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TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF *DE*
IN THE *DAODEJING*

In his essay, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," Philip J. Ivanhoe responds to D. C. Lau's assertion that the concept of *de* "is not particularly important," in the *Daodejing* and argues that an understanding of *de* is indispensable for a full appreciation of the philosophy presented in the text.[1] In "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," Roger T. Ames also argues against Lau's assertion, writing that the Daoist concept of *de* has been "severely undervalued" in both later commentary and in present understandings of Daoism.[2] However, the similarities between Ivanhoe's and Ames's analyses end with their agreement that an understanding of *de* is essential for an understanding of the *Daodejing*, because they arrive at dramatically different conclusions in their interpretations of the concept. This article compares the methods and aims that inform their interpretations of *de* and examines how consistently their professed or implied methodologies are followed. I argue that Ivanhoe's and Ames's methods of doing comparative philosophy result in contrasting interpretations of *de*.

While there has been general agreement about the translation of *dao* as "Way," the "underlying and unifying *pattern* beneath the play of events,"[3] there has been considerable disagreement about the translation of *de*. Lau writes, "*De* means 'virtue' . . . In its Daoist usage, *de* refers to the virtue of a thing (which is what it 'gets' from the *dao*). In other words, *de* is the nature of a thing, because it is in virtue of its *de* that a thing is what it is. But in the *Daodejing* the term is . . . often used in its more conventional senses."[4] Wing-tsit Chan concurs with Lau's translation of *de* as "virtue," but Arthur Waley translates *de* as "power," emphasizing the way in which one with *de* has influence or moral force.[5] James Legge translates *de* as "attributes" and writes, "It is not easy to render [*de*] here by any other English term than 'virtue,' and yet there would be a danger of its thus misleading us in the interpretation . . ."[6] Legge's concerns about interpretation are warranted, and Waley is correct in his observation that

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de carries the connotations of moral force, but neither Ivanhoe nor Ames agrees with their translations.

I. Ames on *De* as Particularity

In "Putting the *Te* Back in Taoism," Ames describes *de* as "the Daoist conception of particularity."[7] By combining several strands of philological data, Ames concludes that *de* is "importantly defined as an event, 'arising' or 'presencing,'" the "transforming content and disposition of an existent: an autogenerative, self-construed 'arising.'"[8] Here, and throughout the essay, Ames uses the vocabulary of Western process philosophy to describe the concept of *de*. *De*, according to Ames, is the coming-into-being of an individual. It is a metaphysical feature of living organisms.[9] "Presencing" refers to the Whiteheadian concept of concrescence, the coming-into present being from the past. The principle of concretion is what makes something concrete as a particular in relation to others.[10]

Ames says classical Chinese philosophical reflection was committed to a kind of "process cosmology."[11] He writes that *de*

> at a fundamental cosmological level, denotes the arising of the particular in a process vision of existence. The particular is the unfolding of a *sui generis* focus of potency that embraces and determines conditions within the range and parameters of its particularity . . . for the classical Chinese philosopher, the world of particulars is alive in the sense that they are aware of and hence 'feel' or 'prehend' other particulars in their environment.[12]

Ames also argues that *de* should be understood in relation to *dao*. Ames writes that the principle necessary for understanding this relation is polarity, in which "each 'pole' can be explained by reference to the other . . . As we discover immediately on opening the [*Daodejing*], conceptual polarity has its correlative sets of terminologies which are applied in explanation of the dynamic cycles and processes of existence . . ."[13] Ames says *de* is used both to denote a particular aspect of the *dao* and to denote the whole. He refers to *dao* and *de* as "field and focus," because "*Dao* is the defining condition—the context or environment—for the particular *de*."[14] He says, "When disclosing its uniqueness and difference, it is apprehended as a particular *de*; when considered in terms of the full complement and consequence of its determining conditions, it constitutes its own whole."[15]

According to Ames, *de* unifies all particulars. His discussion is reminiscent of the Buddhist notion of inter-subjectivity or inter-being: with each individuation, the whole is included; in each self, all other

selves are included; in each particular, the whole is contained.[16] Ames tells us that when *de* is cultivated, it fully expresses the whole, and "the distinction between *dao* and *de* collapses and *de* becomes both an individuating concept and an integrating concept." Ames writes that the difference between *dao* and *de* is only a matter of degree.[17] *De*, then, is a principle of individuation when it is a particular event in the *dao*, and it is a principle of integration when it is a "holograph of this underlyling harmony, diffusing in all directions in coloration of the whole . . ."[18] Ames blurs the distinction between process philosophy and inter-subjectivity, utilizing both sorts of language simultaneously to describe his interpretation of *de*: "[One' s] presencing in the world is colored by the *de* of his whole environment extending out to embrace ultimately all of existence . . . To the extent that he embraces the *de* of the whole within his particularity, he is integrated and efficacious at whatever he does."[19]

