Z. (2000). Mouzongsan dui ren de quanshi ji zai lunli jiaoyu de hanyi [Interpretation of Mou Zong San towards benevolence and its meanings of moral education]. *Zhexue yu wenhua [The Journal of Philosophy and Culture]*, 27(4), pp. 329-336.
- Zengzi (2011). *Daxue. [The Great Learning]*(J. Legge, Trans.). Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching And Research Press.
- Zhao, K.T. & Li Y.H. (2007). Zhongguo chuantong sixiang daode yu dongnanya lunli [The China Traditional Moral Thought and Ethics in East Asia]. *Zhongguo shehui kexue*.
- Zhao, L. (2005). *Xietiao yu chaoyue- Zhongguo siwei fangshi tantao [Coordination and Beyond – Discussion on Chinese Thinking]*. Wuhan University Press .
- Zhu Xi (2013). *Sishuzhangjuzhuzhu [The Variorum of Four Books]*. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company.
- Zisi (2011). *Zhongyong [The Doctrine of the Mean]*. (J. Legge, Trans.) Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching And Research Press.