

Destiny or Decision: Revealing the Change of the Concept of Ming命 and Its Pedagogical Implications

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Abstract

In Chinese philosophy, scholars have been discussing a long-standing and unresolved matter (Fan, 2019; Lupke, 2005; Wu, 2009), namely Ming命. Ming, often translated as life, fate, or command, was initially understood as orders and arrangements from heaven (Fan, 2019). However, since the Kongzi (Confucius) period, the focus of Ming命 has shifted to people themselves and how they should live their lives. Furthermore, Ming命 has been recognized by people as human life as well as the survival of one's life journey. In the contemporary age, the concept of Ming命 has shifted again. It ensures that people, instead of the predetermined power of nature and its kind, have most of the ability to decide how to live their lives. The study of Ming命 has thus become one of the essential philosophical fields for Chinese and international thinkers, and academic researchers, to explore the question of heaven and human existence. In this paper, the analysis of four texts throughout Chinese history will serve as a simple reflective example of the difficulties of interpretation, revealing the evolving meaning of the concept and its pedagogical implications.

Keywords

Ming命; contextual meaning; pedagogical implication; transition

Introduction

Over thousands of years, different Chinese philosophers have discussed numerous aspects of Ming命 (Fan, 2019; Lupke, 2005; Wu, 2009). According to the study of the formation of this concept, Ming命 may originate from the beginning of the Western Zhou dynasty (1046 BC to 771 BC) (Wu, 2009). Generally, Ming命, often translated into life, fate, and command, was initially understood as orders and arrangements from heaven (Fan, 2019). However, since the Kongzi period, the discussion on Ming命 has turned to how people themselves decide how to live their lives. The amount of literature and research on this topic is

substantial, and these viewpoints and concepts are constantly being reviewed at present, as they have been for several years (Fu, 2006; Liu & Zhang, 2019; Tang, 1999). Nevertheless, little research has been conducted to connect this concept to pedagogy and the pedagogical implications associated with its ever-changing meanings.

In this paper, four texts throughout Chinese history have been selected to indicate **the development of this concept's** evolving meanings and its pedagogical implications over time.¹ In the first section, Ming命 as the command of heaven will be discussed through “Wei Tian Zhi Ming 周颂·维天之命” of “the Book

¹ The translation of the four texts is more for readers' reference, whilst the authors interpret the meaning of Ming

命 in the analysis based on their bilingual background and advantage.

of Songs 诗经。” Kongzi’s (551 BC to 479 BC, often referred to as Confucius in Anglophone countries) viewed Ming命 as the coexistence between humans. Heaven will be explored later in “the Yanyuan of the Analects 论语·颜渊.” Furthermore, a famous classical essay, “Chen Qing Biao陈情表,” will be used to analyze the meaning of Ming命 as human life and survival. Finally, we will examine the modern usage of Ming命 in Xi Jinping’s report “Never Forget the Original Intention and Remember the Mission 不忘初心, 牢记使命.” However, the selection of these texts does not suggest these are the only stamps in time in which the meaning of Ming命 has shifted. As time changes, the cultural and contextual meaning of this notion shifts simultaneously. Accordingly, these texts are chosen as examples to discuss Ming命’s different meanings and pedagogical implications in particular contexts.

Whilst dissecting the connection between this concept and pedagogy, and the respective pedagogical implications derived from **this notion’s changing meaning, this paper will** utilize the framework of the pedagogical triangle (Kenklies, 2019; Lewin, 2018; Friesen & Osguthorpe, 2018). The framework suggests in the pedagogical process that there are three key factors, namely, the educator, the educand, and something in relation with the student, which forms a solid “pedagogical triangle” (Friesen & Osguthorpe, 2018). A necessary condition is that the student needs to improve the relation between themselves and something. Meanwhile, the teacher has an intention to improve this relation. To start this dissection, Ming命 as the command of heaven will first be reviewed in the next section.

