PSC

S Sage

Zhuangzi and ideological state apparatuses

Michael Hemmingsen (iD)
Tunghai University, Taiwan

Abstract

Louis Althusser is perhaps most well-known for his concept of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISAs). However, Althusser is not clear about what role, if any, ISAs play in a post-capitalist society. At times, Althusser talks about ISAs (and the state) withering; at other times, they are merely reformed. Sometimes, ISAs are described as having an inescapable repressive dimension; on other occasions, they are a perfectly acceptable tool for the reproduction of socialism. In this paper, I offer a way of thinking through this confusion that draws on the thought of the Daoist philosopher, Zhuangzi. I argue that Zhuangzian friendship represents a kind of radical equality that is reproducible *without* the traditional kind of ideological interpellation of ISAs, thereby allowing Althusser explain post-capitalist ideological reproduction. It is worth noting that in this paper, I am not engaging in a textual exegesis of the *Zhuangzi*. My primary interest is in using the contemporary literature on the *Zhuangzi* to think through a problem in Althusser's philosophical system.

Introduction

Louis Althusser is perhaps most well-known for his concept of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISAs), and his description of how these apparatuses reproduce a mode of production through ideological interpellation rather than coercion. However, Althusser is not clear about what role, if any, ISAs play in a post-capitalist society. At times Althusser

Corresponding author:
Michael Hemmingsen, International College, Tunghai University, No. 1727, Sec. 4, Taiwan Boulevard, Taichung 40704, Taiwan.
Email: mhemmingsen@thu.edu.tw

talks about ISAs (and the state) withering; at other times they are merely reformed. Sometimes ISAs are described as having an inescapable repressive dimension; on other occasions they are a perfectly acceptable tool for the reproduction of socialism and/or communism. However, if a mode of production is to be reproduced, either ISAs or some other mechanism must accomplish this. If ISAs necessarily have a repressive function (as Althusser sometimes seems to suggest), then ISAs appear to be incompatible with post-capitalism. But if not ISAs, then what?

In this paper I develop a way of thinking about post-capitalist reproduction that draws on thought of the Daoist philosopher, Zhuangzi. I argue that Zhuangzian friendship represents a kind of radical equality that is reproducible *without* the traditional kind of ideological interpellation of ISAs; specifically, with horizontal rather than vertical interpellation (Rehman 2013). The Zhuangzian concept of friendship can help us to understand how this form of horizontal interpellation can reproduce a communist mode of production without the repression inherent in ISAs and their vertical interpellation.

It is important at this point, however, to be clear about my approach in this project. My interest is in identifying a problem in Althusser's thought that is unsolved (the role post-capitalist ISAs and social reproduction in communism). I note that there are some significant philosophical parallels between Althusser and Zhuangzi, most especially when it comes to issues related to ISAs and social reproduction, and I ask whether the philosophical moves that Zhuangzi makes in that context might also help us to productively think through this difficulty in Althusser. My primary interest in the *Zhuangzi* in this paper is therefore the ways in which it can help us to think through a problem in Althusser's philosophical system. While the reading of the *Zhuangzi* should be rooted in some way in the text (otherwise why talk about Zhuangzi in the first place?), my foremost concern is in employing interpretations of Zhuangzian concepts to think about the aforementioned problem in new ways, rather than strict textual exegesis. This may involve adapting Zhuangzi or moving beyond the text in certain respects. Most especially, I am not making strong claims about the parallels between Zhuangzi and Althusser: I certainly do not argue that Althusser is a crypto-Daoist, or that Zhuangzi is a proto-Marxist. Rather, I merely note specific areas where their thought dovetails, areas that it might be productive – in the context of developing an adequate and defensible account of Althusser – to explore.

Ideological state apparatuses

In Althusser's view, a mode of production can only be maintained if both the material conditions of production (e.g., the productive forces) *as well as* the existing relations of production are reproduced (2014: 48). Reproducing the material conditions of production is, while practically challenging, at least somewhat straightforward in principle: it is merely a technical process. However, those who operate within a mode of production must also learn the 'rules' of good behaviour, that is, 'rules of *respect* for the social and technical division of labour, and, in the final analysis, the rules of *the order established by class domination*' (2014, 51). They must learn how to *behave* in the 'reality' of the system in which they exist: to accept and even *approve of* the system as it is presented to them.

This is a matter of reproducing the *relations* of production, and Althusser argues that this is done via what he refers to as 'state apparatuses'.

State apparatuses come in two forms. First, repressive state apparatuses (RSAs), such as the police, courts, army and so on, act through force or the threat of force to make certain that citizens abide by the law and the established social order.

