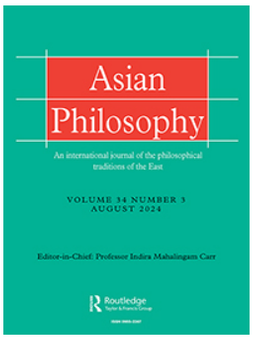

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Yuanping Shi

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How to attain oneness through internal affectivity (*neigan*)? Divergent responses in the philosophy of the Cheng brothers

Yuanping Shi

Institute for Philosophy, Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

This article examines the neo-Confucian response to the question, "How to achieve the state of oneness," as put forth by Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao. While both philosophers achieve this state through internal affectivity, their interpretations diverge significantly. Cheng Yi views internal affectivity as an inherent goodness that emanates from the pre-manifested mind but warns against emotional instability and desires. He thus rejects the notion of "teaching benevolence through perception." (*yijue xunren*) and instead emphasizing the primacy of the unmanifested mind in attaining oneness. Conversely, Cheng Hao stresses the inward perception of bodily sensations and supports "teaching benevolence through perception." He argues that through sensory arousal and the transformation of vital energy, the mind and body can achieve harmony, thereby embodying the benevolence present in "heaven, earth, and all things." This divergence in their approaches to oneness reflects their differing responses to Buddhism and contrasting views on human nature.

KEYWORDS

Affectivity theory; oneness; benevolence; bodily perception; Cheng Hao; Cheng Yi

Introduction

The long-standing question of 'how to achieve the state of oneness' has perplexed Chinese philosophers throughout history.[1] The fundamental principle of 'oneness', central to Chinese philosophy, describes a state of harmony where individuals and their interactions with the surrounding world become integrated. It is also known as '*tianren heyi*', denoting the union between the cosmos and humans. This state represents the ultimate goal of Confucian cultivation, attainable through diligent practice of Confucian virtues and principles. Within the philosophical context of China's Song Dynasty, the distinguished scholars Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, known as the Cheng Brothers, articulated a cultivation paradigm emphasizing the significance of 'internal affectivity' in the pursuit of attaining the elevated state of oneness.[2] Nevertheless, contemporary scholarly discourse reveals a clear gap in the detailed examination of the nuanced implications of the concept of 'internal affectivity' as elucidated by Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao. Existing research on the Cheng Brothers' internal affectivity has predominantly focused on

CONTACT Yuanping Shi y.shi@phil.leidenuniv.nl Institute for Philosophy, Leiden University, P.J. Veth, Nonnensteeg 1-3, Leiden 2311 VJ, Netherlands

examining the coherence of their philosophical ideas (Mou, 1999, p. 222; L. Zhang, 2022, pp. 99–105). This paper, however, argues that the philosophical systems formulated by the Cheng brothers reveal at least two fundamental divergences. First, the two philosophers diverge in their approaches to attaining the state of oneness[3]: Cheng Yi prioritizes the refinement of the pre-manifested mind, whereas Cheng Hao underscores the importance of perception and the arousal of bodily sensations. This divergence in emphasis contributes to differences in their respective responses to Buddhism. Second, the Cheng Brothers held contrasting perspectives on human nature. Cheng Yi adhered to the conventional Confucian tenet of the innate goodness of human nature, whereas Cheng Hao believed that both good and evil are manifestations of the laws of heaven.

Exploring the cultivation of a pre-manifested state of heart-mind: Cheng Yi's philosophical approach

The notion of internal affectivity is a key aspect of the Cheng Brothers' discourse on affective resonance. However, their perspectives subtly diverge in terms of emphasis. Cheng Yi, in his exposition of internal affectivity, posits, 'Within the realm of serene stillness, the vastness of existence is already encompassed; the attainment of resonance is accomplished through immediate affectivity. Affectivity emanates from within, independent of external influences' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 154). To elaborate on this idea, Cheng Yi further connects the concept of 'abiding in profound tranquility and stillness while swiftly permeating upon the arousal of affectivity' (*jiranbudong, ganersuitong*) with the ideas of 'pre-manifestation', (*weifa*) 'already manifested', (*yifa*) and the concept of neutralization (*zhonghe*):

> 'The condition in which joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness remain unmanifested is termed "neutrality". This designation signifies a state of tranquillity and placidity, and is considered the foundational principle of the cosmic order. When these emotions are manifested but remain in moderation, it is called "harmony". Harmony reflects a state of affectivity and resonance, exemplifying the actualization of the *Dao* within the cosmic realm. (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 319)