II. Ivanhoe on *De* as Virtue

Ivanhoe translates *de* as "virtue." In the commentary to his translation *The Daodejing of Laozi*, Ivanhoe writes that Daoists are an unusual type of ethical realist. He claims that pre-reflective tendencies, instead of self-conscious policies or principles, guide the Daoist sage, for whom there is no conflict between what is ethical and what one naturally would do.[20] If we follow Ivanhoe's reading, then we can readily appreciate why unhewn wood (*pu*) is a Daoist illustration for the ideal person. Daoist practice is directed toward returning to an uncarved state, where individuals follow their prereflective tendencies, as opposed to carving themselves into a shape dictated by cultured society, one believed to overcome the imperfections of their original state.[21]

However, the return to a natural way of acting does not mean "doing nothing," and neither does it mean "acting without regard for self or others." According to Ivanhoe, the Daoist perspective is that "true and correct value judgments reflect objective features about the world, and they do not hesitate to criticize those who fail to accord with what is proper and fitting."[22] In addition, Daoists think that for most humans, it is not easy to act in accord with the *dao*, and we must come to a different understanding of ourselves and the world in order to accord with the "natural" patterns and processes of the *dao*. Daoists hold that our understanding and articulation of true values is incomplete and flawed, but Ivanhoe cautions that we should not take this as implying a rejection of a normative *dao* for the world. Although the moral fabric of the *dao* is ineffable, "this does

not mean either that it does not exist or that we cannot understand it."[23]

By following prereflective tendencies such as openness, individuals can "discern and harmonize with the patterns and processes of the *dao*," and *de* is generated. *De* accrues to those who possess calmness, compassion, and confidence. It is a power capable of attracting, disarming, reassuring, and pacifying others, while enabling the sage to move others to "abandon the insanity of normal society and return without coercion to the peace, contentment, and prosperity of the *dao*."[24]

In "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," Ivanhoe argues that the view of *de* in the *Daodejing* shares several important characteristics with an earlier Confucian notion of *de*. He discusses three distinctive characteristics of *de*, the first of which is its attractive power. The Daoist sage "draws people toward him and wins their allegiance by placing himself below them, welcoming all and putting them at ease."[25] The *Daodejing* uses the metaphors of the valley and water (which naturally flows downward) to illustrate this ideal, because putting oneself below others is not only the action of one with *de*, but also increases and perfects one' s *de*. The Confucian sage also attracts others but "is like the Pole Star, which remains in its place while all the myriad stars pay homage to it."[26] The Daoist sage, on the other hand, is "upright but not imposing, shining but not dazzling."[27]

The second characteristic Ivanhoe notices is the effect of *de* on other persons and on nature itself. Ivanhoe writes, "The Daoist path of spiritual improvement is one of paring away or relieving unnatural, distorting, and deforming influences and ideas and restoring original vitality and health."[28] While the Confucian *de* seeks to educate and cultivate people, the Daoist *de* seeks to unravel and settle them. Thus, it has a "therapeutic effect" on others, because in the *Daodejing* whatever is "still" naturally has the *de* to settle that which is restless.[29]

According to Ivanhoe, a third characteristic of *de* in the *Daodejing* is the close relationship between *de* and *wuwei* ("nonaction") in governing the people.[30] Daoist rulers cultivate a still mind, which generates *de* and enables them to attract others and help them to give up "false beliefs and artificial practices that interfere with the spontaneous functioning of their natures."[31] In fact, the *Daodejing* tells us something just the opposite from what we expect. Self-conscious appreciation of what creates and constitutes "virtue" is a mark of the decline of the *dao*. The virtuous person does not strive to be virtuous, for "Those who stand on tiptoe cannot stand firm."[32] As Ivanhoe says, "The actions of the truly virtuous arise spontaneously from their nature . . . but this does not mean they are inactive . . . *de* is the

'power' or 'virtue' that accrues to those who attain a peaceful, tenuous, still state of mind."[33] This leads to a *wuwei* ("non-active") form of government, because the power of *de* enables the Daoist ruler to rule through *wuwei*.[34]