Second, and more important, are the apparatuses that teach people to abide by the 'rules of respect' due to their *obviousness*. In other words, the reproduction of the relations of production relies in the first instance not on repression but on *ideology*. It is ideology that, as Althusser puts it, 'brings off the feat of making things and people "go all by themselves"' (2014, 93). 'Ideological state apparatuses' (ISAs) are therefore the more important kind of state apparatus; they are the 'system of defined institutions, organizations, and the corresponding practices' (2014, 77) that maintain the state ideology, for example, the ideology of the dominant class.[1] ISAs include institutions such as the school system (comprising both public and private schools), the media and the arts, religious institutions, the family, and so on.

ISA institutions are not required to *explicitly* endorse state ideology – though they may – to fulfil their function. Rather, state ideology is reproduced via these institutions' structures. For instance, teaching Marxist philosophy at university presumably promotes thinking that goes against the state ideology of capitalism. However, even while teaching Marxism, instructors are inescapably training students to follow instructions; to manage their time in particular ways; and to accept the obviousness of having their performance regularly assessed by an authority figure.

Similarly, media content can be anti-capitalist, but we can note, among other things, the role of advertising ('the official art of modern capitalist society' [Williams 2005, 204]). Through advertising, the media unavoidably acts to present a particular picture of the self and of what we can and cannot (or should and should not) do. In Nicholas Holm's words,

> advertising is one of the few places where we learn how to take part in… the consumption of goods and services. This does not just mean learning the actual physical and social practices that make up consumption… but also internalising a set of assumptions and beliefs about consumption… [Advertising is] concerned with presenting purchasing as a fun and *natural* activity (2016, 76, emphasis mine).

With the inescapability of advertising, the media plays this ideological function *regardless* of what the individual participants in the advertising industry – companies, advertising creatives, consumers – intend. Hence, ISAs function to promote state ideology impersonally, and even those who benefit from it 'find that they have been caught by it, implicated by it, just when they are using it and believe themselves to be the absolute masters of it' (Althusser 1979, 234).

For Althusser, we are unavoidably taught state ideology through activities that are, to a large degree, voluntary: 'It is "of our own free will,"' Althusser says, 'that we go to church or school… join a political party and obey it, buy a newspaper, switch on the TV, go to a cinema or a stadium, buy and "consume" records, paintings or "posters," and literary, historical, political, religious, or scientific works' (2014, 78). Nevertheless, by interacting

with these institutions we internalize their deeper lessons. In performing certain actions required by an ideological apparatus (such as handing in university assignments), we are interpellated by state ideology and are trained to behave a certain way; to become a certain kind of person. In short, ISAs teach us who to be, how to be, and how we ought to relate to others, and this in turn facilitates the reproduction of certain relations of production. This happens without any kind of intentional direction by the ruling class, and most especially without any kind of explicit *persuasion*.

Confucian rites

The idea that 'voluntary' institutions, and the activities associated with them, play an essential role in maintaining the stability of the state is not a new one: it is a central idea in classical Confucian philosophy. For Kongzi (Confucius), ritual propriety (*li* 禮) is a core pillar of the development of social virtue. The *junzi* ('gentleman' or 'superior person' 君子) follows closely the everyday rituals and social practices – the 'rules of social etiquette and standards of personal conduct' (Ivanhoe 2000, 11) – that have been handed down by tradition, including rules regarding how to dress, how to mourn, how to relate to others in a range of different contexts, and how to behave even when others are not present (such as eating and drinking alone).

Just as with Althusser – for whom the importance of ISAs is not so much in the explicit content of the institution, but rather the way in which they *train* and *shape* us through the performance of actions with embedded knowledge – the rites, which provide a blueprint for action across the full spectrum of human activity, '[shape] the character of those who practiced them, [express] and further [refine] the virtue of those who knew them well, and [influence] those who participated in or observed a given ceremony' (Ivanhoe 2000, 15).

Just as Althusser thinks that ISAs maintain a particular system without overt repression, similarly the rites,

> confer a regulated form of expression on certain human sentiments, thus managing both to trigger them and keep them alive. These sentiments, duly reined in and ordered by means of ritual, exert control or influence over the conduct of individuals, thereby making the existence and maintenance of a well-ordered social life possible (Galvany 2008, 55-6).

The repressive functions of the Confucian state are only mobilized at the point where the rites fail to inculcate the 'correct' behaviour in citizens. Hence, though Legalists such as Han Feizi thought a repressive system of rewards and punishments was required to maintain social order, for Confucians having to regularly call upon the repressive functions of the state is considered a failure of governance.

ISAs and repression

While there are similarities between the ISAs and the rites, Althusser is not anything like a contemporary Confucian, most especially because he views (capitalist) ISAs as something to be overcome rather than celebrated. To find a closer parallel to Althusser, we need

to look to those who *critique* the role of the rites in ancient Chinese philosophy, and one clear example of this is the Daoist philosopher, Zhuangzi. Just as Althusser opposes the ISAs and wants to see them eliminated along with the state, Zhuangzi wanted to 'destroy and wipe out the laws that the sage has made for the world… [and] wipe out and reject benevolence and righteousness' (Zhuangzi 2013, 71).