This excerpt underscores the unmanifested mind's state of 'silence and stillness' as the fundamental root of the cosmos, while manifested harmony represents affectivity, resonance, and the ultimate realization of the *Dao*. By establishing a profound correlation between the core tenets of *the Book of Changes* (*Yijing*) and *the Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*),[4] this interpretation makes a significant scholarly contribution to philosophical inquiry. Nevertheless, Cheng Yi's introduction of the concept of neutralization has sparked debates among scholars for centuries. These debates included intellectual disputes between Cheng Yi and his contemporaries, such as Lv Dalin and Su Jiming, and extended to modern scholars like Mou Zongsan and Lao Siguang. Mou Zongsan holds particular prominence for his rigorous investigations into Cheng Yi's conception of harmony, which have inspired further profound inquiries. These inquiries suggest that Cheng Yi's understanding of harmony suffers from a lack of clarity and coherence (Mou, 1999, pp. 292–320). Consistent with his rejection of Cheng Yi's concept of internal affectivity, Mou Zongsan also refutes the connection between Cheng Yi's interpretation of neutralization (*zhonghe*) and its true meaning in *the Book of Changes*. He argues that

the former pertains to the corporeal mind (a psychological construct) explained through the concept of *qi*, while the latter relates to sincerity and the numinous, indicating a fundamental disparity between the two (Mou, 1999, p. 304). A critical question arises regarding Cheng Yi's intentions in explicating affective resonance through the framework of neutralization. Are the reservations expressed by scholars regarding Cheng Yi's exposition of affective resonance through neutralization justified?

Neutralization: A key to emphasizing the pre-manifested state

Scholarly critiques of Cheng Yi's theory of neutralization and its related concept of internal affectivity focus on two key aspects. First, it concerns the perceived inconsistency in Cheng Yi's statements regarding the interplay between perception, movement, and stillness. For example, Mou Zongsan argues that Cheng Yi affirms the necessity of 'something within stillness to achieve' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 201), suggesting the presence of something within a state of tranquillity. At the same time, Cheng Yi argues that 'Once there is perception, it is already movement. How can we speak of stillness?' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 201) While these two assertions may initially appear contradictory, the apparent inconsistency arises from Mou Zongsan's proposal to interchange 'something' (*youwu*) with 'perception' (*zhijue*) in his analysis. This leads Mou to argue that Cheng Yi's alignment of these concepts with either movement or stillness causes confusion (Mou, 1999, p. 316). Upon closer examination, however, these statements are not contradictory but refer to different levels in Cheng Yi's philosophical system. 'Something within stillness' refers to the pre-manifestation state (*weifa*), while 'perception' pertains to the realm of what has already manifested (*yifa*).

A secondary critique of Cheng Yi, as presented by Lao Siguang, argues that Cheng Yi's explanation of the origin of 'emotion' (*qing*) contains inherent inconsistencies. Lao contends that emotions arise from external stimulation, which contradicts Cheng's use of the water and waves metaphor to explain emotions. As a result, Lao Siguang concludes that Cheng Yi's claim about the natural origin of emotions is flawed (Lao, 2005, p. 178). Lao bases his critique on the following passage:

> Further inquired, 'In what manner do emotions of joy and anger arise externally?' Cheng Yi responded, 'They do not fundamentally emanate from external sources; rather, they are elicited by external stimuli and then manifest within the internal realm' . . . In human nature, there are only four inherent virtues. How could there be numerous unvirtuous deeds? Without water, how can there be waves? Without human nature, how can there be emotions? (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 204)

This passage posits that human nature not only serves as the wellspring of the four sprouts (*siduan*) but also as the origin of emotions. Cheng Yi further argues that the state of 'centrality' (*zhong*) encompasses joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 181). Due to the inclusion of these emotions, 'emotional disposition' (*qing*), 'nature' (*xing*), and 'heart' (*xin*) effectively become interconnected. This can be understood through Cheng Yi's metaphor of 'water and waves'. The relationship between '*xing*' and '*qing*' is akin to that of 'water' and 'waves'. The nature of water remains calm like a mirror, yet it can also surge with turbulent waves. Water, in different contexts, exhibits diverse appearances. This analogy reveals the limitations, vulnerabilities, and complexities of

human nature. Returning to Lao's critique, his evaluation overlooks the crucial concept of 'arising from within' (*fayuzhong*) in Cheng Yi's philosophy. Lao Siguang emphasizes the external source of perception, while neglecting the internal catalyst that actually triggers emotions. Furthermore, Lao Siguang fails to grasp Cheng Yi's emphasis on the genuine significance and theoretical importance of attributing the genesis of emotions to human nature. Cheng Yi's reasoning for attributing the origin of emotions, including the four sprouts and emotions like joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness, to the 'inner' realm, is based on his intent to assign the heart-mind (*xin*) and human nature (*xing*) the key role of regulating emotional development. If the source of emotions were external, the heart could no longer govern the distinction between moral integrity and degradation.

