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# Transforming knowledge to wisdom: Feng Qi and the new Neo-Marxist humanism

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper introduces the philosophical theory of Feng Qi, an important modern Chinese philosopher, who is practically unknown in the West. I argue that his theory of knowledge is not limited to epistemology in the strict and narrow sense, but also refers to ontological and metaphysical issues. The paper shows how Feng Qi integrated ontological and ethical suppositions into the framework of what he called 'expanded epistemology'. In this way, he offers an innovative solution to several problems, linked to the dichotomous relations of substance and phenomena. The article analyses and interprets his theoretical system in order to highlight that it represents an important contribution to comparative epistemology and its underlying methodology.

**KEYWORDS**

Feng Qi; expanded epistemology; comparative theory of knowledge; methodology of intercultural studies

## 1. Introduction

Feng Qi (1915–95)[1] is known as both an explorer of old, and a creator of new systems of comprehension. Although he was a versatile theorist and thinker, he saw epistemology as both the core and mainspring of all his theoretical endeavours.[2] Already before the establishment of the PR China, he published his thesis under the title On Wisdom[3] and consequently, he never completely abandoned this topic, even though he explored it through the lens of his manifold other interests that were connected with both, traditional Chinese, as well as with Western[4] (including Marxist and neo-Marxist) philosophy (Zhai & Yongqiang, 2022, p. 196). With respect to comparative studies, he has set himself two major tasks in terms of application: the first task is to understand and interpret the old in the new and to interpret the traditional in the modern. Similar to many other contemporary Chinese theoreticians, he invested a lot of work and energy into the reintegration of those theoretical patterns, methods and categories of the Chinese philosophical tradition that could not be explained and understood within social and ideational contexts, which do not belong to the discourses of this tradition. This task, which has been assumed by many Chinese scholars of his period, has namely implied the need for an adequate transformation of those traditional discourses, which cannot be comprehended, applied, reproduced or developed beyond the specific frameworks of the Chinese tradition. Hence, this aspect has been connected to the need for the analytical reconstruction

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of traditional concepts in the context of social modernization. Feng Qi's elaborations (and modern adaptations) of the concept of wisdom certainly belong to such endeavors. Feng Qi's second task was to create a system of sinicized Marxism, in which the traditional concept of wisdom could be explained and upgraded within the framework of dialectical materialism.

Feng Qi was born in Zhejiang province and obtained his PhD from the Department of Philosophy at the famous Qinghua University in Peking. After 1944, he taught philosophy in Shanghai at the Tongji and Fudan Universities, as well as at the Huadong College of Education. Later he became vice dean of the Shanghai Academy for research in humanities, and would hold numerous other positions and titles in the field of philosophy in various academic and official organisations and institutions.

He was a student of Feng Youlan, Tang Yongtong and Jin Yuelin,[5] whereby the latter undoubtedly had the greatest impact upon the work of the young philosopher (Huang, 2002, p. 213). However, most of the contemporary scholars agree that Feng Qi's work represents an advanced elaboration and a theoretical upgrading of Jin Yuelin's philosophy:

> Feng Qi often mentioned his teacher Jin Yuelin and sought to expand upon the foundations established by Jin and related theorists. In the field of comparative research in Western and Chinese thought and in terms of creating new philosophic systems, Feng Qi would surpass his teacher.[6] (Zhu, 1997, p. 79)

This particularly holds true for Feng's most innovative work in the development of Chinese epistemology. While Jin Yuelin's theories of knowledge were based upon the traditional understanding of epistemology as a discipline limited to a pure theory of knowledge, Feng attempted to extend this approach and, based upon traditional Chinese discourses, sought to create an epistemology in a broader sense, which he called 'expanded epistemology'.[7] He believed that epistemology should not be limited to the theory of knowledge,[8] but should also include the problem of exploring wisdom.[9] In this context, he strove to consider all the basic approaches to the main philosophical issues of both ancient and modern times. For him, these basic approaches were clearly expressed in both, Western metaphysical inquiries, and in the ancient Chinese methods of cultivating ideal personality.[10] Similar endeavours were also clearly visible in his general philosophical and/or methodological research through which he tried to establish a new approach to solving the contradiction between the natural sciences and the humanities.

> The essence of his thought is an attempt to provide a solution to the old problem of the conflict between fact and value, between a positivistic/scientific approach and a humanistic/metaphysical approach. Feng tries to solve this conflict by constructing what he calls an 'epistemology in a broad sense'. The core of this epistemology is his theory of the 'transformation of knowledge into wisdom'. (Yang, 2002, p. 441)

Feng Qi's most important treatises were collected and published posthumously in ten volumes between 1996 and 1998, under the title *Feng Qi's Collected Works* (馮契文集). In the field of the history of thought, we should also mention his *History of Chinese Philosophy* (中國近代哲學史) and the trilogy *The Logical Development of Ancient Chinese Philosophy* (中國古代哲學的邏輯發展). The fundamentals of his theory of knowledge were laid out for the first time in his study *The Exploration of Wisdom* (智慧的 探素), and two years later he provided a more detailed description of his epistemological system

in the work *Trilogy of the Theory of Wisdom* (智慧說三篇), which was comprised of his previous studies, *Understanding the World and Understanding Ourselves* (認識世界與 認識自己), *The Dialectics of Logical Reasoning* (邏輯思維的辯證法) and *Human Freedom and Truth, Goodness and Beauty* (人的自由與真善美).

## 2. Historical and ideational background of Feng Qi's work

Feng Qi lived throughout most of the 20th century. Hence, in order to better understand his position, and before introducing his epistemology more in detail, let us take a brief look on the general development of the Chinese philosophy during the 20th century, which, for China, was a period of continuous upheaval and sweeping social change.

At the end of the 19th Century, the country found itself on the margins of the modern world, being nothing more than a part of its semi-colonial periphery. While Western culture manifested itself at its most violent and aggressive in the form of economic and military invasions, Western philosophy, which entered China in the train of Western capital and its troops, was mainly seen as a challenge (Cheng, 2002, p. 371). This challenge became visible in the specific language of modern formal logic and analysis and in the social function of reason, embodied in modern science and technology. It was also exposed in the Western idea of the state, law and democracy.

At the level of theoretical methodology, it appeared in forms of Cartesian Dualism and their structure of mutually contradictory polarities as well as in the formal frame of traditional European dialectic. At the edge of the century, Chinese scholars were also continuously confronted with the concepts and categories specific to the Western history of thought (Nelson, 2020, p. 183), such as the notions of substance, objectivity, truth, and so forth. Especially challenging were the elementary methodological conditions that determined this confusing set of new, mostly unknown categories and concepts, such as the demand for evidence or the formally flawless establishment of essential assumptions and conclusions, explicit argumentation and accurately formulated definitions (Moeller, 2022, p. 21). During the latter half of the century, a sinicized form of Marxism-Leninism prevailed as a new state ideology derived from Western theories (see Rockmore, 2019).