However, Zhuangzi focuses on the individual, whereas Althusser is more interested in the social structure: his focus is the political and economic systems and the way that ISAs reproduce them. This gives rise to a problem for Althusser: while he doesn't – and probably cannot[2] – defend a concrete, positive account of communism, it is not obvious that the necessity for the *reproduction* of the political-economic system – whatever it is – withers along with capitalism.

Does Althusser therefore have a place for ISAs? What role (if any) should ISAs (or rites) play in an *ideal* society? If ISAs give rise to, as he puts it, 'individuals' imaginary relations to their real conditions of existence' (2014, 181), is the solution to remove the influence of ISAs entirely? Or should we rather *reform* ISAs so as to interpellate subjects with an ideology that reflects those real conditions?

Some of what Althusser says gives us reason to think he supports the second view, that ISAs should be reformed. For instance, he says that 'the proletariat must seize state power in order to destroy the existing bourgeois state apparatus [and] replace it with an utterly different, proletarian state apparatus' (2014, 74). Elsewhere, he says that 'It is not enough to destroy the repressive apparatus; it is also necessary to destroy *and replace* the Ideological State Apparatuses' (2014: 90, italics mine). Althusser describes the transition from capitalism to socialism as involving 'a very special kind of "destruction," not at all an annihilation, but the reorganization, restructuring and revolutionization of an existing apparatus' (1977). Rather than removing ISAs entirely, he says, instead we ought to 'revolutionize in their structures, practices and ideologies the existing state apparatuses; to suppress some of them, to create others' (1977).

However, the suggestion that ISAs should go from reproducing a capitalist state ideology to – with suitable reorganization – reproduce instead a *socialist* state ideology, sits uneasily. While the fact that they reproduce specifically capitalist relations of production is, of course, a significant part of the problem with ISAs, the ISAs *themselves* are also an issue. In fact, Althusser himself recognizes the problematic nature of ISAs regardless of the ideology they are being used to reproduce. He notes, for instance, that '*all* state apparatuses, repressive and ideological alike, function *simultaneously* on repression and on ideology' (2014, 85). More than this, however, as Panagiotis Sotiris puts it, 'Althusser always treats processes of subjectivation in a negative way: being interpellated as a subject almost necessarily leads to the subject being dominated by an ideology – and consequently being in a state of misrecognition of actual social reality – that is instrumental to the reproduction of forms of social domination' (2020, 504). If ISAs *by their very nature* rest on repression or domination, then this is a problem with ISAs generally, not with the use to which they are being put.

At other times, Althusser holds that ISAs will be destroyed entirely. He agrees with Friedrich Engels, who says that 'the society which organizes production anew on the basis of free and equal association of the producers will put the whole state machinery where it

will then belong – into the museum of antiquities, next to the spinning wheel and the bronze ax' (1884). This will not happen immediately, but nevertheless, Engels thinks, over time, '[t]he interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself'. Similarly, for Althusser, 'in later phases, [communism sets] a radical process in motion, the destruction of the state (the end of state power and all state apparatuses)' (2014, 74). While socialism does not immediately *abolish* the state, the state nonetheless 'withers away' (1947, 315). As the state disappears, so do ISAs.

There is at least superficially a contradiction here, then. ISAs both exist and don't exist in socialism and/or communism. ISAs are inherently repressive, yet will nonetheless be required to reproduce a repressionless society structured according to 'free and equal association'. Of course, we might understand this in terms of stages: ISAs exist during the transitional, socialist phase, but perhaps cease to exist under full communism. However, this doesn't fully solve the problem, since even in a fully transitioned communist society, the system must be *re*produced through *some* mechanism or other. If not ISAs, then something else.

The obvious way to square this circle is to distinguish between capitalist and socialist and/or communist ISAs; the ISAs in socialism/communism must operate in a fundamentally different way than those under capitalism. Or, to put it another way, communism might have *ideological* apparatuses (IAs), but not ideological *state* apparatuses. The question becomes, then, how to cash out precisely the difference between the two.

This is where the *Zhuangzi*'s critique of Confucianism and the rites can offer resources for thinking this problem through productively. The *Zhuangzi* potentially outlines a means of relating that is fundamentally emancipatory, but that is nevertheless able to exist *without* ideological *state* reproduction.