III. Comparing Metaphors: The Infant and Water

One way of highlighting what is at stake in the difference between Ames's and Ivanhoe's interpretations of *de* is to see how they use their understandings to interpret the text. Ames and Ivanhoe both discuss two important metaphors used to describe *de* in the *Daodejing*. The first is the metaphor of the newborn infant. The *Daodejing* says, "One who possesses *de* in abundance is comparable to a new born babe; Poisonous insects will not sting it; Ferocious animals will not pounce on it; Predatory birds will not swoop down upon it. Its bones are weak and its sinews supple yet its hold is firm."[35] Ivanhoe writes that the use of this metaphor in Chapter fifty-five reveals the *Daodejing*'s rejection of an anthropocentric understanding of *de*: "For him the power that accrues to those who embrace the Way affects the whole world. Those who have cultivated an abundance of *de* 'virtue' are protected from natural harms. Not only people, but other creatures as well will honor and respect their special 'power.'"[36] For Ivanhoe, this passage is thoroughly metaphorical and shows that individuals with *de*—virtue—are protected from harm because the cultivation of *de* gives them moral force or power. This is not an over-bearing, aggressive power, but one that accrues to those who allow their natural tendencies to come to the forefront.

Ames interprets the metaphor of the infant in Chapter fifty-five quite differently: "The point here is that an infant with his 'oceanic feeling' does not distinguish himself from his environment. There is no circumspection or separation from his whole . . . because the infant is a matrix through which the full consequence of undiscriminated existence can be experienced, it can be used as a metaphor for the *de* which is *dao*."[37] Here Ames returns to his use of inter-subjectivity and argues that the infant is an example of beings who do not distinguish themselves from their environment, because even as particulars, they are in reality integrated with the whole. Ames also says "The baby here is described as having the highest degree of particular potency and as being entirely integrated in his environment such that 'poisonous insects will not sting him' . . ."[38] According to Ames's interpretation, the infant is not harmed by insects or other creatures because it is one with them. The metaphor shows that individuals with *de*—the Daoist conception of particularity—are fully integrated

with their environment, unable to distinguish themselves from the whole.

The infant metaphor also helps us understand the difference in Ames's and Ivanhoe's views on the relation between *dao* and *de*. Ames defines *de* in terms of *dao*, writing that the infant is a metaphor for "the *de* which is *dao*," because for Ames, *de* denotes a particular aspect of *dao*. When *de* is cultivated, "the distinction between *dao* and *de* collapses."[39] Ivanhoe, however, maintains a separation between the two concepts, quoting from the *Daodejing*: ". . . among the myriad creatures, none fail to revere the *dao* and honor *de*. But the *dao* is revered and *de* honored not because of some command but because this is naturally so."[40] The infant metaphor, for Ivanhoe, emphasizes the fact that *de* affects both humans and other living things. *All* creatures revere the *dao* and honor *de*. Ivanhoe does not argue that the distinction between *dao* and *de* eventually collapses, as Ames does. Later in the essay, he writes, "The actions of the truly virtuous arise spontaneously from their nature. They are not so much their actions as they are the *Dao* acting through them."[41] Instead of *de* denoting an aspect of *dao*, which indicates that one who possesses *de* also possesses *dao*, those with *de* allow the *dao* to act *through* them. Ivanhoe maintains the distinction between the two concepts, and he relies on the textual distinction to support his interpretation. Ames collapses the distinction between the two concepts, and his view that the notion of intersubjectivity reflects the meaning of *de* informs his interpretation.

The second metaphor in the *Daodejing* interpreted by both Ames and Ivanhoe is water. Ivanhoe quotes from Chapter sixty-six: "The reason why the River and the Sea are able to be king of the hundred valleys is that they excel in taking the lower position . . ."[42] Ivanhoe says this metaphor, like the metaphor of the valley, shows that those who put themselves last or below others increase and perfect their *de*: ". . . the draw of *de* is . . . the natural tendency of things to migrate down toward low, safe, and inviting terrain. The *de* of the Daoist sage is welcoming, accommodating, and nurturing . . ."[43] Ivanhoe writes that the actions of the sage are "spontaneous and natural: like the flowing of water or the falling of timely rain."[44]

