



Undergraduate assignment feedback form
(to be completed by marker)

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☐ I have not used AI in my assignment

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

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1. 翻譯成英文 (translate into English)

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Introduction to the Polysemy of the Chinese Term Míng 明

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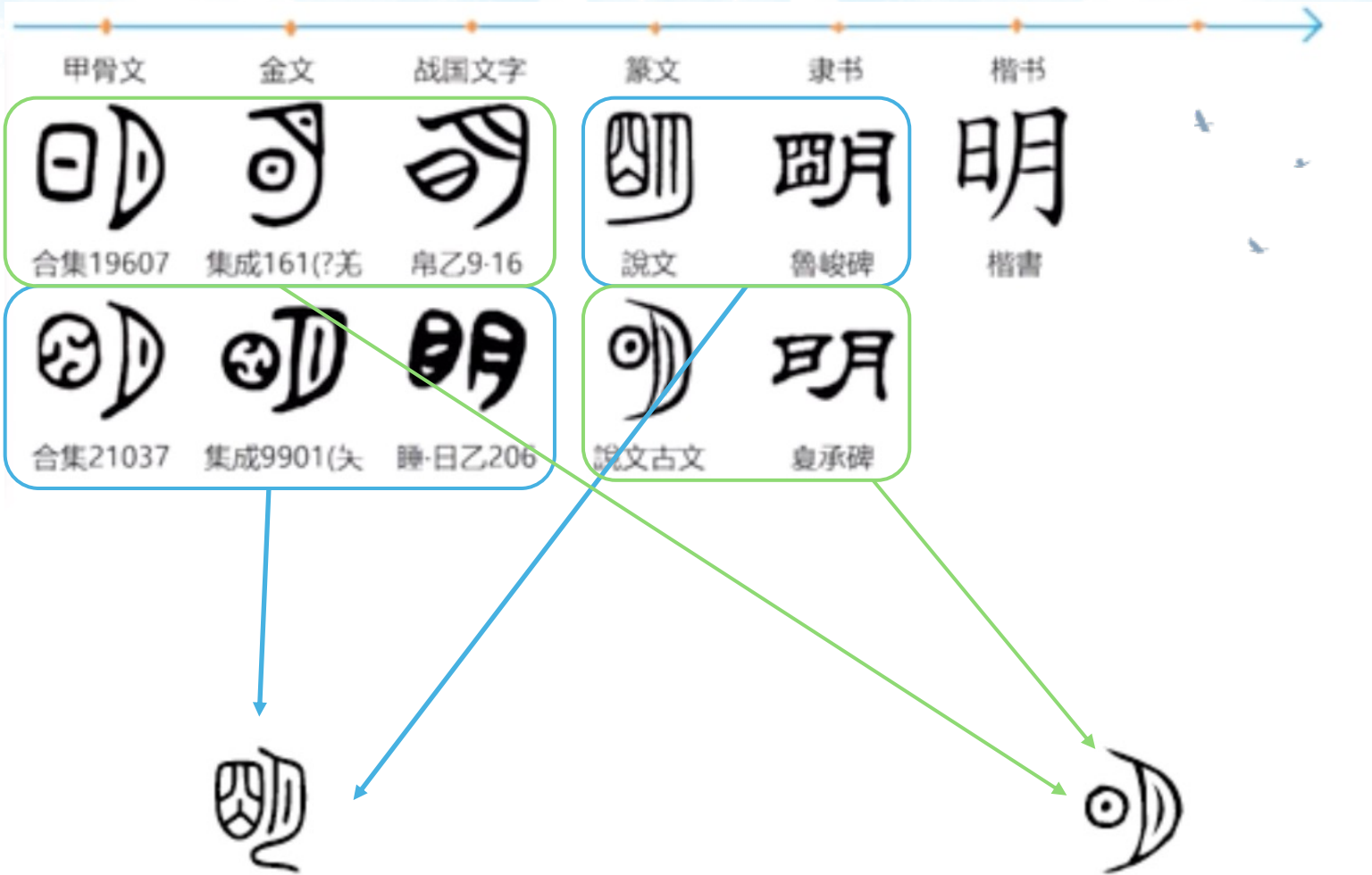
Conclusion