The self

For both Althusser and Zhuangzi, one of the key ways in which domination is produced is through the construction of the self. According to Lacan, who Althusser drew on in this respect, 'the basic principle of the imaginary is that an incoherent, uncoordinated, and fragmented individual finds one's identity by projecting a unified image of oneself' (Rehmann 2013, 163). In other words, the self-constructs its identity by imagining itself to be a unified subject rather than a collection of fragments. But this self is a (mis-)recognition of a unified Ego (*moi*) by the small 'I', the always-fragmented '*je*' that does the recognizing. As Terry Eagleton puts it, 'the fragmented "*je*" of the child is unified in the Ego-ideal and takes its imaginary coherence from there' (1991, 142). Ideology therefore becomes a part of the self at the point where the subject itself is initially constituted, since this (mis-)recognition always takes place via the external social images and concepts that act as a mirror for the *je*'s construction of a *moi*. The *je* 'transcends its true state of diffuseness or decentrement and finds a consolingly coherent image of itself reflected back in the "mirror" of a dominant ideological discourse' (Eagleton 1994, 214). In other words, the unified image of the *moi* is not generated internally, but is instead a 'reflection' of the subject that is projected back to the individual from society. This self/subject is

therefore created through a process of 'interpellation' in which images and concepts 'hail' the individual and the response to this hailing – the recognition of the individual as the one being hailed – involves at the same time both the recognition of a self *and* the internalization of those images and concepts. In this way, ideology operates at the level of our self-recognition (or subjectification). In coming to (mis)recognize oneself *as* a self, we are always already interpellated by ideology: the subject, as Panagiotis Sotiris puts it, is actually 'the ideological formation par excellence' (2020, 504). As Rehmann notes,

> The term 'subject' has a double meaning in French as well as English. On the one hand, it means a subjected being that submits to a higher authority, and on the other hand it seemingly means the opposite of this, namely a self-confident and responsible author of one's actions, endowed with a free subjectivity, an intentional centre of initiatives. According to Althusser, ideology works precisely through the combination of these two opposite meanings. One submits to higher authorities, high moral values, and while doing this, one considers oneself as a free, independent person, guided merely by one's inner impulses, convictions and beliefs: the subject is subjected in the form of autonomy (2013, 156).

In other words, becoming a self involves at the same time submitting to moral values, but in such a way that those moral values appear to be coming from the 'inside'.

Though of course the *Zhuangzi* does not use the language of psychoanalysis, the view it presents is somewhat similar to the above. Zhuangzi holds that in becoming a self, one cannot help but be 'infected' by the moral values of society. In the words of Livia Kohn, this infection is a form of power that is

> particularly insidious because it works stealthily by invading people's minds. Internalized as concern or worry, it appears in the petty ways of social coercion and attachment, in ordinary thinking that creates the rigid patterns of the fixed mind, in customary judgments and prejudices that justify the social order and make people strive for social recognition and external goals (2020, 127).

According to Eske Møllgaard, the 'moral reciprocity' that underlies moral concern leads to a situation in which 'the self is no longer properly brought into question'. That is, we fail to consider the ways in which our selves have been shaped, and we imagine that our particular idea of morality arises naturally. In this way, morality ends up hiding the degree to which it is created by a particular system of authority and the extent to which it is 'a mere technique in the service of power' (Møllgaard 2007, 108).

For Zhuangzi, then, sage-knowledge (*shengzhi* 聖知), for example, the embodied, material system of morality that Confucians support, is nothing more than a method by which to reinforce state power (Møllgaard 2007, 108). Sage-knowledge is 'the wedge that fastens the cangue', and 'benevolence and righteousness are… in fact the loop and lock of these fetters and manacles' (Zhuangzi 2013, 77). As Zhuangzi puts it, 'What the ordinary world calls a wise man is in fact someone who piles things up for the benefit of a great thief… And what it calls a sage is in fact someone who stands guard for the benefit of a great thief…' (Zhuangzi 2013, 68). For Zhuangzi, benevolence and righteousness are a

tool for oppression: 'until the sage is dead', he says, 'great thieves will never cease to appear, and if you pile on more sages in hopes of bringing the world to order, you will only be piling up more profit for Robber Zhi' (Zhuangzi 2013, 70).

Confucian rites and Confucian morality shape individuals in such a way as to reinforce and reproduce state power and, like ISAs, makes it seem as if obedience to state power arises from the inside. Hence, rather than becoming a *self* – inevitably imprisoning ourselves inside these values – Zhuangzi thinks that we should exist as a *no-self* (*wuji* 無 己). As he puts it, 'The man who has forgotten self may be said to have entered Heaven' (Zhuangzi 2013, 89).