However, despite the need to understand, explore and apply Western ideas and ideal concatenations (Nelson, 2020, p. 185), the alleged acceptance of foreign theories was essentially a superficial phenomenon and the Chinese tradition of thought proved to be much more resistant and flexible than first appeared. Thus, the majority of Chinese scholars of the 20th century—including Feng Qi—continued to apply and to elaborate on traditional, especially Confucian concepts. In order to understand the modes and methods of this preservation of traditional thought, we have first to comprehend the particular stages of the process of cultural modernization in China and their individual implications.

This process can roughly be divided into three periods, with the first being the period of active modernization, which lasted approximately from 1910 to 1937. This was the period of the systematic, extensive and qualitatively profound introduction of Western discourses (Chen & Vrhovski, 2022, p. 12). The start of WWII, which began in China with the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1937, represents the beginning of the period of theoretical stagnation,[11] which lasted for more than four decades, until 1978.[12] The third

period, which began with the contemporaneous external opening and internal liberalization of China, can be designated as the period for the dissemination and critical evaluation of the most influential currents of Western thought, but also for a complex and wide revival of traditional, especially Confucian philosophy.[13] The further development of practical theory, in the sense of a systematic formulation of philosophical contents, began in the early 1980s. This phase, which represented the last fifteen years of Feng's life, was especially important for his philosophical theory. Since the majority of his work that was created during the cultural revolution was destroyed, he had to start again and to rewrite it during these two decades:

> In the 1980s, he published *The Logical Development of Ancient Chinese Philosophy*[14] (3 volumes) and *The Revolutionary Process of Modern Chinese Philosophy*,[15] which in both spirit and style can be compared to Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. In the 1990s, he prepared his major philosophical work, *Three Treatises on Wisdom*,[16] which he finished shortly before his death in 1995. (Huang, 2002, p. 213)

In this work, which was posthumously published as the first three volumes of the *Collected Works of Feng Qi*,[17] Feng presented a tripartite philosophical system of wisdom (Huang, 2002, p. 213), which represented the foundation of his philosophical—and especially epistemological—reasoning.

In the post-Maoist China of the last two decades of the century, there were interesting attempts to sinicize dialectical materialism, as well as increasingly frequent efforts to fuse Chinese and Western traditions of thought. At the end of the century, i.e. towards the end of Feng Qi's life, philosophy as an academic discipline existed in China within the framework of what we can call three different 'scopes of content':

(a) The scope of (sinicized) Marxist—and Neo-Marxist—philosophy,
(b) the scope of traditional, primarily classical Chinese philosophy and
(c) the scope of the introduction, the exploration and the elaboration of Western philosophy.

While the latter primarily appeared in the new methodological foundations of contemporary Chinese thought, irrespective of the specific theoretical area, the sinification of Marxist discourses mostly appeared in two other theoretical currents. The first of these was primarily determined by dialectics, logic and modern linguistic theories and the second by the ethical and aesthetic aspects of the synthesis of Marxist and traditional Chinese thought (Rošker, 2008, pp. 145–151).

## 3. Feng Qi's political position and his sinification of Marxist thought

Feng also gained a reputation as an expert in classical European thought, and was especially familiar with the works of Spinoza, Hegel and Kant. His own philosophy, however, was based upon his attempts to elaborate on and to upgrade Marxist theories and their basic methodology of dialectical materialism.

> I set a specific philosophical task for myself: I tried to explain the dialectical transformation from ignorance to knowledge and from knowledge to wisdom on the basis of dialectical materialism.[18] (Feng, 1996, p. 16)

Contrary to most Chinese theorists of the latter half of the last century, Feng's adherence to dialectical materialism appears as 'genuine', and not due to the pressing political directives of his time. His development of Marxist epistemological and ethical approaches is well-substantiated and logically consistent, indicating an author who was 'Marxist by conviction':

> It is obvious that Feng Qi's relation to Marxism was not a dogmatic one; it was based upon his own, independent reasoning.[19] (Zhu, 1997, p. 79)

This was especially visible in Feng Qi's theory of knowledge. Hence, many contemporary scholars point out that Feng's work is not only a modernized reinterpretation, but also a qualitative elaboration of Marxist epistemological approaches:

> If we view (Feng's work) merely in terms of these epistemological specifics, we could claim that he was merely imitating Marxist theories. But if we consider his broadening of epistemology as such, we can see that his work represents a new development and elaboration of Marxism. Feng Qi's understanding of epistemology went far beyond the traditional understanding of this term.[20] (Fang, 1999, p. 24)

Because Feng's extensive philosophical output, which by the mid-1960s numbered several million characters, was, as already mentioned, almost completely destroyed during the so-called Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), he was forced to spend the last two decades of his life attempting to reconstruct his own theories (Huang, 2002, p. 213).

His conviction that every genuine philosopher should not only theorize, but also contribute to solving the crucial problems of the society in which he lived (Feng, 1996, pp. 3–4), led him to frequently criticize the ideological manipulation of philosophical ideas in order to serve the interests of the bureaucratic oligarchy, for instance:

> Some people linked theory to political power. In this way, they deprived theory of its autonomy and intrinsic value, so that it ultimately only became a tool for certain politicians. Marxism and Maoism were turned into brainwashing mantras. This is obviously completely antithetical to the principles of a democratic society and totally suffocated any academic freedom … A philosopher, who does not possess completely the spiritual freedom of autonomous thought, cannot be a real philosopher.[21] (Feng, 1996, p. 18)

In this context, we have to consider the fact that even during the gradual liberalization which followed Mao Zedong's death, such a radical criticism of the political dogmatization of theory was still a very risky undertaking. Thus, Feng Qi was one of the very few intellectuals who, already in the early 1980s, dared to put his name to such a pain for academic freedom. In this respect, contemporary interpreters still acknowledge his extraordinary political courage and constancy:

> How many people possessed such self-assurance during those extremely difficult times? Probably not many.[22] (Zhu, 1997, p. 77)

In terms of historical materialism, which represents the theoretical and methodological foundation of Marxists thought, he was most interested to develop its dialectical model, striving to connect or unify it with the traditional Chinese paradigm of correlative dialectics. This fusion, however, had to be positioned into the framework of the specific Chinese onto-epistemology.[23]

## 4. Dialectical logic in the framework of onto-epistemology: Dealing with the complex order of the external world

An important element of Feng Qi's philosophy is his supposition that genuine ontological systems can only be founded on epistemology. According to him, the opposite approach was necessarily speculative in nature. The coherency of ontological theories depended on the recognition of the external world (and, ultimately, also on the recognition of one's Self).

The Way of Nature,[24] a notion that can be found at the heart of Feng Qi's epistemological ontology, represents both the ontological core of the sphere of inexpressibility and the absolute essence of its all-encompassing laws. According to Feng, this view is rooted in an ontological problem, but is at the same time essentially a question of knowing the world (Yang, 2002, p. 447).