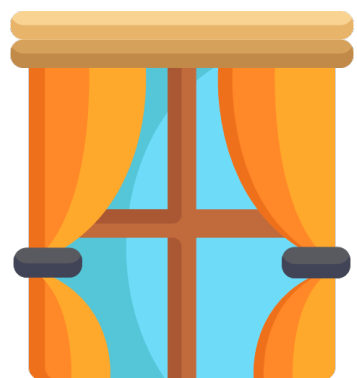


Part 1 Introduction

All meanings of “明” grow from one core prototype
“the brightness of the sun and moon ” → “bright”

Part 1 - Introduction





Shuowen jieyizhu: "The character incorporates '月' (moon) because moonlight is, in essence, reflected sunlight. It incorporates '囧' (a window frame) to represent the concept of light passing through a latticed window, thus creating illumination."

《說文解字注》：「从月者、月以日之光為光也。从囧、取窗牖麗虔闡明之意也。」



"The sun and moon push on each other (in their courses), and light is generated."

《易經·繫辭》：「日月相推而明生焉。」¹

Ancient Chinese mainly used:

- xiangxing (pictography)
- huiyi (associative compounding)²



"Understanding the meaning
Through the form"²
(“因形見義”)



Two structural interpretations, both
linked to "bright":

- Combining "sun" + "moon"
- Depicting "moon entering a window"²

¹ Wang Bi, Zhou Yi Zhu Jiaoshi, ed. by the Lou Yulie, Zhonghua Guo Xue Wen Ku(Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2012),p.249

²Zhang Lei, “神明”考释, *Journal of Xiangnan University* 39, no. 3 (2018): 20.



Part 2 Semantic Extensions

The semantic development of “明”
Step by step from the visible world to the conceptual world

漢語大詞典查詢

明

查字頭

默認

查詢

The Chinese Dictionary
42 meanings



形

1. 光亮的。如：「**明**月」、「**明**亮」。《文選·謝惠連·秋懷詩》：「皎皎天月**明**。」
2. 清晰的。《漢書·卷五二·韓安國傳》：「清水**明**鏡，不可以形逃。」
3. 聰慧、悟性很高。如：「**聰****明**」、「**明**智」。《文選·陳琳·檄吳將校部曲文》：「夫見機而作，不處凶危，上聖之**明**也。」
4. 公開的、顯露的。如：「**明**槍易躲，暗箭難防。」
5. 才德高顯的。如：「**明**主」、「**明**君」。
6. 磊落的。如：「**明**人不做暗事」。
7. 乾淨、整潔。如：「窗**明**几淨」。
8. 顯著的。如：「**明**顯」、「**明**效」。
9. 時序在後的。如：「**明**天」、「**明**年」。

動

1. 通曉。如：「**明**瞭」、「**明**白」、「他是個深**明**大義的人。」
2. 使通曉。《左傳·僖公二十二年》：「**明**恥教戰，求殺敵也。」
3. 昭示、彰顯。《禮記·郊特牲》：「天垂象，聖人則之郊，所以**明**天道也。」
4. 發亮。《詩經·齊風·雞鳴》：「東方**明**矣，朝既昌矣。」

名

1. 視覺、目力。《禮記·檀弓上》：「子夏喪其子而喪其**明**。」三國魏·王粲〈贈文叔良〉詩：「視**明**聽聰，靡事不惟。」
2. 陽。相對於「陰」。《史記·卷一·五帝本紀》：「順天地之紀，幽**明**之占，死生之說，存亡之難。」
3. 神靈。如：「**神****明**」。
4. 朝代名。參見「**明**朝」條。
5. 姓。如清代有**明**耀光。

2.1 Core Meaning: “Bright”

“明” character structure → means “the brightness of the sun and moon ” or “bright”

For example

Hanyu Da Cidian, Shi Jing :

dōng fāng míng yǐ

「東方明矣」



“The east is bright.”

2.2 Major Extended Senses: From Concrete to Abstract

Here are the five major extensions, each linked to the prototype of “bright”



① Physical Quality: Visual Clarity (清晰)

From brightness we get visual distinctness

Light reveals shapes and colors → “明” describes things that are clear to the eye

For example:

Hanyu Da Cidian

李 白：

yī xī chū rù qiān huā míng
「一 溪 初 入 千 花 明。」



In Li Bai's poem:

“A stream first enters a thousand bright flowers.”