The Transitional Concept of Ming命 in Four Texts

Ming命 as the Command of Heaven

Justification of the Text in the Pedagogical Lens

“The Book of Songs 诗经” is the first known collection of poems in China. It states that during the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046BC to 771BC), officials were assigned by the emperor to collect the poetry. These officials traveled deep into the country to gather folk tunes that could portray the joys and pains of the people (Chen, 2013). Since the Han dynasty (202 BC to 220 AD), Kongzi taught his followers how to read the “Book of Songs” as the standard of speaking and doing to achieve success in life. Since then, given the dominant position of Confucianism in ancient China, the Book of Songs was primarily employed as an instructional book in both home-schooling and formal educational settings.

The poem, “Wei Tian Zhi Ming 周颂·维天之命,” is the second chapter of the “Book of Songs.” “Ode to Zhou,” is first and foremost a song of worship and adoration for King Wen, who the Zhou people revered as the highest power. In this poem, King Wen is portrayed as **the manifestation of heaven’s command**, namely, as a “Godlike” person who has been adored and believed in by the people of ancient China (Legge, 1872). All eight sentences in the poem can be divided into two sections, which is how the poem is organized:

维天之命，² 于穆不已。于乎不显·文王之德之纯·假以溢我·我其收之·骏惠我文王·曾孙笃之 (Zhu, 2006, p.1)

The ordinances of Heaven/How deep are they and unintermitting!/ And oh! how illustrious/Was the singleness of the virtue of king Wen!/How does he (now) show his kindness?/We will receive (his favor)/ Striving to be in accord with him, our king Wen/And may his remotest descendant be abundantly the same (James Legge, as cited by the Chinese Text Project, 2022, p.1)!³

The first four sentences of the poem state that King Wen is directed by heaven and has a moral character that is pure and beautiful. This section stresses **King Wen's supremacy with Ming命** as the direction of heaven. The final section of the four phrases declares the intention of this poem by stating that King Wen was beloved by his successors and that future generations should follow in his footsteps and continue the tradition of their ancestors.

It is stated in this poem that King Wen is **heaven's command and that his destiny is linked** to that of the Zhou dynasty, as revealed in the poem. Therefore, the individual (King Wen) is thus referenced as the descendant of heaven. **Consequently, King Wen's descendants became** the descendants of heaven, and they were able to carry on his ideal destiny in perpetuity. As a result, when the poem is read and sung, the descendants experience an inner sense of delight and satisfaction, as though their lives and the life

of the dynasty will continue. Thus, King Wen is as perfect and as moral as heaven, and the Zhou dynasty and its subjects will continue to exist in **harmony and stability. Although the poem's** claimed goal is to praise and revere the nobility of King Wen, the author can discern that its underlying goal is to educate people to obey the arrangement of heaven or authority from above unconditionally; thereby, they may be blessed for all time.

Meaning of Ming命 in this Text

From the time of the Zhou dynasty (104BC to 256BC), people relied on their senses to understand the world around them. When faced with unexplained or invisible occurrences in nature and culture, they assumed mysterious powers manipulated them. This mysterious power was then referred to as the command of heaven and identified as Ming命. Moreover, since culture and politics were inextricably linked in ancient China, the worship of heaven was used to permeate the divinity of the ruling class to the people, creating the impression that **the monarchy's power had been granted by** heaven. This helped to maintain the position of the ruling class. Consequently, the people believed that through worshipping King Wen, they might build a spiritual connection with heaven to receive the answer to the question of the right way of living (Chen, 2013).

Ming命, in this poem, implies that it is **heaven's command to choose King Wen to rule the country, and King Wen's destiny is linked to** that of the Zhou Dynasty. With the blessing of heaven to King Wen, the Zhou Dynasty and its people will continue to live in perpetual peace

² The Chinese character Ming 命 in the citations is in bold for visual clearance.