Like Kant (1998, p. 567; A6IS/B646), Feng hypothesized that external reality, i.e. the reality beyond human perception, manifests itself as 'things as such'. Feng named this entity 'Natural Nature (or the Nature of Nature)',[25] and used the analogous phrase 'Man's Nature (or the Nature of man)'[26] to define the reality that appears to us in the process of comprehension.[27] However, contrary to Kant, Feng did not believe that 'things as such' were necessarily completely beyond our comprehension, for the boundary between things as such and things we perceive was not static and unchangeable, but blurred and dynamic, and a part of the eternal changeability of being. Here, we are confronted with the traditional Chinese correlative relation between the principal entities of being: in their essence, Natural Nature and Man's Nature represent two formally divergent manifestations of the same, essentially unified and undiversified reality. Natural Nature merely represents a form of Man's Nature that has not yet been comprehended by human beings, while man's Nature is an already comprehended form of the former. Because on the levels of perception and the rational de-composition of perceived objects, our consciousness can only function within the framework of relative distinctions, the absoluteness of the external world can only be comprehended as a complex and multi-layered entity. And because the external world was thus multi-layered, the transformation of beings from the sphere of Nature's Nature into the sphere of Man's Nature was also necessarily a complex and multifarious process. This passage of the external world into human consciousness consisted of two partial transformations, which were analysed by Feng in detail: first, there was the transformation of Nature's Nature into the entity of facts and possibilities,[28] followed in a second phase by the evaluation[29] of comprehended objects. The humanity of men, which simultaneously represented their freedom, could not be developed before the final transformation of facts (or their possibilities) into values; at the same time, this final transformation modified 'Nature's Nature' into 'Man's Nature', and 'things as such'[30] into 'things for us'.[31] (Feng, 1996, p. 49) The first part of this transformation occurred in accordance with universal laws or the 'Way of Nature',[32] while the second corresponded to social norms, or the 'Way of men'.[33]

For Feng Qi, a mature comprehension, which simultaneously signified a liberation of human personality, was possible only through the unification of both the Natural and human way. This unification, which could only occur during the second stage of

the transformation process, manifested itself in the ethical valuation of perceived actuality.

Being a loyal adherent of the materialistic tradition, Feng Qi viewed human perception, i.e. the transformation of Nature's Nature into man's Nature, as a sensorial and rationally determined process for conveying objective reality to human consciousness. Because objective reality was primarily material, it was at the origin of our comprehension of actuality.

Feng, however, distinguishes 'matter as objective reality' from 'matter as the principle of the unity of the world'. Matter as objective reality, which is transmitted to us through sensation, is the primary precondition of epistemology, while matter as the principle of the unity of the world is the result of the development of our process of knowing over time (Feng, 1996, p. 448).

Feng elaborated the Marxist (and, simultaneously, the classical Chinese) discourse on the indivisibility of matter and movement by hypothesizing that the principle of this unity was inseparably joined to the principle of development, while taking care to emphasize that neither of these principles represented a transcendental postulate (Feng, 1996, p. 448). Both principles, the principle of unity as well as that of development, revealed and manifested themselves continuously in concrete processes of human perception, comprehension and recognition.

In his analysis of sensory perception and comprehension, Feng also used the term 'givenness',[34] which was first applied by his teacher, Jin Yuelin. With this term he expressed a certain mode of comprehension or a certain kind (certain qualities) of reality, as perceived by the innate mechanisms of the human senses.

Through the process of perception, things as such (Nature's Nature) were manifested to us as facts and possibilities. Facts differed from Nature's Nature because they occupied specific units of time and space, and because they formed a part of the differentiated reality, which was composed of countless manifold variations.

The structural order of this reality manifested itself in inter-connections or inter-relations among individual facts, while also reflecting the principles inherent within them. Based on this assumption, Feng divided the structural order of facts into two domains: the first was determined by the principle of the compatibility of actual reality,[35] and the second by the principle of a contradictory development of actual reality.[36] The first principle represented the objective foundation of deductive and inductive processes and of formal logic in general, while the second constituted the dynamic cognitive basis for dialectical logic. With respect to methodology, Feng Qi concentrated upon the method of dialectical logic. A simple form of dialectical logic also represented one of the major patterns of thought in the development of traditional Chinese philosophy. Hence, in his methodology Feng Qi also consciously elaborated the advantages of traditional Chinese of thought. On the one hand, he stressed that there were 'two types' of logic, and that both of them, i.e. formal, as well as dialectical logic, belonged to basic modes of reasoning, and neither should be disregarded. However, his elaboration and further development of ancient Chinese dialectical thought also followed the principles of Marxist dialectical logic. In this way, Feng Qi's derivations enriched traditional sources of dialectical thought in Chinese philosophy by adding new forms and contents to them, and by placing them upon a self-reflective and scientific basis (Chen, 1999, p. 22).

> It is generally acknowledged that Chinese philosophy was primarily focused on ethics. Even though the Moist classic Mo jing includes some well-developed formal-logical treatises, these were ignored or forgotten later on. Hence, (Chinese philosophy) can definitely not be compared to Western or Indian philosophy in this respect.[37] (Feng, 1983, pp. 43–44)

In this context, Chai Wenhua,[38] a contemporary interpreter of Feng Qi's work, argues that Feng did not deny a-priori any development of logical reasoning in traditional Chinese thought.

> Therefore, we cannot deny that there was no research in formal logic within traditional (feudalist) Chinese philosophy. But the lack of formal logic does not mean lacking logic in general. Since traditional Chinese philosophy conducted profound researches into dialectical logic relatively early, it likewise produced a well-developed logical thought.[39] (Chai, 1997, p. 52)

Feng saw in this development one of the crucial advantages or contributions of the Chinese philosophical tradition:

> The weakness of traditional Chinese philosophy lies in the fact that it did not conduct sufficient research into atomic theory and formal logic. However, a simple dialectical logic and a simple dialectical view of nature (a monism based upon the concept of substantiality (qi)) were developed in China quite early. Thus, on the basis of complex and multifarious research, Chinese philosophy verified the epistemological question whether logical thought can provide us with any insight into cosmic laws. And this is precisely its advantage.[40] (Feng, 1983, p. 47)

As this passage indicates, Feng Qi attributed great importance to the 'germs of dialectical thought' that can be found in the ancient Chinese tradition, viewing them not merely as 'primitive stages' of later developments, as expressed in Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, but also as specific approaches representing possible points of departure for further, diverse elaboration.

> Because the ancient philosophers already expounded certain principles of dialectical thought, which can be applied by contemporary scientists as scientific methodology, it is fair to say that they attained a high degree of consciousness … Dialectical logic underwent a long development with very successful results. Although still simple (because it lacked a scientific basis), it nevertheless contained the germs of important, highly developed elements, that are worthy of being explored in detail.[41] (Feng, 1983, p. 45)

Feng saw the basic and elementary precondition of logical thought in the inherent order of the domain of facts. As noted, the second domain of perceived manifestations of external reality was the sphere of possibilities. This sphere was not understood as a form of the transcendental metaphysical world, but as a domain, which was determined by concrete actuality (Feng, 1996, p. 33). A precondition for the realization of a given possibility was its compatibility with the sphere of facts (Feng, 1996, p. 33). Therefore, possibilities were connected to reality and this enabled us to realize these possibilities, i.e. to transform them into facts in accordance with appropriate laws.