② Action: To illuminate (照亮)

“明” evolves into a verb meaning “to make something clear”

Just like light reveals what is hidden.

For example:

Hanyu Da Cidian

王安石：

huǒ shàng zú yǐ míng yě

「火 尚 足 以 明 也。」



In Wang Anshi's text:

“The flame is enough to illuminate.”

③ Mental Clarity: Understanding, Wisdom (通曉、聰慧)

“明” extends to mental clarity—treating “understanding” as “light dispelling ignorance.”

A key metaphor arises here:

light = understanding.

So “明” can mean “to understand” or “to be wise.”

For example:

Modern Usage

“After the teacher explained, I finally understood this math problem.”

④ Moral Brightness: talented and virtuous, aboveboard (才德高顯的, 磊落的)

"public" → "selflessness"

"the public nature of a situation" → describing "the magnanimity and integrity of a person's conduct."

For example:

Idiom

guāng míng lěi luò

「光明磊落」



morally transparent and upright

⑤ Obvious, Conspicuous (公開的，顯著的)

The meaning of “明” evolved from visual clarity → "obvious" and "conspicuous"

For example:

Idiom

Míng qiāng yì duǒ àn jiàn nán fáng

「明槍易躲，暗箭難防」



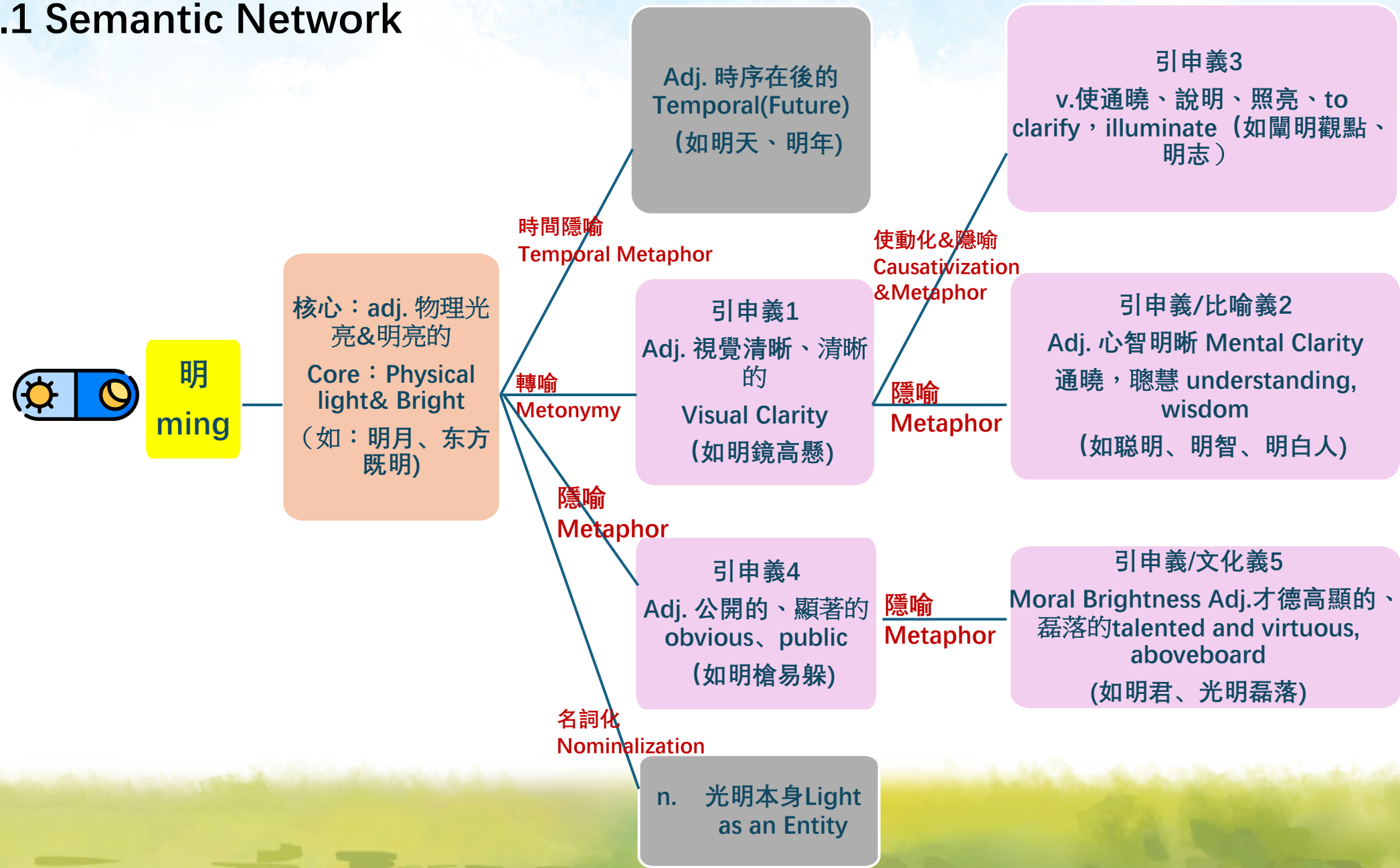
Better an open enemy than a false friend.