³ This version of the translation was selected for its clear and classic interpretation of the "Book of Songs" translated by James Legge, cited and adapted from the Chinese Text

Project, an online open-access digital database. Legge's work on translation is widely recognized and was chosen merely for reference.

and safety. Here, the author can infer the definition of Ming命 in this context, as the command of heaven; how a person will live their life is in the hands of heaven. As such, it **indicates humanity's unstoppable future. There** is nothing a person can do to alter the command of heaven; this command dictates whether a person will be affluent, glorious, and long-lived, and their efforts will make little difference.

Pedagogical Implications

In this section, the author has discussed Ming命 as the command of heaven and its meaning embodied in the “Book of Song.” The author of this text, as the educator, attempted to educate people to respect and obey King Wen, who is regarded as the descendant of heaven. The people served as educands in this process, improving their relationship with heaven and its descendent, King Wen. Ming命, as the command of heaven, was intentionally delivered through this pedagogical process.

As it was believed that such a command was long-lasting, this command needed to be passed on and carried on across the generations. It was not to be resisted but inherited through poems or songs as a form of education. By praising the king, this form of text intended to improve the relation between the young generation and their understanding of King Wen; since the king is a descendant of heaven, **he is viewed as an extension of heaven's** command. People are enlightened when they are led by example (Chen, 2015). The pedagogical implication here is that the descendants from heaven are expected to become the model for the people to be educated. However, such absolute command strikes fear and unwavering belief (Wan, 2019). With such respect and fear, other forms of education are unnecessary. The only form of education needed were the ones from

heaven above or the king, the descendant of heaven. It suggests that when the belief in an absolute mandate from heaven is strong, the call for education is neglected because such belief denies the necessity for its existence.

Furthermore, as heaven or the authority above has designed the order for how the universe works and how all the individuals are to live their lives, any effort that attempts to disobey or even reverse the predetermined law of the universe, if it exists, was considered nonsensical. Similarly, the qualities embedded in the nobleman and the virtues sprouted in the younger generations are not inherited from their ancestors or acquired from education or **socialization but endowed with heaven's** command (Lupke, 2005). This understanding brings numbness to the recognition of life; nothing can be changed for the better or worse, thus, nothing needs to be improved. Hence, there is no need for education, such as personal growth. Such ideology could be used by the noblemen and their families to justify their privilege, and further, disregard the need and **opportunities for their populace's individual** growth.

Ming命 as the Coexistence Between Humans and Heaven

Justification of the Text in the Pedagogical Lens

Moving forward to the Spring and Autumn period (770 BC to 476 BC), people began to recognize the power of individuals, and the understanding of Ming命 as the command of heaven has slightly changed, which is explicitly discussed in the “Analects of Kongzi 论语.” The “Analects of Kongzi” (2018) is a collection of **quotations compiled by Kongzi's disciples during** the Spring and Autumn period to record the words and acts of Kongzi and his disciples,

embodying Kongzi's political beliefs, ethical thoughts, moral conceptions, and educational principles. The “Analects of Kongzi” was designated as one of “the Four Books” since the Song dynasty (960AD to 1127AD), becoming the official textbook in ancient schools and was required reading for Imperial Examinations.

The “Yanyuan 颜渊” of the “Analects” is frequently quoted by scholars for its most famous conversations about benevolence between Kongzi and his disciples. In one of those chapters, Sze-ma New was concerned that he would be dying alone because he announced that he did not recognize Huan Yu as his brother:

司马牛忧曰：“人皆有兄弟，我独亡” 子夏曰：“商闻之矣：死生有命·富贵在天·君子敬而无失·与人恭而有礼·四海之内·皆兄弟也——君子何患乎无兄弟也？”

Sze-ma New, full of anxiety, said, “Other men all have their brothers, I only have not.” Tsze-hea said to him, “There is the following saying which I have heard, ‘Death and life have their determined appointment; riches and honors depend upon Heaven.’ Let the superior man never fail reverentially to order his own conduct and let him be respectful to others and observant of propriety; then all within the four seas will be his brothers. What has the superior man to do with being distressed because he has no brothers” (edited and translated by James Legge, 1861, p. 116)⁴