Within the context of the discourse on 'internal affectivity', the foregoing exposition gains further clarity and coherence. The inherent presence of 'emotions of joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness' as well as 'emotions of the four sprouts', emphasizes the internal dimension's role in determining the moral nature of one's actions. Cheng Yi's focus on 'not being affected by external objects' highlights the active emanation from within, rather than the passive reception of external stimuli. Accordingly, Cheng Yi espouses a pronounced emphasis on the importance of cultivating wisdom 'internally' rather than 'externally'. As he articulates, 'The objective of learning is to instigate individuals to search for wisdom within themselves. The pursuit of external sources, in contradistinction to the pursuit of internal exploration, constitutes a deviation from the trajectory of sagely learning' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 319). The essence of this internal cultivation lies in the endeavor to seek knowledge at its foundational roots. From Cheng Yi's perspective, directing attention solely towards superficial aspects rather than plumbing the depths of essence stands incongruent with the pursuit of sagely learning (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 319).

This practice of internal exploration reveals a complex relationship with the concepts of sincerity and the intrinsic emanation of goodness. As Cheng Yi elucidates, 'Sincerity is inherently preserved by constraining and defence against malevolence, rather than attempting to externally capture sincerity in anticipation of its future preservation … Thus, as Mencius enunciated, the innate goodness emanates from within' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 149). Cheng Yi posited that sincerity resides within the essence of human nature and cannot be acquired externally. Notably, the parallel structures in 'not by externally grasping onto sincerity' and 'not being affected by external objects' reveal the inherent connection between the principles of 'goodness emanating from within' and 'internal affectivity'.

It becomes evident that Cheng Yi's ultimate theoretical concern revolves around the question of human virtue and evil. The emergence of goodness stems from the 'emotions associated with the four sprouts', while proximity to evil resides in the deviation of these emotions (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 291). Despite the subtle existence of a predisposition towards malevolence, Cheng Yi acknowledges the potential for goodness. When questioned about the essence of human nature, he responded by establishing an equivalence between nature and principle. Cheng Yi further contends that upon retracing the origins of the principles under the heaven, it becomes evident that they possess an inherent goodness. This inherent benevolence constitutes the state that precedes the emergence of emotions. Once these emotions manifest and are governed by moderation, goodness is always present (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 292). Notably, Cheng Yi emphasizes the

sequence in which goodness and evil emerge, with goodness taking precedence. This is encapsulated in the statement 'goodness comes first, then evil' (*xian shan er hou e*). The same logical progression applies to auspiciousness and adversity, as well as to right and wrong, with auspiciousness and right preceding adversity and wrong (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 292). Ultimately, these sequences are sustained by the proactive nature of goodness that emanates from within.

The heart (xin) *or the nature* (xing): The subject of Cheng Yi's internal affectivity

In the preceding section, we expounded upon the fundamental import of the tenet 'goodness emanates from the inner realm', encapsulating the crux of the notion of internal affectivity. This raises a pertinent question: does the locus of internal affectivity reside within the heart-mind (*xin*) or human nature (*xing*)? Before addressing this question, it is essential to clarify Cheng Yi's exposition of the relationship between the heart-mind and human nature. In Cheng Yi's framework, the heart-mind extends beyond mere experiential states. He explicitly rejects the claim that the heart-mind refers solely to a manifested state (*yifa*), stating, 'Whenever we speak of the heart-mind, we mean to refer to what is not yet manifested; this is indeed inappropriate' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 609). In Cheng Yi's conception, the heart-mind encompasses both the dimension of essence (*ti*) and extends into the domain of function (*yong*): 'The heart-mind attains a state of unification. In its essential connotation, it aligns with a state of tranquility and absence of movement. In its functional connotation, it swiftly penetrates the entirety of existence beneath the heavens upon the awakening of affective engagement' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 609). The 'essence' aspect of these two aspects of the heart-mind is congruent with human nature (*xing*), supporting the idea that 'the heart-mind is human nature'. Cheng Yi, drawing from Mencius, emphasizes the dictum 'Exhaust one's heart-mind, comprehend one's nature'. This affirmation underscores the equivalence of the heart-mind to human nature. (*xinjixing*) (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 609) Elaborating further, he delineates the interrelationship among the heart-mind, nature and destiny, articulating, 'In the heavenly realm, it stands as destiny; within the human domain, it embodies human nature. When scrutinizing the agent of governance, it is designated as the heart-mind, yet fundamentally they form an inseparable unity' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 609).

While Cheng Yi emphasizes the inherent goodness of human nature, a virtue that naturally unfolds from within, he also demonstrates a keen awareness of the human heart's vulnerability to disturbances when considered in its functional domain. Consequently, his philosophical principles stress the importance of distinguishing between the human heart (*renxin*) and the *Dao* heart (*daoxin*). This focus on differentiation extends to the concept of neutralization, where Cheng Yi carefully distinguishes between the manifested and the unmanifested:

> The inquiry arises: 'Is it feasible to seek neutralization before the manifestation of joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness?' Cheng Yi responds, 'Such a pursuit is unattainable. Pondering harmony before the manifestation of joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness constitutes an act of contemplation. Contemplation implies the occurrence of manifestation, for thinking bears resemblance to the manifestation of joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness. It is only upon manifestation that we may label it as harmony, not during its state of unmanifestation'. (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 200)