Ames also discusses the Daoist understanding of the water metaphor, but he relies on the text of the *Zhuangzi* for his interpretation. He quotes the following passage from the *Zhuangzi*: "Placidity is the highest state of water at rest, and can be used as a gauge or measure. Within it retains this condition, and is undisturbed from without. *De* is the completion of the cultivation of harmony. That *de* does not assume a shape is because things are inseparable from it."[45] Ames argues that this passage defines *de* as both determinate and indeterminate. He writes, "On the one hand, water at rest is so plane

that it can be used for measurement; on the other, it is utterly fluid and indeterminate. *De* is similar. It functions to constitute a determinate and identifiable harmony—a regularity and rhythm. But then, given that it cannot be abstracted from context, it is fluid with no fixed determinateness."[46] While Ivanhoe and Ames both argue that the metaphor of water informs our understanding of *de*, they emphasize different aspects of the metaphor. Ivanhoe discusses the downward motion of water as similar to the sage with *de*, who places himself in the lower position. Ames discusses the fact that water is both fluid and at rest, similar to the way *de* is indeterminate and yet has a definite regularity. Ivanhoe's interpretation has primarily moral import, while Ames's has a metaphysical emphasis.

Their discussion of the water metaphor illumines another important difference. Ivanhoe's discussion of *de* focuses entirely on the text of the *Daodejing*, except for the final section of his essay, which is devoted to a brief discussion of *de* in the *Zhuangzi*. He maintains that in addition to the more obvious similarities, there are significant enough differences between *de* in the *Daodejing* and *de* in the *Zhuangzi* to merit separate discussions. For example, he writes, "For both Zhuangzi and Confucius, other people are attracted to the sage as an individual. The sage we encounter in the *Laozi*—like the text itself—is anonymous."[47] In contrast, Ames uses the texts of the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* in his analysis and moves between them freely, indicating his view that there is a consistent notion of *de* in the two texts.

IV. COMPARING METHODOLOGIES

Ivanhoe and Ames are among the most prolific living philosophers working on comparisons between Chinese philosophical traditions and those of the West. Both are issuing new translations of classical texts, in addition to commentaries and essays such as those discussed here. A substantial question is why they have such divergent interpretations of a concept such as *de*. Any attempt to answer this question must pay extensive attention to the methodology used by each philosopher. The methodologies employed by Ivanhoe and Ames are heavily informed by their respective understandings of their tasks as comparative philosophers.

Ivanhoe situates his comparison within the tradition of classical Chinese philosophy, and he considers the Daoist conception of *de* in relation to an earlier Confucian conception. He maintains that *de* takes on "a genuinely ethical sense," and he argues that in the *Daodejing*, we see a "related but significantly distinct conception of *de*."[48]

Ivanhoe notices characteristics that are present in both Confucian and
Daoist understandings of *de* but then shows the differences in the way
these characteristics are manifested and understood in each tradition.
Although he notes the differences between the two understandings
of *de*, he argues that it should be translated as "virtue" for both tra-
ditions and that the proper application of the concept is in the domain
of moral philosophy.

While Ames also acknowledges the contrast between traditional
Confucian and Daoist understandings of *de*, he says, "While a differ-
ent emphasis is apparent, I suggest that the radical nature of the dis-
tinction which they draw reflects different levels of meaning rather
than different conceptual content."[49] Here, Ames agrees with Ivanhoe
that the Confucian and Daoist notions of *de* are not entirely disparate.
However, Ames maintains that *de* is "specifically ethical" in the
Confucian *Analects*, whereas the Daoist discussion is "predominantly
a cosmological account of the transformational process of existence
where *de* is regarded as categorical: the presencing of a particular."
He writes that when we "draw out the social and political implica-
tions of *de* in the Daoist texts," the similarities between the Confu-
cian and Daoist notions of *de* become more apparent. Ames, then,
maintains that the social and political aspects, and consequently the
ethical aspects of *de* must be *drawn out* of the *Daodejing* by the
reader, while Ivanhoe maintains that the ethical aspects of *de* are
evident in the text, indeed, that *de is* an ethical concept. Although
both Ames and Ivanhoe maintain that one use of *de* is dominant in
the text, it seems clear that neither of them intend to argue that a
"genuinely ethical" concept does not have metaphysical implications,
or that a "predominantly cosmological account" does not have ethical
implications. Perhaps the different accounts offered here serve as a
reminder that the authors of the *Daodejing* likely had more than one
use for the concept of *de*.