As the text reveals, Sze-ma New was concerned that he would live alone, without brothers and

friends. Tsze-hea consoled Sze-ma New in the same chapter, telling him that life and death are not decided by him but by Ming命. However, if his words and deeds were in keeping with kindness, he would be praised by people all across the world. Thus, there was no need to worry about his lack of siblings because he would find other brothers and friends who “exist all over the world.” In the text, Kongzi and his disciple Tsze-hea offer Sze-ma New (as well as the readers) keywords of wisdom on aspects such as how to handle the dilemma, how to be deliberate, and how to alter the situation, by suggesting Sze-ma New to be respectful, courteous, and polite toward others, with morality and compassion and righteousness. In this respect, this text intends to educate people on how to better communicate and create a harmonious atmosphere with other individuals in the world.

Meaning of Ming命 in this Text

From this text, the author can observe that the role of Ming命 as a predetermined destination designed by the highest power is not dismissed by Kongzi and his disciples. Nevertheless, more importantly, they emphasized the subjective initiative of **individuals during one's life journey. As Fan (2019) affirms, from Kongzi's perspective, the most crucial thing is that one must believe in and obey Ming命 but also actively recognize Ming命, take moral responsibility, and constantly strive to improve one's society as they do the whole world.** The author can also perceive, from the instruction of this text, that although success or failure would be the result of their own causes and consequences, people would be lost in fear and worries if they gave up

⁴ The source of translation was recorded from one of the most classic books of James Legge, which is named “The Chinese Classics: Vol. 1: Confucian Analects, the Great

Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean.” Legge's work on translation is widely recognized, and it was chosen merely for reference.

putting up their best efforts to conduct tasks. To prevent the regrets of avoiding making an attempt, people can still work to conduct their previous statements under the condition of a clear conscience, with respect to the arrangement of Ming命.

In Kongzi's discussion of Ming命, heaven remains the highest power; however, to distinguish itself from the earlier definition of Ming命 as the command of heaven, Ming命 in **this context implies that an individual's future is** in their own hands, under the guidance and supervision of heaven (Zhang, 2009). This alteration is more optimistic because it reminds people that they can take control of their lives, whereas in the first text, people could only obey the command of heaven.

Pedagogical Implication

In this section, the author analyzed the coexistence of humans and heaven and its meaning in the “Yanyuan” of the “Analects.” Kongzi and his disciples acted as educators, **endeavoring especially to cultivate people's** moral character. The people functioned as educands, improving their relationship between their own images and that of the sage. Ming命, as the coexistence between humans and heaven, was intentionally used as the condition for people to practice their own moral ideas and form their own moral pursuits.

Kongzi suggests that people actively practiced their moral standards in their predetermined life and could experience unprecedented inner peace and even joy in the process without worrying about the end (Zhang, 1997). As a result, the author can perceive that, different from the Ming命 discussed earlier as **heaven's command, which does not require** other forms of education, Kongzi encouraged

actively exploring Ming命 **based on one's belief** in it, and he emphasized the importance of **making a change in one's life** because of **one's exploration. Correspondingly, Kongzi's idea on** subjective efforts should be interpreted as being coherent with the arrangement of the Ming命, rather than rejecting it entirely.

In this context, the whole of the human endeavor is tinged with a degree of uncertainty, and numerous factors are beyond their control. **Kongzi's perception** of Ming命 offers more room for individuals to make changes in their lives, in the world, and gradually improve their minds and personalities during this process. To calmly deal with those predetermined but unknown issues, one must learn to situate themselves appropriately in this world and cultivate oneself with openness and acceptance of the command of heaven. This means that to create as many beneficial conditions as possible, a state of coexistence between humans and heaven is highly encouraged in this text. As such, although people are constantly struggling with an uncontrolled future, people can have their own moral pursuits and practice their own moral ideals. In this respect, people are free and have free will. In the process of this paradox, people improve their moral status and shape their noble personalities.