In his discussions on neutralization with Su Jiming, Cheng Yi strongly argues against pursuing neutralization before any manifestation occurs. He asserts that 'thinking' itself implies manifestation, and that 'seeking' is inherently linked to 'thinking'. Cheng Yi's position rests on two key points. First, he recognizes the futility of using contemplative techniques to pursue an unmanifested state, as such efforts result in superficial and insubstantial outcomes, running counter to the true goals of understanding and cultivating the heart-mind. Therefore, Cheng Yi advocates for cultivating the unmanifested heart-mind, creating the necessary conditions for 'enlightened comprehension'. Second, Cheng Yi views 'thinking' as similar to joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness. The proliferation of thoughts easily causes mental unrest, reflecting Cheng Yi's cautious attitude towards the nature of 'thinking'. As a result, Cheng Yi rejects the pursuit of premature harmony before manifestation.

Cheng Yi's explanation of the dual aspects of the 'heart' and his articulation of the two dimensions of 'perception' and 'movement' are interconnected and coherent. In one part of his analysis, Cheng Yi identifies the importance of motion. For example, in his explanation of the commentary on the returning hexagram (*fugua*), he diverges from the views of earlier Confucian scholars, who regarded stillness as the essence of the heavenly and earthly hearts. Instead, he asserts, 'the inception of motion is indeed the heart of heaven and earth' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 819). However, Cheng Yi remains cautious about the 'motion' linked to perception, recognizing its tendency to be influenced by egocentric desires and vital energy. This caution is also evident in Cheng Yi's exegesis of the hexagrams and line explanations in *the Book of Changes*. For instance, in the hexagram of the retreat (*Tun*), the third line, representing a yin line in a yang position, shows misalignment, which leads to 'reckless movement'. (*wangdong*) Furthermore, considering the interplay between lines, the aforementioned *yin* line seeks resonance with the fifth *yang* line, which Cheng Yi identifies as a manifestation of 'greed' (*tan*). As a result, Cheng Yi describes this line as 'immovable yet moving', characterized by 'reckless movement' stemming from an 'animalistic mindset'. In such cases, Cheng Yi emphasizes the noble person's duty to 'abandon following it', seeking tranquillity in stillness (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, pp. 716–717). Similarly, in the cases of the first line in Hexagram of Waiting (*xugua*), the first line in Hexagram of Resoluteness (*guaigua*), and the fourth line in Hexagram of Conflict (*songgua*), all of which manifest as yang lines but lack proper alignment. Cheng Yi contends that 'those who possess forcefulness will inevitably exhibit restlessness in their actions' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 724). Therefore, these lines require the 'calming of their energy' and a warning against unnecessary movement.

Cheng Yi's cautious approach to the concept of 'movement' logically extends to the realm of 'perception', given the inherent interdependence between perception and motion. In this context, the emergence of 'perception' triggers an immediate shift from quiescence to motion. The danger in interpreting benevolence as perception lies in its association with the mind and concrete experiences. As a result, personal desires can easily merge with the benevolent heart, blurring clear distinctions. Vigilance over the vast array of thoughts is key to his rejection of using perception as a path to foster benevolence (*yijue xunren*). Cheng Yi raises the question of how benevolence should be properly understood and explained. While some argue that it should be equated with perception or human being, these views are seen as erroneous in Cheng Yi's philosophy. Cheng Yi does not provide a direct definition of benevolence; instead, he suggests that one must

immerse themselves in the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, engaging in years of deep reflection and exploration of its essence. This endeavour requires years of deep inquiry, yet Cheng Yi emphasizes that it is never too late to begin this intellectual and moral pursuit (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 314). This indicates that, according to Cheng Yi, the authentic meaning of benevolence cannot be fully apprehended through conceptual understanding alone. Rather, it is through sustained endeavours and practical application that individuals can gradually approach the genuine essence of benevolence.

Grasping Cheng Yi's vigilance towards the manifested 'movement' enables us to grasp his prioritization of cultivation during the unmanifested state. If one only seeks to restrain negative thoughts and actions after they have emerged, maintaining self-discipline becomes increasingly difficult. Cheng Yi associates the unmanifested state with the hexagram of 'Youthful Folly' (*menggua*) in *the Book of Changes*, wherein one should focus on 'nurturing the upright' from the very beginning. This nurturing of the upright, Cheng Yi notes, is a profound achievement realized by sages. Thus, nurturing the upright in the unmanifested state of '*meng*' represents the pinnacle of moral cultivation and learning (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 720).

The subtle intertwining of personal desires within 'movement' makes their manifestation elusive. Aware of this challenge, Cheng Yi emphasizes the difficulty of attaining tranquillity amidst constant motion. This formidable pursuit surpasses the notion of 'tranquillity' advocated by the Buddhist tradition. In contrast, within the Confucian framework, the concept of 'cessation' (*zhi*) requires the harmonious integration of movement and stillness. In cultivation, one must have the ability to immediately halt the turbulent *qi* associated with negative inclinations.