Both Ivanhoe and Ames make use of traditions external to Daoism
in their attempt to describe the concept of *de*. Ivanhoe describes
Daoists as ethical realists, a category of the Western philosophical tra-
dition. In addition, Ivanhoe uses concepts from the Confucian tradi-
tion as a way of noticing similar concepts in the Daoist tradition. A
critical difference between the two interpretations is that while
Ivanhoe employs other traditions explicitly at given points in his
analysis, Ames systematically uses concepts external to the classical
Chinese tradition to inform his study. He uses the language of
Western process philosophy, and likewise appears to use Buddhist
concepts, as a conceptual frame for his interpretation of the Daoist
notion of *de*. In other words, he appropriates the concepts of other
traditions in order to describe a Daoist concept. Discussing *de* in his

translation of the *Analects* with Henry Rosemont, Ames says *de* "more nearly approximates *dharma* in signifying what we can do and be, if we 'realize (*zhi*)' the most from our personal qualities and careers as contextualized members of a specific community."[50] Given his reference to *dharma*, it appears that Ames's interpretation of the Confucian notion of *de* is also informed by Buddhist philosophy.

In his analysis of *de*, Ames's work as a comparative philosopher is not explicit, because he does not compare concepts from two traditions. Instead, he offers the concepts of one tradition as elements to inform the interpretation of concepts in another. This is different from comparing concepts in Western process philosophy or Buddhist philosophy with those of Daoism, because such a project should involve a discussion of the similarities and differences between the concepts and traditions being compared.

Ivanhoe's analysis is an explicit comparative and contrastive study of Confucian and Daoist understandings of *de*. His interpretation of *de* in the *Daodejing* differs from Ames not only because his comparison is contained within the tradition of classical Chinese philosophy but because his purpose is different. Ivanhoe argues that "an understanding of the concept of *de* is indispensable for a full appreciation of the philosophy presented in the [*Daodejing*]," and his purpose is to *describe* the concept of *de* by referring to the text of the *Daodejing* and discuss its relation to the philosophical project of the *Daodejing* as a whole.[51] He emphasizes the text and the historical context, offering a highly descriptive and tightly focused analysis. He directs his attention almost entirely to the *Daodejing*, with a brief comparison to the *Analects* and a separate section concerning the *Zhuangzi*.

Ames's project is not a descriptive one in this sense. He states his purpose in the following way: "In looking to the Daoist tradition, I *reconstruct* four concepts . . ."[52] Ames emphasizes the "correlative nature" of the four concepts of *de*, *dao*, *wuwei*, and *youwei* and writes that they should be explained by mutual reference: "we almost need to say all in order to say anything."[53] Ames describes his reconstructive approach here, and his methodology extends beyond these four concepts. His method is to explain one concept (the Daoist notion of *de*) by referring to correlative concepts in other traditions, such as Western process philosophy and Buddhist philosophy. But he does not compare these concepts to *de*. Instead, he describes *de* by using the language used by the Buddhist and process traditions to describe inter-subjectivity and concrescence.

In advocating the use of recently unearthed texts, Ames advocates a move away from the larger philosophical tradition in which a particular concept has been situated. He writes that the *Mawangdui* editions of the *Daodejing* unearthed in 1973 shed new light on the

structure of the *Daodejing*, because what has traditionally been regarded as the second half of the text, the *De jing*, precedes the first half, the *Dao jing* in this copy of the text. This reverses the order from versions of the *Daodejing* previously studied. Ames suggests that this reversal should direct our attention to the fact that *dao* should not be regarded as more important than *de*. In the introduction to his translation of the *Daodejing* with David Hall, Ames writes that recently unearthed manuscripts "provide us with an opportunity to resolve what have been persistent textual problems" because they contain "a wealth of grammatical particles that are not present in later versions, and that provide us with somewhat greater precision in our reading of the text."[54]

Ivanhoe's response to this issue is different from that of Ames. In the introduction to his translation of the *Daodejing*, he discusses the *Mawangdui* editions of the text, and writes that although "recently discovered versions of the text offer very helpful suggestions as to how to read particular lines and how one might interpret certain passages . . . there is nothing in them that conflicts with or alters our understanding of the core philosophical vision of the text used by the later and highly influential commentator Wang Bi."[55] Ivanhoe uses the Wang Bi text as the basis for his translation because "unlike the recently unearthed manuscripts, which were lost to later generations of readers, the Wang Bi text has served as the standard for around two thousand years. This version of the text generated the rich commentarial tradition that is an important part of the legacy of this Daoist classic . . ."[56] The question raised in the difference between Ames's and Ivanhoe's views of recently unearthed manuscripts is *which* legacy should inform our interpretation. Ames advocates a return to earlier versions of the text, following Lau's claim that this helps us to avoid "the scribal errors and editorial tamperings of a subsequent age."[57] Ivanhoe, on the other hand, believes we should consider the text in the form the "subsequent age" encountered it, and thus in the context of how understandings of it have developed in the larger tradition of Daoism.