Ming命 as Human Life and Survival

Justification of the Text in the Pedagogical Lens

In the Three Kingdom Period (220 AD to 280 AD), the meaning of Ming命 began to **shift and expand. Aside from heaven's command** and the coexistence between humans and heaven, it also began to imply orders, designation, and human life itself. To study this transition, the article “Chen Qing Biao 陈情表” written by Li Mi in the West Jin dynasty (265 AD

to 317 AD) will be analyzed. As one of the officials for the Emperor Wu of the Jin dynasty, Li Mi wrote this piece to Emperor Wu to renounce a designated position and petition for leave due to the poor health of his grandmother.

“Biao表” is a form of text written by officials to their emperors. Amongst four categories, “Biao” is primarily for stating facts or describing situations. “Biao” are to express loyalty and hope from the advisors or officials to the emperor, and state political requests and appeals. Employed as a means to an end, this form of article is usually embedded with strong emotional expression to achieve its purpose. Therefore, the character of this form of text is to convince or persuade through emotions. Understanding the usage of “Biao” allows one to identify the pedagogical element in the text itself. Since the purpose of writing such articles is to **change the emperor’s relation favorably to a particular event or a specific person**, electing to use this form already represents an active intention to improve. In this case, it could be argued that Li Mi (Li, translated by Luo, 2005, p.10) wrote this article **to improve the emperor’s understanding of filial piety**.

The chosen piece in this text is the core **of the petition and highlights Emperor Wu’s** guiding principles of ruling the country, and leading through the standards of filial piety. It strongly connects such standards to his personal experience with his grandmother and strongly argues for petitioning his absence owing to his **grandmother’s health. The character of Ming命** was used more than once in this article, and it represents different meanings. For instance, it was used once in the second paragraph and once in the third paragraph with the meaning of designation. Moreover, it was also used twice in the third paragraph, signifying human life or survival.

In this section, the third paragraph of the article will be further explored to explain the usage of the concept Ming命 with its meaning as human life and its pedagogical implications. The reason for choosing this meaning to discuss in this piece is that the usage here connects human life to emotion and the notion of filial piety.

伏惟圣朝以孝治天下，凡在故老，犹蒙矜育，况臣孤苦，特为尤甚。且臣少仕伪朝，历职郎署，本图宦达，不矜名节。今臣亡国贱俘，至微至陋，过蒙拔擢，宠命优渥，岂敢盘桓，有所希冀！但以刘日薄西山，气息奄奄，人命危浅，朝不虑夕。臣无祖母，无以至今日，祖母无臣，无以终余年。母、孙二人，更相为命，是以区区不能废远。

Now Your Majesty is ruling the country on the principle of filial piety. Old people of high virtue are being taken care of and well provided for. It is apparent that I am more distressed than others. Besides, out of vainglory to secure a high position in the government regardless of my personal integrity, I served in the last dynasty during my youth as Shangshulang, and now, I, a captive, a slave, am getting undeserved favor from Your Majesty. How dare I hesitate and cherish any aspirations? But my grandmother is at her last breath, and she is like the setting sun beyond the western hills. Her life is at stake, and she may die at any moment. But for her, I would not have become what I am today. But for me, she would have been long dead. It is because the two of us depend upon each other that I,

your humble servant, cannot leave home at present (Li, translated by Luo, 2005, p.10).⁵

“陈” means stating and “情” holds two common meanings. It could imply a situation, as well as an emotion. In this context, these two meanings **are intertwined. The article states the author’s situation, namely that he cannot accept the designated position and he expresses his emotion to the emperor. He also needs to follow the filial piety standard to look after his grandmother. He used the emotional elements to convince the emperor by bringing forth his love for his grandmother and connecting such love to the emperor’s filial piety ruling principle and the emperor’s comprehension of filial piety.**

