ABSTRACT

Feng Youlan (1895-1990), a prominent contemporary Chinese philosopher, is famous for his works on Chinese philosophy. Views on both Chinese and Western culture are reflected in his philosophical studies, but previous studies on his views on culture have hitherto been limited in scope.

To fill this gap, this Honours Thesis concentrates on the analysis of the internal structure of Feng’s theory on culture. It argues that Feng’s thoughts can be divided into two periods and should be studied from the perspective of change. Feng’s thoughts in these two periods are treated as two separate theoretical systems and they are examined in detail.

In the first period, culture is viewed from a philosophical perspective, and the difference between Chinese and Western culture is thus a result of the difference between these two philosophical traditions. In the second period, culture is viewed from the perspective of types of society. The difference in Chinese and Western culture shows that they belong to different societies. The second system is more complicated and elaborate than the first as it aims to provide a theory to absorb Western culture so as to aid China’s modernization.

In spite of his attempt, Feng’s theory has difficulties withstanding criticisms as he fails to understand the pluralistic nature of culture. However, such a point of view in itself is insufficient if a more comprehensive assessment of Feng’s view on culture is to be considered.
This Honours Thesis argues that Feng's concern in the modernization of China and his historical role in the absorption of Western culture into Chinese culture should be taken into account for the purpose of assessment.