A key idea here is 'spontaneity' (*ziran* 自然). Something is *ziran* if it acts according to its own nature, for example, without becoming an object, without being ordered by human-made names, images or concepts. *Ziran* is the behaviour of a 'thing before it is objectified as a thing (*wu* 物)' (Møllgaard 2014, 160). *Ziran* is therefore inconsistent with the kind of 'vulgar learning' that takes place via the rites, and Zhuangzi is explicitly critical of them. As he says,

> The Way cannot be brought to light; its virtue cannot be forced to come. But benevolence – you can put that into practice; you can discourse on righteousness, you can dupe one another with rites. So it is said, When the Way was lost, then there was virtue; when virtue was lost, then there was benevolence; when benevolence was lost, then there was righteousness; when righteousness was lost, then there were rites. Rites are the frills of the Way and the forerunners of disorder. (Zhuangzi 2013, 177)

The rites are, as Jung H. Lee puts it, 'an *exception* to the inherent spontaneity and harmony of nature' (2014, 91): 'the Way and its Virtue were destroyed in order to create benevolence and righteousness...' (Zhuangzi 2013, 66-7), As Zhuangzi puts it,

> If we must use curve and plumb line, compass and square, to make something right, this means cutting away its inborn nature; if we must use cords and knots, glue and lacquer, to make something firm, this means violating its natural Virtue. So the crouchings and bendings of rites and music, the smiles and beaming looks of benevolence and righteousness, which are intended to comfort the hearts of the world, in fact destroy their constant naturalness. (Zhuangzi 2013, 61)

The rites, then, lead to a 'distorted development caused by one's unexplained proclivity to misinterpret his reality in dichotomous terms by perceiving himself as separate and distinct from what he mistakenly construes as an external world' (Ames 1994, 35). In other words, by allowing ourselves to be constituted as a subject *in the first place*, our development is inevitably distorted by the images and concepts of the social world. Instead, we ought to work towards being a no-self.

We can see the importance of forgetting the self and naturalness for Zhuangzi clearly in a dialogue between Yan Hui and (Zhuangzi's) Confucius, in which Yan Hui's ability to make himself identical with the Way through forgetting is praised:

"Yan Hui said, "I'm improving!"

Confucius said, "What do you mean by that?"

"I've forgotten benevolence and righteousness!"

"That's good. But you still haven't got it."

Another day, the two met again and Yan Hui said, "I'm improving!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I've forgotten rites and music!"

"That's good. But you still haven't got it."

Another day, the two met again and Yan Hui said, "I'm improving!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I can sit down and forget everything!"

Confucius looked very startled and said, "What do you mean, sit down and forget everything?"

Yan Hui said, "I smash up my limbs and body, drive out perception and intellect, cast off form, do away with understanding, and make myself identical with the Great Thoroughfare. This is what I mean by sitting down and forgetting everything."

Confucius said, "If you're identical with it, you must have no more likes! If you've been transformed, you must have no more constancy! So you really are a worthy man after all! With your permission, I'd like to become your follower." (Zhuangzi 2013, 52-3)

In other words, as Lee puts it, 'moral conceits like humaneness and righteousness or cultural standards… represent a distortion or impairment of the *xing* (innate nature性), something external to one's inner power' (2014, 91).

We might think of the *xing* as at least somewhat analogous to the *je* – the natural, fragmented self, rather than the unified, interpellated self of *moi*. Our goal as Daoist sage-aspirants is to, as Møllgaard puts it, 'get rid of imposed goodness so our natural goodness will flower of itself, and to get rid of imposed knowledge, especially sage-knowledge, so great natural knowledge will shine forth by itself' (2014, 152). We ought to undo the process of subjectification and interpellation that has, to this point, constructed our very selves, and 'let the mind wander' (Møllgaard 2014, 152). As the text puts it, 'when benevolence and righteousness in all their fearfulness come to muddle the mind, the confusion is unimaginable. If you want to keep the world from losing its simplicity, you must move with the freedom of the wind, stand in the perfection of Virtue' (Zhuangzi 2013, 115). We should be like the wind, cease to engage in *deliberate* action, and instead engage in non-deliberate action (*wuwei*) that stems solely from a 'spontaneous' response to the world as it is, rather than as it is made to appear via the images and concepts of the social world.

Daoist objectivity and Althusserian nominalism

However, we might wonder whether Zhuangzi's *ziran* and *wuwei* have any relevance to Althusser's thought. After all, for Althusser there is no 'natural', no 'self-nature' for us to uncover: the self is 'always already' in ideology. Though this is arguably a significant difference between Althusser and Zhuangzi, at the same time there is an underlying similarity that suggests that we may be able to draw on suitably modified Zhuangzian concepts to help us to understand non-repressive post-capitalist IAs and their role in social reproduction.

Zhuangzi does not hold that human beings are naturally virtuous, and he does not think of spontaneity in terms of mere instinct. We are not merely born with the ability to act spontaneously, and so the *Zhuangzi* is not advocating for a 'pre-civilised' society (Huang 2010, 1063). Spontaneity – while natural in the sense of being an inherent *capacity* – is not something that is just *there*. As Kohn puts it, spontaneity, 'while always and originally present… is yet the endpoint of long and arduous training, the ultimate attainment of perfection within this world' (2020, 173). Spontaneity is certainly not a matter of un-conscious, reflexive or instinctual action.