In summation, the subject of internal affectivity is not only the nature but also the human mind. Cheng Yi's circumspect stance on the function of the heart, including its associated movement and perception, led him to emphasize the distinction between the 'substance' and 'function' of the heart. This perspective adds a nuanced layer to Cheng Yi's broader theoretical framework on internal affectivity. While human nature and the heart facilitate the operation of internal affectivity, the application of human nature in cultivation poses challenges in smoothly transitioning between movement and stillness, as well as between essence and function, without residual traces. To avoid the risk of conflating substance with function, and movement with stillness, it is more prudent to engage in distinct practices for each during the cultivation process. By engaging in this endeavour, the activity of internal affectivity can be better preserved within the framework of cultivation theory.

Appreciating perception and awakening the body: Cheng Hao's philosophical approach

Cheng Hao also provides a direct exposition on the notion of internal affectivity, stating, 'Between father and son, ruler and minister, the constant principles do not change. How can they be moved? Because of their immovability, they are considered "tranquil". However, in this stillness, the emergence of affectivity forms an immediate connection. This affectivity does not originate from external sources' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, pp. 43, 154, 1261).

In agreement with Cheng Yi, Cheng Hao equates the mind-heart with human nature, considering them as the driving force behind internal affectivity. However, their differences regarding internal affectivity become evident when comparing their perspectives on goodness and evil.[5] Cheng Hao recognizes that 'vital energy' (qi) can inherently be differentiated into good and evil, and extends this distinction to the concept of 'principle' (*li*). This nuanced view differentiates Cheng Hao from Cheng Yi, who asserts the inherent goodness of 'principle'. Cheng Hao argues: 'Human life is inherently imbued with an innate disposition, wherein the principles of good and evil reside. However, it is not that these two aspects arise in a relative manner within human nature itself. While certain individuals demonstrate virtuous inclinations from an early stage, others manifest depraved tendencies since their formative years … Undoubtedly, the manifestation of goodness stands as an intrinsic characteristic of human nature; nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the undeniable presence of evil as a distinct facet inherent to human nature' [6] (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 10).

At first glance, acknowledging the inclusion of 'evil' within the framework of the 'heavenly principle' might be mistaken as a defense of 'moral evil'. As a result, the claim that 'principle encompasses both good and evil' has faced skepticism from many thinkers.[7] Notably, Mou Zongsan contends that Cheng Hao's statement, asserting that 'both good and evil are in accordance with heavenly principles', does not entail the existence of a primary moral principle that encompasses both good and evil. Instead, it pertains to the actual state of affairs, expounding on the diverse natural complexities and inclinations inherent in existing reality in terms of principle. Mou Zongsan describes this view as a 'hollow theory' (*xushuo*) (Mou, 1999, p. 71). Cheng Hao recognized the potential conflict between 'inheriting goodness' and the traditional Confucian doctrine of innate goodness. He observed that good and evil are not inherently contradictory, noting that 'evil is not inherently evil, but becomes so when it exceeds or falls short, as in the cases of Yang Zhu and Mozi' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 14). The opposition between good and evil does not fully explain their emergence in human nature. Instead, some individuals are born with a disposition towards goodness, while others have inherent inclinations towards wickedness. Thus, both goodness and evil are integral aspects of human nature. Cheng Hao interpreted Mencius' theory of innate goodness as being understood through the idea of 'inheriting goodness'. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that not all individuals inherently possess goodness from an early age. In elucidating the concept of 'inheriting goodness', Cheng Hao employed the metaphor of water's clarity and turbidity. He likened the expression to the natural flow of water seeking lower ground. Despite variations in clarity, the presence of turbidity does not negate the essence of water. Consequently, individuals are compelled to engage in the practice of 'clarifying and purifying' themselves (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, pp. 10–11).

Cheng Hao's recognition that both clear and muddy water share the same essential nature, along with his assertion that 'nature is *qi*', reflects his comprehensive thought and seeks to inspire individuals towards the imperative of 'clarifying and purifying'. Cheng Hao posits that the effectiveness of the purification process is contingent upon the application of force with agility and courage, as swiftness or sluggishness directly influences the clarity or turbidity of the water (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 11). Cheng Hao's perspective does not advocate for a complete replacement of turbid water with clear water, thereby recognizing the value inherent in turbid water. However, he stresses the importance of

actively engaging with turbidity rather than passively dismissing it (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 11). Consequently, the acknowledgment that '*qi* is nature' entails recognizing the intrinsic worth of physical nature and provides a theoretical foundation for the cultivation of character. In accordance with his acknowledgment of the significance of physical nature, Cheng Hao places great emphasis on the concept of 'cultivating benevolence through perception', which stands in stark contrast to Cheng Yi's rejection of such an approach. Cheng Hao regards bodily sensation as a crucial avenue for comprehending and cultivating benevolence. He skillfully uses medical texts to illustrate the profound spiritual essence of Confucianism, particularly benevolence. Diverging from his predecessors within the Confucian lineage, Cheng Hao exhibits a distinct fascination with the field of medicine, as evidenced by his insightful remarks on the subject:

> Within medical texts, there exists an assertion affirming that paralysis of the limbs signifies an inherent deficiency in benevolence, a proclamation that aptly captures the essence of the matter. (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 15)

> The explication of 'four limbs lacking benevolence' expounded by medical practitioners serves as a remarkably befitting embodiment of benevolence itself. (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 120)

> Medical practitioners consider a lack of recognition of pain or itching as a deficiency in benevolence, analogous to people consider the absence of perception and recognition of righteous principle as indicative of a dearth in benevolence. This analogy bears considerable pertinence. (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 33)

> Pulse diagnosis provides a tangible experience of benevolence. (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 59)

Viewed through a conventional lens, Cheng Hao's statements regarding medicine may initially seem unfounded. Conventional wisdom holds that there is no inherent correlation between physical well-being and moral virtue. The proposition that a lack of benevolence in one's heart directly leads to physical weakness or limb paralysis seems implausible. Cheng Hao's statements may give the impression that the state of one's soul is entirely determined by the body's physical condition, implying that cultivating virtue can be achieved solely through focusing on bodily health. However, this perspective presupposes a division between body and soul, contradicting Cheng Hao's intent. Following Cheng Hao's holistic perspective that 'the vessel is also the Dao, and the Dao is also the vessel' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 4), one might assert that Cheng Hao argued 'the body is the soul, and the soul is the body'. The most prominent distinction between body and soul lies in their visibility, with the body being perceivable and the soul intangible. However, it is difficult to argue that a corporeal form without a soul can still be called a body. Cheng Hao did not view the pursuit of a healthy body as the ultimate objective. Instead, he believed that understanding the imperceptible spirit begins with the tangible sensations of the visible body, which is inseparable from the soul. Hence, Cheng Hao establishes a correlation between physical afflictions such as 'limb paralysis' and 'intractable wind ailments', which cause tangible suffering, with the experience of 'benevolence'. This association allows individuals to vividly understand the pain caused by a 'lack of benevolence'. As individuals awaken to the pursuit of virtue within their souls and recognize its embodiment in their physical being, the unity of body and soul is fulfilled, making the statement 'the soul is the body' not an overstatement.

Consequently, the vast cosmos, encompassing all phenomena and the diverse multitude of the common populace, integrates harmoniously, much like one's own body. Cheng Hao explains this synthesis, stating: 'When an individual achieves the pinnacle of benevolence, heaven and earth converge as one body, wherein all things and their manifold forms become the limbs and organs. Can there exist an individual who regards their own limbs and organs devoid of love?' (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 74) The anguish of all things resonates with the intensity felt in one's own body. By extending care for all things as for one's own body, a profound unity with heaven and earth is achieved. Cheng Hao's efforts to awaken individuals to their corporeal existence and revive the spiritual essence within bodily sensations are closely related to his critique of Buddhism:

> Unaware of this profound insight, the Buddhist tradition strives to detach from the physical body, yet the inevitable connection to corporeal existence evokes repulsion. It seeks to eliminate worldly attachments and calm the restless mind, aspiring to resemble lifeless ashes and withered wood. Yet, the principle it seeks to embody is non-existent, as its existence would only signify a state of death. In reality, the Buddhist tradition is rooted in an attachment to the physical body, an incapacity to relinquish it, and therefore employs various discourses to justify its position.[8] (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 34)

According to Cheng Hao, Buddhism unnaturally severs the connection between the six sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind) and their corresponding objects (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, and mental objects). Buddhism seeks to 'eradicate all worldly attachments' and adopts a stance of rejection towards the physical body. As a result, the body becomes like 'withered wood and dead ashes', disconnected from the external world. Buddhism's rejection of the body stems from concerns about bodily sensations disturbing the mind. Cheng Hao's insight is in identifying the core of this resistance. Instead of transcending the body, Buddhism essentially struggles with its inability to let go of the body, reflecting an 'attachment to the body'.[9]

Cheng Hao views the human body as an ordinary component within the vast cosmos, intricately connected to the fabric of existence. He argues that if the body is seen as an ordinary entity among the myriad phenomena of heaven and earth, one must ask what true impediment it presents. Given its various forms, how can the body be susceptible to harm? Cheng Hao asserts that the Buddhist concept of suffering, rooted in worldly attachments, arises only when one clings to self-centeredness and egoism (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 30).