Ivanhoe's and Ames's conclusions result from contrasting methods of doing comparative philosophy. Ivanhoe gives priority to the cultural and historical context surrounding the text, as well as to the commentarial tradition that has shaped current understandings of the text and concepts. Ivanhoe's analysis shows: (*1*) Confidence in the grounds for comparison between contrasting systems within the same tradition; (*2*) Willingness to make an underlying argument that there are significant discussions of what constitutes virtue in both the *Daodejing* and the *Analects*, and that here classical Chinese philosophers are doing something comparable to what Western philosophers do.

In contrast, Ames looks to the resources within other traditions in order to "reconstruct" the concept of *de* in a way that departs from previous understandings within the classical Chinese tradition. This methodology shows: (*1*) A high confidence in the transferability of terms used in one tradition to another tradition[58] ; (*2*) A belief in the ultimate commensurability between traditions, such that links can be drawn even between philosophical concepts such as *dharma*, *de*, and concrescence; (*3*) Willingness to make the underlying argument that one tradition can be enhanced by another if concepts from one are redescribed with reference to concepts from another.[59]

The most obvious difficulty with Ames's approach as it is manifested in his interpretation of *de* is his failure to discuss Western process philosophy and Buddhist inter-subjectivity directly. He uses the language of both traditions in his interpretation of *de*, and he continues to make use of them in his other work, but he does not cite sources or discuss them in the essay.[60] Because he does not directly discuss his appropriation of these concepts, he also does not address a number of substantial questions regarding translation and commensurability between philosophical systems that his analysis raises.[61]

Conclusion

We have compared the interpretations of the Daoist concept of *de* by Ivanhoe and Ames, and examined the contrast between Ivanhoe's understanding of *de* as virtue and Ames's understanding of *de* as particularity. Ames interprets *de* in terms of the Western process notion of concrescence and the Buddhist notion of inter-subjectivity, while Ivanhoe examines three characteristics of *de* that are discussed only in the *Daodejing*. Ames also looks to earlier versions of texts to inform a new interpretation and correct previous interpretations and commentaries. He calls this "reconstructing" the concept. Ivanhoe, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of the historical significance of the version of the text under study.

This difference points to the question of whether the goal of comparative philosophy is to understand the text as a living tradition, in the context of the way it has been understood and interpreted by others, or whether the goal is to understand a pure form of the text in the way it might have originally been intended. These goals also involve determining the extent to which there is a discrepancy between the text itself and the way it has been interpreted by the tradition. The degree of faith a philosopher has in his predecessors comes into play here, for it is important both to respond critically

and to have an appreciation for the contributions of previous commentators.[62]

It is equally important for comparative philosophers to find ways of improving our understanding of classical texts and to continue the dialogue concerning them. Both Ames and Ivanhoe are committed to doing so in their essays, but while Ivanhoe focuses on describing the text in relation to the classical Chinese tradition, Ames seeks to incorporate the ideas and concepts of other traditions. This points to another critical question in the methodology of comparative philosophy: to what extent is it methodologically sound to use concepts external to a given tradition as a means of interpretation? The question before us is whether or not such an approach produces a more accurate interpretation and translation of the concept under study.[63]

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Endnotes

1. Philip J. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," in *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*, edited by Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), p. 239.
2. Roger T. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, edited by J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p. 123. In this article, I have altered all Wade-Giles romanizations of Chinese terms ("te"; "tao") to pinyin ("de"; "dao") for consistency.
3. *The Daodejing of Laozi*, translated by Philip J. Ivanhoe (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2002), p. 239 n.2.
4. *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*, translated by D. C. Lau (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 42.
5. *The Lao Tzu (Tao-te ching)*, translated by Wing-Tsit Chan, in *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 139–176. *Laozi*, translated by Arthur Waley (Hunan: Hunan People' s Publishing House, 1999).
6. *The Tao Teh King*, in *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Taoism, Part I*, translated by James Legge (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), pp. 80–81.
7. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," p. 123.
8. Ibid., p. 124.
9. Ames retains this view in his more recent work with David Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant."* Ames and Hall write that *de* connotes the "insistent particularity" of things: "Given the intrinsic relatedness of particulars in this conception of existence as process, *de* is both process and product—both the potency and the achieved character of any particular disposition within the unsummed totality of experience. *Dao* and *de* are related as field and focus respectively." (Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant": A Philosophical Translation* [New York: Ballantine Books, 2003], p. 60.)
10. Although Ames makes heavy use of process language, he does not cite Whitehead, nor does he make any reference to process philosophy in this essay. However, in other places he discusses his use of Whitehead. For example, he discusses his appropriation of the Whiteheadian vocabulary in relation to the *Daodejing* in *Daodejing: "Making This Life Significant,"* pp. 29–31. See also Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), pp. 16–17.