Part 3
Semantic
Relations and
Cultural Insights

Relation of the Meanings

How Chinese philosophical traditions deepen these connections

3.1 Semantic Network



3.2 Cultural Insights

① Confucianism: Moral Cultivation

《大學》：

Dà xué zhī dào, zài míng míng dé
「大學之道，在明明德。」

verb
to illustrate

adj
illustrious



The Great Learning: “What the Great Learning teaches, is to illustrate illustrious virtue.”³

³ James Legge, trans, *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Confucianism*, Part IV, The Li Ki, XI-XLVI (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), p. 411

3.2 Cultural Insights

② Taoism: Spiritual Clarity

《道德經》：

Zì zhī zhě míng
「自知者明。」



deep, inner clarity

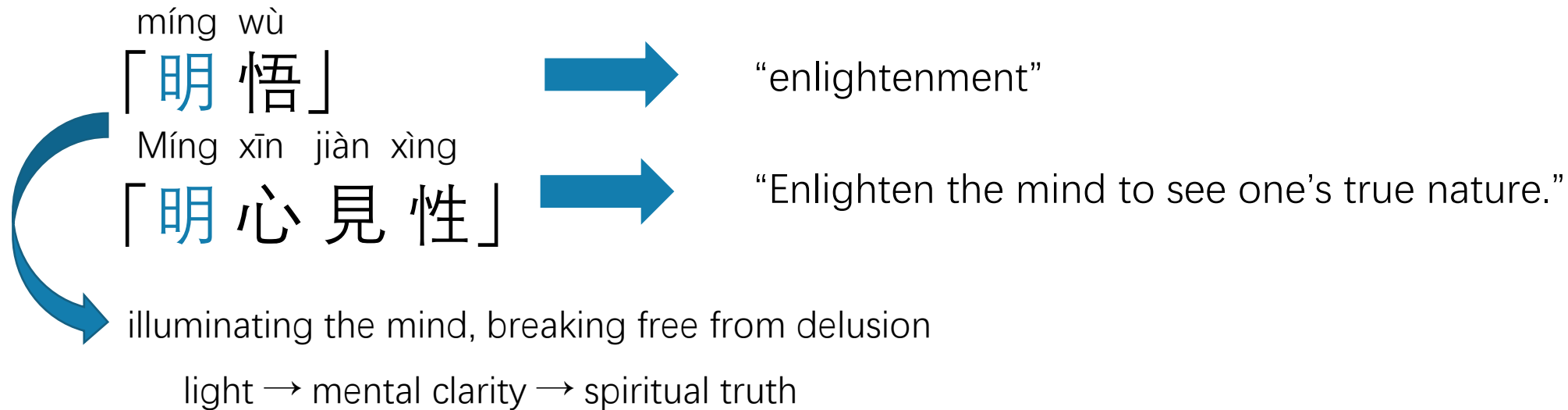


Tao Te Ching: “He who knows himself is intelligent.”⁴

⁴ Lao Tse, *Tao Te Ching or the Tao and its Characteristics*, trans. By James Legge (1891;repr., The Floating Press, 2008), P61.

3.2 Cultural Insights

③ Buddhism: Awakening from Delusion





Part 4 Conclusion

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Thank you for listening!