The Buddhist tradition perceives the body as a hindrance to the attainment of Buddhahood. However, Cheng Hao offers a reconceptualization of the body's significance. He argues that Buddhists suffer from worldly attachments because they cannot transcend the body's inherent self-centeredness, which manifests as selfishness. In contrast, Cheng Hao emphasizes the 'communal nature' of the body, advocating its integration as a shared element in the cosmic order. By perceiving the body as communal, it no longer impedes the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. Freed from the physical form's constraints, individuals attain a state of bliss. However, the complexity of Cheng Hao's philosophy lies in this aspect. On one hand, the body belongs to the individual 'self', yet Cheng Hao emphasizes its 'communal' dimension. The key question is how the body can both belong to the individual and have a communal essence. If 'communal' and 'self' are contradictory, the critical question is whether communal implies 'selflessness'. If so, the

communal nature of the body risks aligning with Buddhist ideology. Consequently, Cheng Hao faces a dilemma. He must, on one hand, assert the 'communal body' to challenge Buddhism's rejection of the physical form, while on the other hand, he must ensure that the 'communal body' does not converge with the concept of 'selflessness'. Understanding Cheng Hao's philosophy in this context requires distinguishing between 'self' (*zi*) and 'oneself' (*ji*). Cheng Hao argues that the benevolent person sees heaven, earth, and all things as interconnected, with nothing separate from oneself. Recognizing everything as part of oneself eliminates boundaries; without the notion of self, no connection to oneself exists (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 33). Cheng Hao uses the analogy of hands and feet, arguing that without benevolence, they lose vitality and no longer belong to oneself (Cheng & Cheng, 1981, p. 33).

The distinction between self (*zi*) and oneself (*ji*) highlights two contrasting modes of subjective cognition and their corresponding worldviews. The former begins from the perspective of the individual self, perceiving the external world as separate and disconnected. In contrast, the latter, from the perspective of 'oneself', recognizes that everything in heaven and earth belongs to oneself. Embracing the idea that 'everything belongs to me' establishes a deep and intrinsic connection with oneself. This connection enables the self to transcend its limited individuality, undergoing a transformation that embodies the virtue of benevolence.

According to Cheng Hao, the notion of 'oneself' neither implies possession over external entities nor imposes the self's narrow perspective on them. Rather, it entails an intimate connection between the self and the joys and sorrows of all things, transcending individuality and creating a profound resonance with one's being. Through this process, the self becomes intertwined with the joys and sorrows of all things, transcending its inherent limitations and approaching the realm of the boundless. It is through this transformative process that the true nature of humanity is revealed. Cheng Hao's unique contribution is his attribution of both individual and communal characteristics to the 'self', presenting a nuanced form of subjective thinking distinct from Buddhist perspectives.

In conclusion, the Cheng brothers held differing perspectives on the perception and engagement with bodily sensations. Cheng Hao emphasized the significance of the human body and its sensory faculties, advocating for the expansion of moral consciousness to achieve a harmonious integration of body and mind. This integration facilitates a profound communion between moral consciousness and bodily sensations and activities, culminating in a dynamic and harmonious state of being. In contrast, Cheng Yi adopted a more cautious stance toward the perception and dynamic nature of bodily sensations, and emphasized less on the integration of perception.

Conclusion: Divergent paths to achieving oneness through internal affectivity in the Cheng Brothers' thought and their varied engagements with Buddhism

The analysis presented above highlights the Cheng Brothers' neo-Confucian responses to the question, 'How can one attain oneness through internal affectivity?' I argue that both philosophers provide divergent answers. Cheng Yi asserts that the theory of internal affectivity involves the internal origin of the driving force behind 'affectivity', with the manifestation of good and evil dependent on one's inner

nature. However, he also recognizes the inherent volatility of the human mind, its susceptibility to various influences, and the need for caution regarding human desires. Consequently, he places significant emphasis on distinguishing between the already manifested and the yet-to-manifest, underscoring the importance of cultivating the pre-manifested state of mind to achieve oneness. The tension between the proactive nature of innate goodness and the vigilance required to manage human desires is a central element of Cheng Yi's thought. His emphasis on vigilance and his somewhat pessimistic view of human nature underscore the proactive emergence of innate goodness and the need to discern between these two states of human nature.

In contrast to Cheng Yi, Cheng Hao's understanding of internal affectivity centers on communication with the perceptive domain within oneself. Cheng Hao argues that both goodness and evil exist within the vital energy (*qi*) and align with heavenly principles. This optimistic view, which contrasts with Cheng Yi's perspective, suggests that goodness and evil are 'relative and interchangeable'. Cheng Hao believes that by awakening bodily sensations and transforming one's temperament, one can quickly attain a state of 'benevolence where all things in heaven and earth are unified'. This state harmonizes the inner and outer realms. Cheng Hao supports the notion of 'cultivating benevolence through perception'. Conversely, Cheng Yi, due to his wariness of the human mind, rejects the idea of 'cultivating benevolence through perception'.[10] Consequently, Cheng Yi's emphasis on the proactive nature of the inner self reflects his more pessimistic view of human nature compared to Cheng Hao's.