Meaning of Ming命 in this Context

Ming命 was used three times in this paragraph. It was used in the phrases “宠命优,” “人命危浅,” and “更相为命,” respectively. In the first phrase “宠命优渥,” Ming命 implies designation, a job, or order or a task given by a higher-rank fellow human. This meaning will be further discussed in the next section with a different text from Xi Jinping. This section will focus on the other two phrases with the meaning of life, human life, or further, survival. In “人命危浅,” Ming命 implies explicitly human life. In contrast to the different aforementioned use, the use of Ming命 here does not suggest heavenly command or the coexistence between humans and heaven. It merely implies the life of humans, as in its length, liveliness, and existence. Ming命 here no longer connects to a higher power but

simply a natural state of being. Ming命 in “更相为命” pushes it a little further to suggest such a state could be affected by the action; it could be established (“为”). Therefore, it implies more than merely being alive; it also implies surviving.

Ming命 in this context stresses what the **grandmother’s living and being signifies to Li Mi. This character was used here to express the urgency of his grandmother’s life in a thin, dangerous, near-death state. Furthermore, it also binds Ming命 to human emotional connections. Li Mi values human life, specifically his grandmother’s life. It suggests that Ming命 as survival does not simply regard one person’s life. Instead, it is a part of a connection to others, such as their family. This understanding is also culturally accepted. In this context, Ming命 is no longer a command from heaven that can only be followed and received, or the co-existence of humans and heaven, but it suggests that life can be controlled or improved in a certain way. Otherwise, survival cannot be affected by the action.**

Pedagogical Implication

In this session, the author has discussed Ming命 as human life and survival and its meaning in “Chen Qing Biao.” In this text, Li Mi, as the author of the article as well as the educator, sought to educate the emperor to respect human life. The emperor, as the educand of this process, improved his relationship with the standard of filial piety. Ming命, as human life and survival, was intentionally utilized to imply a form of life that has value on its own, particularly consistent with filial piety and

⁵ The translation chosen here for the text was made by Luo Jingguo. Li (2019) used Luo’s work as an example to adapt Gadama’s hermeneutics framework, a fusion of Horizons, to explain and compare translation. She suggests that Luo’s

translation for “Chen Qing Biao” is adequate to deliver the **meaning of the content to target the reader’s comprehension**, especially for the readers who come from different cultures that do not possess the same cultural understanding.

respect for life when socially and emotionally related.

In such a context, education is meaningful at different levels. Firstly, it is consistent with the need for life education. The common understanding of life education is to care, explore, and recognize the meaning of life, respect and cherish the value of life and love and develop the unique liveliness of each individual (Huang, 2013). Life has value in itself, and such **education could improve people's relation to this value, not just for themselves but also for the lives of others who share that value.** Education becomes two dimensional at this point, as it: **a) improves one's relation to the content in itself; and b) improves one's relation to the content** with regards to others. An example would be educating for filial piety. In Chinese culture, filial piety is one of the most widely discussed educational topics. When one disregards their own life or is irresponsible for their own lives in a way that affects their elderly next of kin, they are considered unfilial. This would be regarded as a significant breach of moral or personal virtue because filial piety comes before all other virtues.

Ming命 as the Mission

Justification of the Text in the Pedagogical Lens

Xi Jinping's report at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China is the core programmatic literature for the Chinese Communists and the people of all ethnic groups in the new era (Wang, 2022). Reports are commonly first announced by the Chairman of **China during the National People's Congress** meeting before subsequently distributing to the subordinate government and institutions for study and implementation.

The whole process of the distribution is simultaneously a pedagogical process. After the report was first proposed in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party in late 2017, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee held a special meeting and asked the whole Party to conduct Theme Education accordingly. For example, in accordance with the **Central Committee's instruction, the Shandong** province government deploys two batches of educational initiatives (Wang, 2021). Colleges and universities undertake the work measures outlined in the report of the 19th National Congress and provide funds to assist students and teachers in putting the guideline research into action at the institutional level (Xu, 2021; Zhi, 2022; Li & Fu, 2021). Local party media held news competitions on the research based **on Xi's report and organized the study** of the excellent articles that won the prize (Gao & Wang, 2022). Furthermore, Xi delivered a series of essential expositions on the original intention and mission of the Communist Party of China through speeches, instructions, conversations, instructions, replies, and other means.