This is where the concept of *wuji* becomes especially important in applying the *Zhuangzi* to the problem of post-capitalist ISAs. Those who lack a self do not, in Zhuangzi's sense of the term, cease to exist or cease to act. After all, Zhuangzi describes Heaven and earth themselves as engaging in inaction:

> The inaction of Heaven is its purity, the inaction of earth is its peace. So the two inactions combine and all things are transformed and brought to birth. Wonderfully, mysteriously, there is no place they come out of. Mysteriously, wonderfully, they have no sign. Each thing minds its business and all grow up out of inaction. So I say, Heaven and earth do nothing and there is nothing that is not done. Among men, who can get hold of this inaction? (Zhuangzi 2013, 140)

It is clearly not the case that nothing occurs – that nothing takes place – in Heaven and earth. The issue is simply the lack of deliberation in what occurs: it happens naturally, without being filtered through a self.

Instead of not acting, then, the goal of the sage is to transform their heart-mind (*xin* 心) – the seat of their consciousness – into a 'mirror'; they simply reflect back what is simply *there*. 'When a man does not dwell in self', he says, 'then things will of themselves reveal their forms to him. His movement is like that of water, his stillness like that of a mirror, his responses like those of an echo' (Zhuangzi 2013, 295). According to Zhuangzi, we should 'Be empty, that is all. The Perfect Man uses his mind like a mirror – going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding but not storing. Therefore he can win out over things and not hurt himself' (Zhuangzi 2013, 59)

To have a 'heart like a mirror' is a matter of responding to things according to their specific, individual natures, rather than according to a pre-judged set of norms or concepts. Consequently, a person with a heart like a mirror lacks a self in the sense that their responses to things do not arise from an internal structure that *adds to* action anything

other than what the situation 'naturally' calls upon. A mirror reflects back to the world the images that strike it; in the same way, the person with no self-responds to the world without filtering their response through an internalized set of norms and standards – such as the *li*, or ideology – that modifies or augments it with anything that was not originally 'there'. The Zhuangzian sage therefore becomes adept at 'deftly, resiliently responding to and shifting through contexts' (Fraser 2015, 49). In Lacanian terms, perhaps, they never unify their *je* in a *moi*.

Althusser is, of course, likely to be suspicious of the idea that we can achieve the kind of 'objective' knowledge that seems to be required to have a heart like a mirror, since for Althusser nothing is wholly outside ideology. However, there is nonetheless a difference for Althusser between a person who treats the so-called naturalness of ideology as a given, and the person who has an awareness of how that so-called naturalness is constructed. Althusser does not therefore think that ideological construction of the self leads to complete epistemological relativism, the inability to consider one state of understanding as better – as a more authentic recognition – than another. Ideology is inescapable (even under communism), and ideologies are, he claims, a misrecognition of reality. However, the fact of misrecognition implies that there *is* a reality that can be misrecognized, and therefore presumably the in principle possibility that reality may be *correctly* recognized. Calling ideology a *mis*recognition may therefore be overstating the case; perhaps we can never see the world except through the lens of ideology, but that ideology can show or represent that reality more or less clearly.

At first blush this seems distinct from Zhuangzi, who seems to say that our goal is to 'see things as they are', which suggests that we should attempt to adopt the kind of objective perspective on the world that Althusser thinks is impossible. However, while we can understand 'objective' as something like a God's eye view, we can also understand it in a more grounded way, as having an understanding of the 'interrelations and consequences' (Graham 2001, 144) of things, including the relationship between ourselves and ideology. Though in Althusser's view we are inevitably ideologically constituted selves, rather than throwing our hands up in defeat when confronted with the realization of the interpellative construction of ourselves, we can instead attempt to examine ideology in 'relation to the ideological field and to the social structure that sustain it and are reflected in it' (Hartsock 1991, 21). In other words, we should come to understand where our ideology comes from and how it functions. Hence, while there is no such thing as being 'outside' ideology, there is a significant difference between the person who has reflected on the relationships between the ideological field, the social structure, and the self, and the person who has not.

Similarly, in the context of Zhuangzi, the 'only value judgment assumed [by Zhuangzi], … is that aware reactions are better than unaware ones' (Graham 2001, 144). Whether or not we can 'escape' ideology, in the expansive sense Althusser understands it, it is hard to see him disagreeing with this claim. As Marx says, 'Individuals always proceeded, and always proceed, from themselves. Their relations are the relations of their real life process'. The problem arises when 'their relations assume an independent existence over against them' and 'the forces of their own life become superior to them' (Marx 1998, 102). When the domination of reified relations is recognized as the difficulty,

it becomes possible conceive instead of 'ideological interpellations… that are informed and transformed by a scientific and non-ideological discourse, such as historical materialism'. If so, then we can imagine 'non-subjects endowed with a transformed subjectivity or subjective awareness of social reality' (Sotiris 2020, 514).