11. Ames does not mean to say that classical Chinese philosophy was some precursor to what we know as the movement of Process Philosophy in the West, only that it is a process, not a static cosmology.
12. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back Into Taoism," p. 125.
13. Ibid., p. 120. It is interesting that Ames is very deliberate in setting *dao* and *de* as "poles" of the cosmological process, since dipolarity is a central concept in Whiteheadian metaphysics. Although, admittedly, Whitehead's physical and mental poles of objects are probably something different from what Ames means, the language is very close. Whitehead holds that each pole in his system can be explained in reference to the other. (See Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* [New York: Macmillan, 1929], pp. 42, 59, 128, 280, 285, 322, 407 and *A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality*, edited by Donald Sherburne [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966], pp. 46–48 and 228–229.)
14. Ibid., p. 132. Ames reiterates this view in *Focusing the Familiar*: "The central issue of the Daodejing—literally, 'the classic of *de* and its *dao*'—is how the particular brings its field most productively and effectively into focus." (Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong*, p. 65.)
15. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," p. 127.
16. Although Ames appears to make use of this concept, he does not cite any Buddhist texts or concepts in the essay. An awareness of the inter-being of all things is the result of *vipasyana* (insight or looking deeply). The true nature of an object in Buddhist metaphysics is that it can reflect everything else in the cosmos. When we look into the being of a flower, we see clouds, sunshine, minerals, time, and the earth. When we see a criminal with *vipasyana* we see ourselves, etc. Cf. Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (New York: Grove Press, 1959), pp. 1–16; the *Satipatthana-sutra* (The Presence of Mindfulness) in Rahula, 109ff; and for an interesting application of this Buddhist idea comparatively, see Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha*, *Living Christ* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), pp. 10–12, 47–48, 153–154, 184–185.
17. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," p. 128.
18. Ibid., p. 129.
19. Ibid., p. 131.
20. *The Daodejing of Laozi*, translated by Ivanhoe, p. xxii.
21. Here we see most clearly the difference between Confucianism, which seeks to "carve" and "cultivate" the individual, and Daoism which desires to return the person to a natural state.
22. *The Daodejing of Laozi*, translated by Ivanhoe, p. xx.
23. Ibid., p. xx.
24. Ibid., pp. xxvi–xxvii.
25. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," p. 242.
26. *Analects* 2.1.
27. *The Daodejing of Laozi*, translated by Ivanhoe, p. 58.
28. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," p. 245.
29. Ibid, pp. 245–246.
30. Here I follow Ivanhoe's rendering of *wuwei* as "nonaction." Edward Slingerland makes an excellent case for "effortless action" as a more accurate translation in his study of the concept in Warring States thought. See Edward Slingerland, *Effortless Action: Wu-wei as a Conceptual Metaphor and Spiritual Ideal in Early China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
31. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," p. 247.
32. *The Daodejing of Laozi*, trans. Ivanhoe, Chapter 24. See also Chapter 18, n. 41.
33. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," p. 249.
34. Ibid., pp. 247–249.
35. *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*, translated by D. C. Lau, Chapter 55. Ivanhoe uses Lau's translation of the *Daodejing* primarily in his essay, with a few exceptions where he specifies that he is using his own translation. Ames does not tell the reader which translation he is quoting from in his essay. I quote from Lau's translation as Ivanhoe does, but I leave *de* untranslated in each instance for the reader.

36. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," p. 244.
37. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," p. 128.
38. Ibid., p. 134.
39. Ibid., pp. 127–128.
40. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," p. 243. Ivanhoe quotes from his own translation of Chapter 51.
41. Ibid., p. 249.
42. Ibid., p. 243, Lau's translation.
43. Ibid., p. 243.
44. Ibid., p. 248.
45. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," p. 129. Ames cites Burton Watson's translation of *Zhuangzi* 2/1/32 and 12/5/8 *in The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).
46. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," p. 129. Sarah Allan seems to favor Ames's interpretation in her discussion of *de*: "As we have already seen this 'process vision of existence' is the *dao* which is rooted in water imagery. *De* as the '*sui generis* focus of potency' is that which gives people their particular forms." (Sarah Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1997], p. 102)
47. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," p. 251.
48. Ibid., pp. 240–242.
49. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," p. 124.
50. Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation, A New Translation Based on the Dingzhou Fragments and Other Recent Archaeological Finds* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), p. 57.
51. Ivanhoe, "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*," p. 239.
52. Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," p. 121. Italics mine.
53. Ibid., 122.
54. Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing "Making This Life Significant,"* p. 74. In their translation of the *Daodejing*, Ames and Hall use a conflation of the two Mawangdui versions of the text as their basic text, but write that they "have also consulted and taken advantage of" the Guodian bamboo strips discovered in 1993 and the received Wang Bi text. In his translation of the *Analects* with Henry Rosemont, Ames also emphasizes the importance of recently unearthed texts by including the fragments discovered at Dingzhou.
55. *The Daodejing of Laozi*, trans. Ivanhoe, xvi. The text of Wang Bi dates from 249 C.E. and it has been the standard manuscript for modern translations. For a study of the comparison between the Mawangdui text and the Wang Bi version, see Robert G. Henricks, *Te-Tao Ching: Laotzu* (New York: The Modern Library, 1993). Henricks adds "Comments and Notes" to each chapter comparing the two texts.
56. Ibid., p. xvi.
57. Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing "Making This Life Significant,"* p. 74.
58. "Presencing" and "prehend" are two examples in Ames's essay.
59. Bryan W. Van Norden writes that Ames takes what he calls the "radical view," in part due to his discussion of the deep chasm between the concepts and texts of Western philosophy and Chinese philosophy. I hold that a tension exists in Ames's work, which sometimes presupposes a strong commensurability between traditions, and sometimes emphasizes a chasm that is nearly impossible to cross. It is difficult to tell which side Ames ultimately comes down on, and so for the purposes of this paper I focus strictly on what he has written about the Daoist notion of *de*. (Bryan W. Van Norden, "What Should Western Philosophy Learn From Chinese Philosophy?" in *Chinese Language, Thought, and Culture*, edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe [Chicago: Open Court, 1996], pp. 233–235.)
60. In *Focusing the Familiar*, Ames writes, ". . . we have employed a language of process in order to illumine the context and arguments of the Zhongyong . . . Our argument is simple and direct: The use of substance language to translate Chinese insights into a world of process and change has led to seriously inappropriate interpretations of the Chinese sensibility . . . The virtue of the work of A. N. Whitehead and other representatives of the process tradition is that they have attempted to introduce onto-

logical understandings that would allow for the appreciation of the role of true creativity in shaping the processes and events that comprise the world around us." (Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing the Familiar: A Translation and Philosophical Interpretation of the Zhongyong*, pp. 7, 14. See also p. 6 n.2.) In *Thinking Through Confucius*, Ames writes, "We might appropriately employ a model drawn from Chinese Buddhism, provided we are careful to make the necessary qualifications . . . the "reciprocal focusing" illustrated by Fa Tsang's Hall of Mirrors is characteristic of the classical Chinese language . . . And though we certainly grant that Confucius had little interest in explicating the cosmological implications of his thinking, we would claim that were he to have done so, his vision would not have been radically distinct from that of the Taoist or Huan-yen Buddhist." (David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1987], pp. 239–240.)

61. These questions include whether Ames believes terms such as "prehends" and "presencing" are translations of Daoist concepts, and if so, which concepts they are translations of.

62. Ames writes that the Daoist school of classical Chinese philosophy "has been done a profound disservice by being misnamed in the tradition." He goes on to say that the historian Ssu-ma T'an should have been deferred to when he referred to Taoism as "the school of dao and de" rather than the commonly used "school of dao." Ames does not discuss the reasons why "the school of dao" (*dao jiao*) has prevailed as the handle for the tradition. (Ames, "Putting the *Te* Back into Taoism," pp. 122–123.)

63. I would like to thank Jeffrey Dippman, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Ronnie Littlejohn, Henry Rosemont, Jr., Stuart Rosenbaum, participants of the Conference on Daoism and the Contemporary World (Boston University, June 5–7, 2003), and a JCP article referee for helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this article.

CHINESE GLOSSARY

dao	道	pu	樸
Dao Jing	《道經》	*Wang Bi*	王弼
de	德	wu wei	無為
De Jing	《德經》	you wei	有為
Ma Wang Dui	馬王堆	*Zhuang Zi*	莊子