In the report, General Secretary Xin Jinping stated initially:

不忘初心，方得始终。中国共产党人的初心和使命，就是为中国人民谋幸福，为中华民族谋复兴 (Xi, 2017, p.1).

Never forget why you started, and you can accomplish your mission. The original aspiration and the mission of Chinese Communists is to seek happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation

(edited and translated by Xinhua, 2017, p.1).⁶

As the interpretation of the text reveals, *Ming*命 is translated as a mission that people should never forget. This mission is not invented by Xi Jinping, but it has experienced a series of continuations and developments. Mao Zedong said that the goal of the Communist Party was to serve the people wholeheartedly (Mao, 1991). Meanwhile, Deng Xiaoping insisted that the interests of the people were above all else and earnestly safeguarded the rights and interests of the people (Deng, 1994); Jiang Zemin continued to seek benefits for the people, and he insisted the party represents the fundamental interests of the majority (Jiang, 2006). Meanwhile, Hu Jintao adhered to the scientific development thought of “people-oriented” and constantly enriched the relevant viewpoints of “original intention” and “mission” (Hu, 2010). This connects to the meaning of *Ming*命 as an externally endowed responsibility from another human man or party, normally with a higher rank, not command from heaven or the designed destination from a higher power, but from another human man or party, normally with a higher rank.

*Meaning of Ming*命 in this Text

The short version of the above two **sentences in Xi’s report is a more frequently used slogan “不忘初心、牢记使命”** of the contemporary era, which in short is translated to “never forget the original intention and remember the mission.” *Ming*命, translated as “mission” in the text, refers to a significant duty assigned to a person or group of people with a strong sense of calling. As Xi (2017) explains in

the report, the original intention is to serve people and seek happiness for them under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, which is also the mission for all the Chinese populace, not least the members of the Communist Party of China. This advocate has a profound effect by entrusting individuals to pursue happiness for themselves, which has **dramatically boosted people’s enthusiasm.**

Scholars such as Zhou (2012) believe the understanding of serving people as *Ming*命 (mission) originates from the theory of benevolence by Kongzi. Confucianism advocates “benevolence” in leading the country and emphasizes the importance of people. The thought of loving and benevolent people has long been an integral part of the people-oriented thought in Chinese culture. *Ming*命, as a mission under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, follows in the footsteps of this people-oriented idea, which is a modern interpretation and historical extension of people-oriented philosophy.

Pedagogical Implication

In this section, the author analyzed *Ming*命 as the mission and its meaning in Xi **Jinping’s report** “Never Forget the Original Intention and Remember the Mission.” Xi, who acted as the educator and attempted to educate people about life with duty in the text. As the educands in this process, the people improved their relations with other people in this world. *Ming*命, as the mission, was intentionally entrusted to the people with the task of serving people.

Missions that are given out are embedded with expectations. Such expectations

⁶ This translation was retrieved from the English version newspaper China Daily, based on the report content published on the Chinese official news website Xinhua net.

This news network is published and recognized by authorities.

could be interpreted on three levels. The first is the expectation of completing the mission. The second is the expectation of completing the mission well. The third is the expectation of completing such a mission continuously. The pedagogy lies in the third layer. When the order giver puts the intention in hoping the order receiver to complete the task better, it forms the pedagogical triangle. In this context, such intention is clear and obvious. The use of a mission here is not an easy task to be completed over a short period of time. Conducting the mission implies keeping reminding oneself of the task, reviewing and improving oneself whilst doing it, because seeking happiness for a country and its people requires constant reevaluation and continuous effort. It is also not something that can be completed merely through self-assessment. External feedback is needed when deciding if one is on the task. Moreover, more resources have been gathered to guarantee the distribution and implementation in this context, and people are more likely to accept it with those multi-channel and multi-mode distributions.