> The main goal of transforming ideals into reality can be achieved through the creation of values. In the process of creating values, the free spirit acts as essence, and the creation of values as function. We can thus affirm that Self, free spirit and free personality possess the quality of substance.[42] (Feng, 1996, p. 110)

According to Feng, the combination of actual possibilities and human needs leads to the coming into being of human needs. Guided by rational or realizable ends, human beings transform the natural world, or 'humanize' it, to use Marx's term, thereby creating values (Yang, 2002, p. 451). Only through the process of the 'valuation' of recognized being, can the manifestation of 'Nature's Nature' be completely transformed into 'man's Nature'. While the transformation from 'things as such' into the domain of facts and the domain of possibilities is determined by the laws of the Way of Nature, the valuation of the latter domain must be realized in accordance with the associated order of the laws of the Way of Nature and the laws of The Way of man. Because it expressed normative rules accepted by human beings in their social praxis, the latter category no longer belonged to the domain of ontology, but represented an ethical or social notion. We shall therefore examine Feng's ideas regarding the ultimate liberation of human personality which, in his view, had to be realised precisely in the process of creating values[43] and the ethical awareness of facts, and which represented the last step in transforming 'things as such' into 'things for us'.

## 5. The concept of the 'expanded epistemology' and the relation between knowledge and wisdom

As already mentioned in the beginning of the previous chapter, Feng Qi was thus convinced that the basic question of philosophy was the question of the unification of ontology and epistemology. (Feng, 1996, p. 107) Like the majority of 20th Century Chinese theorists, Feng Qi's studies also took their departure from the 'modern' distinction between noumenon and phenomena, which was 'importedi from Western philosophy. While the neo-realists and pragmaticians mostly undertook a positivistic exploration of the former, the advocates of 'inexpressibility' (especially the earliest representatives of Modern Confucianism) generally preferred the introspective search for the 'highest truth'. This tension (which ultimately also manifested itself in the methodologically determined ambivalence between the natural sciences and the humanities) led to the creation of two main and distinct philosophical currents.

Feng designated the relative world of concrete actuality (phenomena) as 'the sphere of expressions (名言之域)', and the world of the absolute (noumenon) as 'the sphere beyond expression (超名言之域)':

> How to overcome the opposition between the realms of the relative and the absolute, the credible and the desirable, and theory of knowledge and metaphysics was a difficult problem that puzzled and haunted many Chinese philosophers. It was this problem that provided the starting point for Feng Qi's philosophical exploration. Thus, Feng professed that while still a student in the 1930s, the one philosophical problem that he felt had to be dealt with was the problem of the relation between knowledge and wisdom. (Yang, 2002, p. 442)

He decided to try to resolve the dichotomy between these two discourses by focusing upon his new, expanded epistemology.

> The expanded epistemology should not be limited only to the theory of knowledge, but must also deal with the theory of wisdom and the issues of a possible 'meta-theory' and 'how to create a free personality'.[44] (Feng, 1996, p. 8)

In other words, he believed that any philosophical theory and any history of thought had to be based on the structures of the processes of comprehension:

> The history of philosophy can be defined as follows: it is a dialectical process of comprehension that originates in social practice and develops by means of questions concerning the relation between thought and existence.[45] (Feng, 1983, p. 11)

The history of philosophical thought was thus, in essence, nothing other than a systemized theory of knowledge:

> The history of philosophy focuses upon the structural order of human processes of comprehension.[46] (Feng, 1983, p. 11)

According to the contemporary scholar Fang Xudong,[47] Feng Qi viewed philosophy mainly as epistemology (Fang, 1999, p. 24). His basic theoretical approaches were already defined in the first part of his abovementioned epistemological trilogy, Understanding the World and Understanding Ourselves (認識世界和認識自己), in which he tried to define the process of comprehension as a synthesis of understanding the external world and understanding one's Self, which was also a form of self-cultivation. These two 'partial' processes, which were united in his 'expanded' epistemology, provide the main themes of the second and third parts of his trilogy, with the second part The Dialectics of Logical Reasoning (邏輯思維的辯證法) addressing the ontological aspects of epistemology, and the third part Human Freedom and Truth, Goodness and Beauty (人的自由與真善美) dealing mainly with the ethical and sensory aspects of comprehension.

Feng Qi's theories addressed four basic questions, which he viewed as crucial to any philosophical research:

> In the history of philosophy, epistemological issues can be seen, very schematically, as an attempt to respond to four basic questions:
>
> First: Is it possible to seize objective reality through our sensations?
>
> Second: Is it possible to seize scientific truth through theoretical reasoning? (Or: How is the universality and necessity of scientific/re/cognition possible?)
>
> Third: Can logical reasoning seize concrete truths (especially the principle of the Oneness of the world and the laws of cosmic development?)
>
> Fourth: Can human beings attain freedom? (Or: How can a free or ideal personality be cultivated?).[48] (Feng, 1983, p. 29)

Detailed examinations of the first three questions, which were primarily linked to the relations among sensation and perception,[49] knowing[50] and reason[51] can be found in most modern Western epistemologies, while the fourth question does not usually form a part of them (Fang, 1999, p. 25). By raising this ethical and axiological question in the context of his 'extended epistemology', Feng was attempting to integrate one of the fundamental aspects of the traditional Chinese theory of knowledge into the framework of modern epistemology.

> While Feng Qi's integration of a free and ideal personality into epistemology can still be seen as being based upon classical Marxism, it represents to a much greater degree his elaboration of Chinese philosophy.[52] (Fang, 1999, p. 25)

Feng himself stressed that his attempt to integrate a free and ideal personality into the process of seeking comprehension consciously followed certain approaches of traditional Chinese thought:

> Traditional Chinese philosophy considered the process of the formation of human morality to be based upon the interactive relation between man and nature. Therefore, it explored the principles of ethical consciousness, the semantic theories of aesthetics and the epistemological question of how to create the ideal personality, relatively early. (The latter question has been closely connected with the concepts of truth, goodness and beauty.) Concerning these problems, it proposed many sensible and specifically Chinese solutions.[53] (Feng, 1983, p. 54)

In his 'extended epistemology', Feng Qi followed the assumption that Western philosophy mainly focused on the first two of the four above mentioned questions, while traditional Chinese thought mainly explored the latter two[54] (which did not mean, of course, that both Western and Chinese theories did not explore all of the aforesaid questions).