While both Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao share the common objective of restoring the universality of the connection between heaven and earth through their theory of internal affectivity, their responses to Buddhism differ, leading to distinct theoretical frameworks. Cheng Yi criticizes Buddhism for fostering a passive, negative, and retroactive relationship with the world, which results in detachment from worldly concerns and a diminished capacity to empathize with sentient beings. He seeks to counter this negativity by emphasizing the proactive emergence of innate goodness from within. In contrast, Cheng Hao critiques Buddhism's non-naturalistic approach, which isolates the six senses from the six dusts and aims to eliminate attachments to the material world. He argues that this perspective ultimately desolates the body, severing its connection with the external world. Therefore, Cheng Hao focuses on restoring awareness of the body and views bodily sensations as a means to achieve the unity of all things. Thus, while both Cheng brothers aim to counter the illusory nature of the world and re-establish the connection between heaven and earth, Cheng Yi emphasizes the proactive emergence of innate goodness, whereas Cheng Hao highlights the importance of bodily sensations in achieving unity.

Notes

1. This work was supported by a grant from John Templeton Foundation, awarded via the Global Philosophy of Religion Project (GPRP). The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of John Templeton Foundation or the GPRP.
2. 'Affectivity' (*gantong*) is a core concept of moral practice in Confucianism. It refers 'to open oneself to and be affected by the spiritual, human, and natural beings in the surrounding

world' (Wang, 2012, p. 463). Neo Confucianists in the Song and Ming Dynasties paid special attention to this concept. Notably, the Cheng Brothers played a pivotal role in further refining and advancing it by introducing the concept of 'internal affectivity'. The term 'internal affectivity' refers to the source of affectivity originating within an individual. However, the Cheng brothers offer divergent interpretations of what precisely constitutes this 'internal' aspect.

3. Huang Yong contends that the Cheng brothers share a general similarity in their perspectives on the issue of morality (Huang, 2008, p. 322). This paper argues for a more nuanced understanding of this viewpoint. Within the context of Huang's examination of the question 'Why be moral?' the perspectives of the Cheng brothers converge. However, when considering the discourse in this paper on achieving oneness and morality, the two brothers demonstrate divergent approaches in their moral practices.
4. The proposition 'abiding in profound tranquillity and stillness while swiftly permeating upon the arousal of affectivity' originates from *the Book of Changes*, whereas the concept of 'neutralization' is a discourse found in *the Doctrine of the Mean*.
5. Wong Wai-Ying conducted a comprehensive analysis in her research on the origin of evil in the philosophical thought of the Cheng brothers. However, the study lacks differentiation between the ethical viewpoints of Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao. The author asserts that both philosophers attribute an equal metaphysical standing to good and bad (Wong, 2009, p. 143). Nevertheless, this assertion is specifically applicable to Cheng Hao's ethical stance and does not align with the philosophical concepts put forth by Cheng Yi.
6. This citation emanates from an excerpt located within Volume 1, Passage 56, of the '*Posthumous Works by the Cheng Brothers*' (*ercheng yishu*). The meticulous collation conducted by Jin Hongshui substantiates that a total of fourteen distinct sources, spanning from the ancient '*Exegesis on the Mencius*' *(Mengzi Jingyi*) penned by Zhu Xi to the contemporary '*Substance of Mind and Substance of Human Nature*' (*Xinti yu Xingti*) authored by Mou Zongsan, unambiguously attribute this specific excerpt to the discursive domain of Cheng Hao (Jin, 2005, p. 43).
7. For instance, many disciples of Zhu Xi were greatly perplexed by this thought (cf, Zhu et al., 2002, pp. 3270–3271).
8. This citation originates from an excerpt situated within Volume 2 of the '*Posthumous Works by the Cheng Brothers*' (*ercheng yishu*). The assiduous collation undertaken by Jin Hongshui establishes that a cumulative count of six distinct sources, encompassing Zhuxi, Li Chunfu, Tang Hezheng, Sun Chengze, Mou Zongsan, and Pang Wanli, unambiguously ascribe this particular excerpt to the discursive domain of Cheng Hao (Jin, 2005, p. 45).
9. In connection with the preceding context, Cheng Yi's vigilant or even exclusionary stance toward perception stands in contrast to the attitude of Cheng Hao. From the perspective of bodily perception alone, Cheng Yi appears to exhibit a greater affinity with Buddhism. In contrast, Cheng Hao appears to exhibit a heightened awareness of the tendency of individuals to devalue the physical body due to the influence of Buddhism.
10. In the realm of the correlation between perception and benevolence, Zhu Xi embraced the doctrinal stance advanced by Cheng Yi, while conversely, Shang Cai aligned with the interpretative paradigm set forth by Cheng Hao. It is noteworthy that Zhu Xi directly criticized Shangcai's thought on 'cultivating benevolence through perception'. For pertinent studies, please consult Li (2012, pp. 82–91).

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