Conclusion and Limitations

This paper analyzed the different meanings of the concept *Ming* using pedagogical texts from four various time-stamps in Chinese history. The author explored how the concept of *Ming* has shifted and changed over time, and the pedagogical implications indicated in the respective contexts.

Firstly, the author could conclude that when *Ming* was interpreted as heaven's command in "the Book of Song," it implied that education was contextual. Education was needed when the specific form was within the primary context. Such an implication suggests that the impact of education was weak, and the attempt to inflict change was meaningless and futile.

Further along, the author discussed the meaning of *Ming* as a coexistence between heaven and people in "the Yanyuan of the Analects." When connecting this meaning to **Kongzi's work, the author examined the pedagogical element and pointed out that Kongzi's view has developed further from the "Book of Song 诗经."** He advocated that *Ming* could be the command of heaven, but he also brought forth the concept that human action was meaningful here and encouraged the active seeking of change as it was in line with the designed fate.

Thirdly, *Ming* as human life and its relation to filial piety was reviewed in Li Mi's article "Chen Qing Biao." It reveals the extent to which the meaning of *Ming* was expanded, and it was more related to life education and education on the notion of filial piety. The author stresses that life education exists on the basis that life itself has value. Therefore, it should be explored and cherished. This suggestion extends to education for individuals, however, the relationships between individuals, since human life is meaningful as an individual or as part of a larger group, namely family, community, and society.

Finally, such relation brings forth the last piece of analysis, which is *Ming* in Xi Jinping's slogan "Never Forget the Original Intention and Remember the Mission." The meaning of orders from another human was employed here to interpret *Ming* as a mission. This explores the pedagogical element of responsibility and expectation.

In conclusion, the author has demonstrated how *Ming* has changed, developed, and expanded throughout history and the author analyzed its pedagogical implications derived from the changing

meanings of this concept. Based on these textual interpretations, the author can perceive a trend that reflects how the authority of Ming命 moves from up to down incrementally (Wu, 2009). Precisely, the source of power that directs **people's actions and lives gradually shifts from heaven to the mixture of heaven and human until it reaches the hand of only humans themselves.** This trajectory also indicates a shifting in educational thinking, from the unawareness of education, to cultivating the self to coexist with heaven, to value life and its connection through education, and ultimately, to the education for mission and responsibility. This shifting does not imply pure freedom because restriction from the external environment is inevitable. However, it indicates **making one's own decisions and controlling one's own way of living become possible.** This is when people need to learn from the outside world and reflect on the inner world, which requires education.

With the limited time and space, this paper only analyzes four particular texts to observe how the meaning of Ming命 has evolved over time and their respective pedagogical implication. The character of Ming命 indeed possesses more meanings than the four texts employed for the present study. Those meanings have been widely used in numerous different contexts, and the other meanings of this concept could be further explored other than the four examples chosen in the present study. Additionally, the pedagogical implications identified in the present study could also be further expanded in possible future studies.

Despite those limitations, the author has demonstrated the shifting meaning of Ming embedded in songs, texts, petitions, and speeches. The texts in this paper indicate that shifting is not merely time and textual based but

also ideological and contextual based, like its educational thinking. The usage of these texts changes through time whilst the pedagogical implications evolve with it. For instance, the interpretation of a single character could be rather different in numerous contexts. Therefore, one must be conscious of the context they are referring to. Furthermore, one should be aware that the same notion could be interpreted differently over time. Such awareness should be taken into consideration, as the other ideologies, for example, educational thinking, behind those interpretations could lead to a diversity of directions. Moreover, the meaning of a notion and its interpretation could be counter-**related to people's educational thinking,** as the paper has demonstrated. This analysis is merely an example of the various meanings that a single character could have in different contexts. It could serve as a simple reflection of the difficulties of interpretation, wherein the meaning of the concept as well as its pedagogical implications are evolving.

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