> The question of intention and consciousness was discussed in both Chinese and Western ancient philosophy. Nevertheless, if we compare the two systems, we can see that Western philosophy was more focused upon exploring the problem of intention and free will.[55] (Feng, 1996, p. 33)

> In ancient China, discussions on the relation between sensations and theoretical thought date from as early as Confucius and Mo Di, while Zhuangzi already addressed in a complex way such questions as 'the possibility of seizing objective actuality through sensations' and 'the possibility of reaching objective truth by means of theoretical thought'. Therefore, it would be incorrect to say that the Chinese ignored these two questions.[56] (Feng, 1996, p. 41)

According to Feng, the reason for differences between Chinese and Western approaches was to be found in the specific laws that determined social developments in the respective traditions, laws which, as forms of ideal superstructure, in his view defined every philosophical thought. However, regardless of the specificity of the social conditions, which defined its real contents, the basic structure of every historical development of thought was always dialectical.

> The so-called historical method focuses on exploring basic tendencies in the development of the object in question. It deals with its origins and the reasons for its occurrence. It explores the modes and degrees of its development. If we want to define the basic tendencies in the development of a certain object, we must first eliminate all the factors that are coincidental or limited merely to externals. Only in this way will we be able to concretely analyze the contradictions within the innate essence/i.e. the basis/of the object and explore the typical forms of each stage of its development. The sum or unification of (these particular analytical researches) will then reveal to us its inherent logical connections and developmental laws.[57] (Feng, 1983, p. 12)

The same holds true for each single process of philosophical thought:

> What causes controversies among philosophers is the problem of contradiction. Each contradiction that occurs, develops and resolves itself, is followed by another contradiction, which occurs, develops and resolves itself again. This process is cyclical.[58] (Feng, 1983, p. 17)

However, because Feng Qi believed that either set of questions dealt with by Western or Chinese thought was too narrow, his entire epistemological synthesis is pervaded by the desire for a more profound comprehension of new possibilities that would enable ancient

Chinese thought to contribute new aspects to modern world philosophy. In evaluating Feng Qi's theoretical thought, we should bear in mind that he began to develop his system in a period (1950s and 1960s) when epistemology in China was virtually identical to the 'scholastic' epistemology of the Russian philosophy of that time, which was positivistic and primarily explored the relations between perception and reason (Fang, 1999, p. 25). Feng's emphasis on the traditional Chinese connection between comprehension and the ethical evaluation of being as representing an important part of epistemology, was thus of utmost importance for gradually restoring 'credibility' to ancient Chinese thought in the context of modern epistemological debates. In this respect, Feng argued that traditional Chinese epistemology could not be evaluated with the same criteria used for Western theories of knowledge, something, which was also true of philosophy in general:

> If we accept the assumption that the history of philosophy is essentially the history of epistemological thought, and that epistemology did not occupy an important position within Chinese philosophy, then this would mean that Chinese philosophy as such did not occupy an important position within world philosophy.[59] (Fang, 1999, p. 13)

## 6. The recognition and cultivation of a free personality

The unification of knowledge and experience in the sphere of facts and possibilities was possible by means of awareness, which represented the ability to apply logical categories that served to achieve an integral understanding of the contents of thought (Yang, 2002, p. 453).

Feng named this awareness, which enables us to integrate knowledge and experience, 'the awareness of the subject'[60] (Feng, 1996, p. 35). This awareness was determined by the unity of the abilities and activities (and realization) of reasoning; it was thus, to a great extent, determined by reason, and sprang from the human heart-mind,[61] which was not limited to reason, but also implied emotions, will and intuition. This philosophical unity of thought- and sense-determined (especially social and productive) activities was, according to Feng, an elementary feature of humanity, and he therefore named it in accordance with the traditional Chinese understanding as the concept of inborn human features.[62]

After the transformation of the perceived object of comprehension into the sphere of facts, the Self, in its function as the subject of comprehension and in accordance with its needs, attempted to discover the possibilities contained in the relations among the individual facts within this sphere. In this way, the Self was confronted with the sphere of possibilities and their potential realization, i.e. with the sphere of values. In this process, Feng saw a further dimension of human comprehension, namely the realization of social existence and social consciousness. Evaluation as a way of conferring meaning to any comprehension and thus to any existence as such, was therefore inextricably linked to the socialization of man, understood not merely as upbringing or education, but also as an innate potential of inborn human characteristics. Therefore, the individual process of comprehension always manifested itself in its necessary connection with the variety of different opinions that existed in society, and which simultaneously represented the variety of different possibilities. At this stage of the process of comprehension, i.e. at the stage of valuation, the subject of comprehension was no longer an isolated entity, but

necessarily became a social subject, integrated into the sequences of social interactions. Thus, according to Feng Qi, social awareness was also an inherent and a-priori part of the 'awareness of the subject'. However, this does not mean that Feng saw human nature as 'collective'; his socialized Self,[63] understood as the subject of comprehension that also possessed social awareness, in no way represented a negation of individual values, but merely a unification or association of individual consciousness with social awareness.

Feng defined this unification of individual and social awareness with the traditional terms of the 'Small' and 'Great Self'[64] respectively, terms which had already been applied by Liang Qichao梁啟超 (1873–1929) in his social theories. In his criticism of Marxist essentialism (Yang, 2002, p. 455), Feng Qi therefore stressed that social relations were

> simply the connections between individuals. The essence of human beings is thus inseparable from the existence of each individual. He points out that the fallacy of essentialism lies in the fact that it takes individuality as a particular from of universal essence, thereby equating individuality with particularity … Feng repeatedly stresses that individual existence should not be neglected. In short, for Feng, the authentic Self or free personality is characterized by the unity of existence and essence. (Yang, 2002, p. 455)

Parallel with social developments, the awareness of the subject as a unification of individual and social awareness was transformed into the stage of 'free consciousness'.[65] In the process of comprehension, this liberation was always determined by a transition from the sphere of facts to the sphere of conferring sense or value to comprehension. In this stage, human consciousness recognised the unity of subject and object; this awareness was determined by an effort to 'humanize' (Yang, 2002, p. 454) the natural world. The central feature of free consciousness manifested itself in the gradual awareness of personal autonomy and responsibility, which also represented the basic freedom of every individual. In this context, however, he pointed out that ancient Chinese philosophy has paid much attention to the principle of self-consciousness while overlooking, to some extent, the notion of self-willingness. Hence, according to Feng, it may easily lead to determinism (Yang & Huang, 2011, p. 5). In the process of the evaluation of comprehension, the subject of comprehension, however, not only changed the external world but, at the same time, also enriched and refined their inwardness. The essential qualities of a personality cultivated in this way were virtue[66] and freedom.[67] In this respect, Feng saw virtue as a manifestation of freedom and vice versa. In contrast to traditional interpretations of ancient Confucian thought, Feng Qi emphasized that a similar cultivation of personality was not only the privilege of wise men or sages,[68] but was an ideal, which could be achieved (or at least approached) by anyone. A free personality was thus within reach of every human being.