The problem, however, is that 'historical materialism', as a theory of society itself, rests on generalities and concepts (as all theories do). So, while 'educating' people in historical materialism (through vertically-interpellating ISAs of various kinds) may be required in the first, socialist stage of post-capitalism, it needs to be overcome in the transition to the second, communist stage if a true communist subjectivity is to emerge. Althusser's answer to this is that, rather than thinking in general terms – as historical materialism requires – instead our ultimate goal is to have an '*empiricism* of *the subject*' (Althusser 1977, 228) in which 'every one of [our] relations to man and to nature must be a *specific expression*' (Althusser 2014, 74). In this way of looking at things, the world 'can only be grasped as irreducible diversity, as an infinite – that is, nontotalisable – production of singularities in which essence can be nothing more than the singular essence of each particular, discernible thing' (Montag 1998, 69).

Both Zhuangzi and Althusser therefore resist an approach to relating to the world and to others that sees things in the world as possessing universal qualities; and both ground ethical action in the particular. In Zhuangzi's case, the Daoist 'allows the concrete circumstance to manifest itself in all its specificity and particularity before undertaking the timely action' (Lee 2014: 49). As Zhuangzi puts it, 'The sage embraces things. Ordinary men discriminate among them and parade their discriminations before others. So I say, those who discriminate fail to see' (Zhuangzi 2013, 13-4). He goes on to say that,

> The Great Way is not named; Great Discriminations are not spoken; Great Benevolence is not benevolent; Great Modesty is not humble; Great Daring does not attack. If the Way is made clear, it is not the Way. If discriminations are put into words, they do not suffice. If benevolence has a constant object, it cannot be universal. If modesty is fastidious, it cannot be trusted. If daring attacks, it cannot be complete. These five are all round, but they tend toward the square. (Zhuangzi 2013, 14)

The same might be said about Althusser: Warren Montag, for instance, argues that, in Althusser's view, 'there are only exceptions, only singular cases each of which must be explained without reference to a universal principle that would supply the generality into which their specificity might be resolved' (1998, 69). In both cases, then, the kind of cultivation that we get from ISAs or rites – which are premised on concepts and images which necessarily posit relations of sameness or universality – is misleading. The appropriate way to act is based on a recognition of things for what they are, for their particularity.

The second stage of communism therefore requires a means of reproducing an insight into the particularity of things *without* a top-down 'theoretical' education, even an education in historical materialism. The question, then, is how we might reproduce the insight that historical materialism ultimately gives rise to, *without* top-down interpellation. It is here that Zhuangzi's philosophy can help us.

Amorality and friendship

The rejection of deliberation in favour of spontaneity – and of the general over the particular – is quite explicitly a rejection of morality itself. However, neither Daoism nor communism are *amoral*: certainly, communism is motivated by commitment to radical equality and human flourishing. Rejecting *morality* – understood as a system of social rules, a system that is inevitably tied to power – does not *necessarily* entail also rejecting the *ethical*. As Lee points out, 'human beings can be ethical without explicitly invoking the language of morality... we sometimes participate in ethical behaviour in more implicit ways' (2014, 20).

We can certainly see an ethical dimension in Zhuangzi in passages like the following:

> The sage loves other men, and men accordingly pin labels on him, but if they do not tell him, then he will never know that he loves other men. Whether he knows it or doesn't know it, whether he is told of it or is not told of it, however, his love for men remains unchanged to the end, and others can find endless security in it – It is a matter of inborn nature. (2013, 216)

In Zhuangzi's case, then, forgetting morality actually means 'adopt[ing] a certain attitude in which the moral experience far from being abolished first really comes to view' (Møllgaard 2007, 113). Ethics for Zhuangzi involves what David Wong refers to as *ci* (慈), which he translates as 'compassion' or 'deep love' (2000, 445). *Ci* is a kind of non-reciprocal caring based in a spontaneous feeling of empathy and compassion. Zhuangzi is only amoral in the sense of rejecting a certain conventional account of morality; the kind of account the Confucians put forward. For Zhuangzi, this kind of morality 'blind[s] us to the heart of moral experience' (Cua 1977, 313). Instead of adopting a *moral* attitude, then, we should adopt instead a '"tao-attitude," or a "meta-moral attitude," which suggests no norms to the moral agent' (Møllgaard 2007, 113), since norms are precisely the kinds of generalizations that are embodied in rites and reciprocity.