## 7. Cognitive distinctions vs the unity of knowledge and wisdom

While the unity of understanding the world and understanding the Self was seen as a precondition for the unification of the process of comprehension on a horizontal axis (from outwardness to inwardness, and vice versa), Feng's theory of transforming knowledge into wisdom also expressed the vertical axis (Chen, 1999, p. 17) of the same, holistic understanding of comprehension.

Based on the four main questions which Feng had stipulated as the forming the bases of his epistemology, with the interpretation and valuation of comprehension he was not merely concerned with knowledge in the empirical sense, but also in wisdom which, in his system, was inextricably linked to both essential inborn human features and the Way of Nature. Alongside these distinctions, Feng saw the process of comprehension as one, which included 'two qualitative leaps'[69]: the leap from ignorance to knowledge, and the leap from knowledge to wisdom (Feng, 1996, p. 35).

The first leap originated with sensory perception and was defined by the contents of subjective comprehension within the objective reality:

> From the viewpoint of the object, the original reality is nature, and the natural givenness has been changed into facts. But from the viewpoint of the subject, it is its awareness: while the subject is consciously perceiving individual facts, it also recognizes the individual laws incorporated within this factuality. In short, we can say that the structural order of this interaction between subject and object is empirical knowledge.[70] (Feng, 1996, p. 35)

Feng Qi tried to elaborate Jin Yuelin's presumption that knowledge and experience were the result of applying what we have obtained through the abstraction of experience, back to experience itself In other words, concepts, which enable us to describe and systematize experience, were abstracted from them. We are thus dealing with a general principle of the conceptual (or formal logical) assimilation (acceptance) of certain kinds of experience or of certain kinds of realities. In Feng's theory, this principle is linked to the unity of deduction and the unity of describing or systematizing: humans as subjects of knowledge and experience think with the aid of logical categories, by which they appropriate or assimilate experience according to 'the general principle of acceptance' (Yang, 2002, p. 443).

Formal logic and the general principle of acceptance created the conditions for attaining universally valid knowledge. However, even though both experience and knowledge derived from them, in terms of the discourse of expressibility, knowledge itself was not limited to them. Feng emphasized that knowledge was also linked to essential inborn human features and the Way of Nature, notions which also belong to the domain of wisdom. The domains of knowledge and wisdom were distinguished from each other by the fact that knowledge referred to the first question Feng posited as basic to his epistemology, while the domain of wisdom referred to the third and fourth questions. In other words, the Way of Nature was seen as the highest manifestation of any concrete truth. However, a genuine comprehension of this 'Way' was not possible as long as we tried to understand it as something external to ourselves, i.e. as something alien to our human essence. The manifestation of every concrete truth was thus inherently linked not only to the essential nature of each individual, but also to that individual's potential realization of a 'free, ideal personality',[71] as postulated by Feng in his fourth approach.

Hence, every concrete truth—including its purest or 'highest' form—could be seized by logical reasoning, i.e. by applying formal and dialectical logic, and individuals therefore possessed the ability to distinguish between finite and infinite, and absolute and relative. According to Feng, this ability could be realized precisely in the leap from knowledge to wisdom. According to Feng, 'things-in-themselves' are constantly converted into 'things-for-us', whereas subjectively the mind of the individual also transforms itself from 'being

in-itself' to 'being for-itself'. Our inborn biological nature is hence transformed into virtue, and freedom and the ideal personality are thus realized (Yang, 2002, p. 443).

> From the viewpoint of the object, this is due to a continual transformation of the 'things as such' into the 'things for us'. Hence, objects are transferred into the sphere of human comprehension. But from the viewpoint of the subject, it is the autonomous functioning of the free spirit which causes the subject's naturally given qualities to gradually develop into a free, virtuous personality.[72] (Feng, 1996, p. 49)

As we noted earlier, knowledge belongs to the sphere of expressions, while wisdom refers to the sphere beyond expressions. Knowledge is linked to distinctions, i.e. to the world that can be seized by verbal expressions or statements that can be verified or refuted by judgements (mostly in the form of sentences). Knowledge which can be expressed verbally therefore tends to split up the objects of comprehension, dividing their unity into particular facts and laws, which can also be defined by their interrelations. The application of names and concepts determines the entire domain of (empirical) knowledge. As opposed to knowledge, wisdom focuses upon basic principles of being, including human beings and their lives. In this regard, Feng evokes the traditional Chinese discourse of the Way[73] and its immanent transcendental nature, which manifests itself in Nature,[74] as well as in the (socially and ethically determined) essence of every human being.[75] Feng's notion of wisdom thus represents a bridge which, through the process of comprehension, connects both of these entities into the ideal unity of man and Nature.[76]

In concrete terms, the leap from knowledge to wisdom occurs via the three channels of intellectual intuition,[77] dialectical synthesis[78] and the self-verification of one's own virtues.[79] This leap, which is often instantaneous, recalls the Buddhist concept of instant enlightenment. But as opposed to mystical interpretations, such as those found in the anti-intellectual public records[80] of Chan Buddhism, Feng argued for a rationally comprehensible potential which was inherent to our consciousness and could be theoretically interpreted. For him, instant recognition (or enlightenment) was a product of intellectual intuition, representing a unity of sensation and reason.

> As a process of deconstruction, it transcends all dichotomies and oppositions; as a process of reconstruction, it distinguishes the infinite from the finite, the absolute from the relative, thus achieving the unity of humanity and universe (or nature), of subject and object, and of the knowing agent and what is to be known. (Yang, 2002, p. 445)

However, the entire process leading to this recognition was not instantaneous, but the result of the dialectical process of comprehension,[81] and was ultimately expressed only in the dialectical synthesis of comprehension.

> Human recognition and wisdom reveal the original world through this dialectical process of comprehension. We could say that the essence of the material, i.e. real world manifests itself precisely in the connection between this practice of (comprehension) and substance. Spirit and Self (as such) are originally without substance; instead, they represent its function. But substance can be seized through sufficient practise. Hence, in the developmental process of comprehension, the spirit gradually gains more and more ontological significance.[82] (Yang, 2002, p. 108)

However, the leap from knowledge to wisdom could not be completed at this stage. The final step conditioning the realization of this goal was the aforesaid self-verification of virtue, which had to be carried out by the subject of comprehension.

The intellectual intuition which led the subject to a total recognition, and the dialectical synthesis which made possible a transcendental expression of this total recognition, were both conditioned and guided by this self-verification of virtue. The subject of comprehension as an individual Self,[83] not only possessed the possible awareness of both these steps in the leap from knowledge to wisdom, but also the potential of reflecting this awareness. Hence, men can confirm the sincerity and firmness of their virtues in their activity, which is always characterized by the unity of speech and action (Yang, 2002, p. 443).

Although his system of recognizing the external world and one's own inwardness was focused upon concepts from the sphere beyond expressions, Feng stressed that no theory could be limited to the metaphysical level. Although the process of transforming knowledge into wisdom could thus be understood as a transcendental process, in which the recognition surpassed the sphere of expressions, Feng Qi's wisdom of a free personality remained inextricably linked to knowledge, experience and to all the other factors which determine the complex entities of concrete life, from which it originated and to which it returned.

> Feng Qi goes a step further and claims that wisdom as the comprehension of the truth is always inherently connected with the free development of human beings. Therefore, epistemology can never be separated from the issue of human freedom. Freedom, however, is not merely an autonomous condition, but also autonomous acting.[84] (Chen, 1999, p. 16)

## 8. Conclusion

In his theory of wisdom, Feng Qi creatively applied and elaborated certain aspects of Marxist thought. And while his 'sinification' of Marxism can be seen as an attempt to provide a modern reinterpretation and coherent summation of 20th Century Chinese philosophy, it can also be seen as a well-founded reaction to the challenges of modern Western thought. Since Feng Qi's philosophical system remained open, his studies certainly don't mark the end of Chinese philosophy. However, they offer new approaches to, and open new perspectives for the further development of contemporary Chinese philosophy (Yang, 2002, p. 457).

> As Feng Qi himself often emphasized, no philosophy could sum up the ultimate truth, for truth was always a process. The philosophical developments of each era implied the dynamic developments, changes and problems which determined it. Therefore, a summation of this kind is not important. Feng Qi's profound meditation on the central problems of his time in no way provides us with a recipe that could help us to complete the process of searching for the truth.[85] (Chen, 1999, p. 22)

Feng Qi's attempt to transcend the boundaries between ignorance and knowledge, and his theory of distinguishing between knowledge and wisdom not only referred to epistemological problems, but also implied ontological and metaphysical issues. By consistently integrating ontological and ethical suppositions into the framework of his 'expanded epistemology', Feng provided a unique and original solution to the dichotomous relations of substance and phenomena. His epistemological system, which included systematic, rational distinctions, as well as a holistic reunification of comprehension, represents a felicitous attempt at establishing a theoretical framework that could

provide the basis for fresher, more complex methodologies in contemporary theoretical discourses.

## Notes

1. 馮契, originally Feng Baolin冯宝麟 (Yang & Huang, 2011, p. 3).
2. The present essay is focused upon his epistemological approaches. Hence, it is based upon my previous studies of Feng Qi's theories of knowledge and represents an elaborated and upgraded version of them (see for instance Rošker, 2006, 2008).
3. Zhihui shuo 智慧說.
4. In this paper, all general references to 'Western' thought or 'Western' ideas are not implying any essentialist understanding of the 'West' as a homogeneous cultural area. Rather, they refer to those (mostly continuously evolving) philosophical currents which shaped the lines of thought, the basic paradigms, and the referential frameworks of what evolved in the framework of Euro-American intellectual history. For an explanation of referential frameworks and their role in the development of such prevailing currents, see Rošker (2021). For basic characteristics defining such frameworks and their specific features, see Moeller (2022); Li (2022); Silius (2020).
5. 冯友兰, 汤用彤, 金岳霖.
6. 冯契经常提到他的老师金岳霖. 他自觉地要在金老等人已有成果的基础上前进, 而且他确实是前进了. 在会通中西, 创造新哲理方向, 他越过了自己的老师.
7. 广义认识论.
8. 知识论.
9. 智慧.
10. 修身.
11. Feng Qi also belonged to the victims of various ideological pressures of this time; Huang Yong, for instance, exposes (Huang, 2002, p. 213) that by the mid sixties, Feng Qi had 'completed philosophical manuscripts of several million Chinese characters, but all of these disappeared during the Cultural Revolution'.
12. During the 1940s, theoretical work was silenced by the cataclysm of war, while with the founding of the PRC, a sinificated ideologization of Marxist theories necessarily prevailed in the so-called 'socialist society': the result was that, until the 1970s, philosophy was mainly viewed as a tool for the theoretical underpinnings of Maoist policies, and as a means for the mass ideologization of society. The popularization and simplification of those aspects of Marxist-Leninist and Maoist thought which were considered functional for current political trends was one of the main tasks of the Chinese intelligentsia of that time. This period was marked by a specific shift in discourse, caused by the increasingly broader politicization of everyday life, and theory was increasingly substituted by forms of symbolic speech.
13. 'The decade from 1978 to 1988 was a period of great social transformation in China. The pragmatic economic policies and comparatively relaxed political approach resulted in a less rigid and dogmatic atmosphere, providing a more liberal setting for cultural and intellectual activities. Chinese intellectuals directly participated in defining and developing the new social intersubjectivity and ideological discourse. In comparison with the first 30 years of the People's Republic, the role and functions of intellectuals between 1978 and 1988 became increasingly complex within a rapidly changing social context. The period also marks the development of a new pattern in the relationship between Chinese intellectuals and the state, which was no longer based on the total submission of the former to the latter' (Lin, 1992, p. 969).
14. *Zhongguo gudai zhexuede luoji fazhan* 中國古代哲學的邏輯發展.
15. *Zhongguo jindai zhexuede geming guocheng* 中国近代哲学的革命进程.
16. *Zhihui san pian* 智慧說三篇.
17. *Feng Qi wenji* 馮契文集.

18. 我给自己规定了一个哲学任务, 就是要根据实现唯物主义辩证法来阐明由无知到知, 由知识到智慧的辩证运动.
19. 显然, 冯契对马克思主义哲学的态度, 并不是教条主义的, 而是独立思考的.
20. 如果单从这个模式的认识论特征来看, 他基本上是照着马克思主义来讲的. 那么, 从他对认识论的范围的广大这一点而言, 又可以认为, 他是在接着马克思主义讲的. 冯契理解的认识论已经超越了这一名称的传统涵义.
21. 有些人把理论和政治权力捆绑在一起, 使理论失去了独立性和内在价值, 甚著成了政人的工具. 实际上就是把马克思主义, 毛泽东思想作为紧箍咒, 强加在人们头上, 这明显违背民主教育的态度, 使得学术自由窒息了 … 哲学家如果不能始终保持心灵的自由思考, 那就不可能是真正的哲学家.
22. 在哪些困难的时代, 有多少人有这种自觉呢? 大概不多.
23. In the Chinese holistic tradition ontology is inseparable from epistemology, as in its view of the world every object of cognition is also cognition itself; the manner of its existence is thus linked to our understanding of it. Because this connection goes both ways, i.e. their relation is not a relation of single sided dependency and determination, but an interaction that includes mutual co-dependency, we cannot state that this is a solipsistic conceptualisation of the world. The same as for the perception of the existing world holds true also for its perception and interpretation. This can also not be separated from the wholesome, but changeable and totally individualised existence of objects of cognition; this is clearly manifested in the theoretical system of the so-called onto-hermeneutics (本体诠释学), which was developed by Chung-Ying Cheng (see Ng/Ed./, Ng, 2011).
24. 天道.
25. 天之天.
26. 人之天.
27. Both phrases were borrowed by Feng Qi from Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692).
28. 事实, 可能.
29. 创造价值 (according to Feng, this evaluation was simultaneously a process of humanization and signification).
30. 自在之物 (some other modern Chinese philosophers have also translated Kant's notion of the 'things as such' as 物自身.
31. 为我之物.
32. 天道.
33. 人道.
34. 所与.
35. 现实并行不孛.
36. 现实矛盾发展.
37. 中国哲学注重伦理, 是公认的事实. 中国人对形式逻辑的研究, 在'墨经' 中有很高成就, 后来却被冷淡了, 所以确实不如欧洲人和印度人热心.
38. 柴文华.
39. 因此, 认为中国封建时代的哲学缺乏对形式逻辑的研究有一定的道理, 但缺乏对形式逻辑的研究并不等于缺乏逻辑, 由于中国传统哲学较早和较深入地探讨了辩证逻辑, 所以中国传统哲学的逻辑思想也是很发达的.
40. 原子论思想和形式逻辑没有得到充分发展, 这是中国传统哲学的一个弱点. 但是中国人却比较早地发展了朴素的辩证逻辑和朴素的辩证自然观(气一元论), 从而对逻辑思想能否把握宇宙法则这个认识论问题作了肯定的回答和多方面的考察, 这却是一个优点.
41. 如果古代哲学家已经提出某些辩证思维的原理, 而当时的科学家已在运用它们作为科学方法, 那就是有一定程度的自觉 … 辩证逻辑在中国经过了长期的发展, 有较大的成就, 它虽然还是朴素的, (缺乏近代科学的基础), 但已经具有高级阶段的许多要素的萌芽, 置得我们仔细的加以研究.
42. 在化理想为现实的活动中, 目的因贯彻于过程而得到了实现, 那么就创造了价值. 在价值创造了过程中间, 自由的精神是体, 而价值的创造是用. 因此我们说自我或自由的精神或自由的个性也就具有了本体的性质.
43. 创造价值.

44. 广义的认识论不应该限于知识的理论，而且应该研究智慧的学说，要讨论'元学如何可能'，'理想人格如何培养' 的问题.
45. 哲学史可以定义为: 根源于人类社会实践主要围绕着思维和存在关系问题而展开的认识的辩证运动.
46. 哲学史集中体现了人类认识运动的秩序.
47. 方旭东.
48. 哲学史上提出的认识论问题, 大体说来可以概括为四个.
    第一: 感觉能否给予客观实在?
    第二: 理论思维能否达到科学真理? (或: 普遍必然的科学知识何以可能?)
    第三: 逻辑思维能否把握具体真理(首先是世界统一原理, 宇宙发展规则?)
    第四: 人能否获得自由? (或: 自由人格或理想人格如何培养?)
49. 感性.
50. 知性.
51. 理性.
52. 当冯契把自由, 理想人格纳入认识论, 这固然可以在马克思主义经典作家那里找到根据, 但更多的反映了他从中国哲学中所受的发展.
53. 中国传统哲学从人和自然的交互作用来探讨人的德性形成过程, 比较早地考察了伦理学上的自觉原则和美学上的意境理论，从而对理想人格如何培养这个认识论问(这个问题也牵涉到真, 善, 美的关系), 提出一些富于民族特色的合理见解.
54. Feng believed that the third question concerning the relation between logic and reality, culminated in traditional Chinese discourses that explored the relation between names and actualities (名實辯), while the fourth question was addressed in discussions on man and nature (天人辯) (Feng, 1983, p. 42).
55. 虽然中西古代哲学都提出了道德行为即是自愿的, 又是自觉的, 但相比之下, 西方哲学较多考察了自愿原则和自由意志问题 ….
56. 中国古代, 从孔墨开始, 就已在讨论感性和理论思维的关系了. 而庄子已对'感觉能否给予客观实在' 和'理论思维能否达到客观真理' 提出种种责难. 所以不能说, 中国人不关心前两个问题.
57. 所谓历史的方法, 就是要把握所考察对象的基本的历史线素, 看它在历史上是怎样发生的, 根据是什么; 又是怎样发展的, 经历了哪些阶段. 而真正的要把握基本的历史线素, 就要清除掉外在形式和偶然的东西, 以便对对象的本质的矛盾(及根据) 进行具体分析, 对每一发展阶段或环节都能从其典型形式上进行考察, 而后综合起来, 把握其逻辑的联系和发展的规律.
58. 哲学家们所争论的问题就是矛盾, 某个矛盾产生, 发展, 解决了, 另一个新的矛盾又产生, 经过发展得到解决, … 这是一个在循环往复中前进的过程.
59. 既然我们把哲学史作为人类认识史的精华来看待, 如果说中国传统哲学中认识论不占重要地位, 那么中国哲学在世界哲学史中自然不会占重要地位了.
60. 主体有意识.
61. 心.
62. 人性 – in international Sinology, this concept has mostly been translated as 'human nature'. However, for various reasons, such translation can be misleading. According to Yang Guorong, this understanding of the essential nature of human beings differs from rationalism, which equates human nature with reason, and also differs from empiricism, which equates it with inborn nature in a biological sense (Yang, 2002, p. 453).
63. 自我.
64. 小我, 大我.
65. 自由意识.
66. 德性.
67. 自由.
68. 圣.
69. 两次质变性的飞跃.
70. 从对象方面说, 就是本然的现实为自然, 自然的所与化为事实; 从主体方面说, 就是主体有意识: 知觉到一件件的事实, 理解了一条条现实固有的理或规律;而综合起来说, 这个主客交互作用的秩序就是知识经验.

71. 自由, 理想的人格.
72. 从对象说, 是自在之物不断化为为我之物, 进入为人所知的领域; 从主体说, 是精神由自在而自为, 使得自然赋予的天性逐渐发展成为自由的德性.
73. 道.
74. 天道.
75. 人道.
76. 天人合一.
77. 理性的直觉.
78. 辩证的综合.
79. 德性的自证.
80. 公案.
81. 知识的辩证运动.
82. 正是通过这种认识的辩证运动本然界被人的认识和智慧所明亮. 功夫和本体统一, 可以说物质的本体即现实世界在认识过程中展开, 即精神而自我本来不是本体, 是本体的作用, 但功夫所至, 就是本体, 因而在认识发展的过程中, 精神越来越具有本体论的意义.
83. 自我.
84. 冯契进一步认为, 由于智慧是关于人生的真理性认识, 因此他总是与人的自由发展有内在的联系. 受此制约, 认识论总是离不开对自由问题的探素, 而自由不仅是自在, 而且是自为.
85. 正如冯契所经常强调的那样, 任何哲学都不可能总结真理, 真理永远处于过程之中. 同时, 时代在前进, 时代的问题也处在动态之流中. 所以, 重要的也许并不在于结论, 冯契对时代问题的哲学沉思, 并没有一劳永逸地终结对真理的探求过程.

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