The *tao*-attitude does not lead to selfishness; it is not that other people disappear or play no role in our decision-making. Rather, the *tao*-attitude is one that requires that we attend to others *as they are*, singularly and uniquely, and not as a set or moral rules or principles tells us we ought to. It is a matter of cultivating 'consideration of others, appreciation of variety, and respect for individual uniqueness' (Kohn 2020, 125). We perform right action in an occasional, contextual way, 'within a particular concrete circumstance rather than a matter of principles' (Cua 1977, 313) by 'acting within the parameters of the situation, never worried about it or trying to match it to established norms' (Kohn 2020, 126). Zhuangzi, then, is not a relativist. Nor does he advocate quietism. Instead, Zhuangzi is (arguably) a particularist (Van Norden 1996). Zhuangzi's *tao*-attitude involves rejecting any fixed idea of reciprocity, which in turn means rejecting morality. But in its place, we should substitute *reciprocity* with a *non*-reciprocal, particularistically ethical relationship to the other.

This kind of non-reciprocal ethics is best exemplified in Zhuangzi's concept of friendship (*you* 友). Friendship is the most equal of the five major relationships of

Confucianism (Kohn 2020, 127), and is the one that Daoism shows the greatest interest in. In Kohn's words,

> Friendship lies between the direct, close reciprocity of kinship and the more complex, indirect reciprocity of acquaintances and strangers, allowing for intimacy without inescapable obligation or the codification of social norms (2020, 127).

As Albert Galvany argues, for Zhuangzi, 'the radical parity of friendship' is an 'emblem of an alternative way of understanding human relationships' (2008, 58). Friendship is the only relationship that 'is beyond family ties (products of chance and governed by socially imposed codes) and hierarchical obligations (fruits of authority)' (Galvany 2008, 51), and is therefore the only relationship that can, in principle at least, escape the cangues and shackles of social morality. As Galvany puts it,

> In contrast with tribal or family ties, which are governed by blood lines, hierarchy, and a sense of duty, and unlike political relations, which are conditioned by obligations derived from loyalty or the simple quest for selfish gain, friendship tends ideally to be conceived of as a kind of relationship that is exempt from these external impositions that are frequently at odds with the wishes of the individuals concerned (2008, 52-3).

Zhuangzian friendship is about 'join[ing] with others without joining with others' and 'do[ing] with others in not doing with others' (Zhuangzi 2013, 49). It is about *being* with others *without* that relationship being structured by a moral system of reciprocity, without relying on an account of morality (and hence fundamentally a system of domination) to determine what ought to be done to and with them; and *forgetting* themselves and others in the sense of abandoning the subject that has been shaped and interpellated by ideology. The relationship of friends is *not* based in ritual propriety, or morality, or reciprocity. Yet it is not that friends do not care for each other. Instead, their ethical behaviour to one another is based in the *specific* concern they have with one another in their individual concreteness. Rather than helping others according to a set of norms that governs when and how we should help, help is freely given as a spontaneous response based in the *ci* one naturally feels to others. Friendship is therefore a relationship that 'calls for a lack of moderation', that escapes 'premeditated calculation and restraint' (Galvany 2008, 53-4).

However, friendship nonetheless requires a foundation. For Zhuangzi, the basis of friendship is not a shared history, but rather is a matter of having a 'shared vision and commitment to realizing this vision in everyday life' (Lee 2014, 56). We can see this in the following tale, where four people become friends on the basis of a shared understanding of the Way:

> Master Si, Master Yu, Master Li, and Master Lai were all four talking together. "Who can look upon nonbeing as his head, on life as his back, and on death as his rump?" they said. "Who knows that life and death, existence and annihilation, are all a single body? I will be his friend!"

> The four men looked at each other and smiled. There was no disagreement in their hearts and so the four of them became friends. (Zhuangzi 2013, 47)

For Zhuangzi, the shared commitment that structures Daoist friendship is to the Way, but in the context of communism, we can conceive of this in terms of a shared vision of the radical equality and human flourishing that underlies communism. (Importantly, I am not claiming that these commitments are equivalent.) Hence, while 'outer qualities like class, status, or even conformity to the social order should not inform one's desires for personal association', nonetheless the 'moral qualities of the friend, in this case one's inner power (*de* 德) or embodiment of the Way' (Lee 2014, 74) (or, in Althusser's case, a commitment to human flourishing) act as criteria of inclusion.

As a result of the requirement for a shared commitment to radical equality and human flourishing, interpellative recognition still occurs. However, it takes place between individuals, not via state institutions. As Jan Rehman puts it, 'instead of recognising [ourselves] through the big Subject, [we] recognise each other as equal little subjects' (Rehman 2013, 177). Instead of becoming subjects via identifying our *moi* in the concepts and images embodied in the ISAs, we construct our 'no selves' in concrete relations of recognition with others on the basis of the radical equality of Zhuangzian friendship. This is a form of *mutual* recognition; we recognize and interpellate *each other* as beings working towards equality and human flourishing: this is horizontal rather than vertical interpellation. There is therefore no longer an 'interpellating authority' (Rehman 2013, 177) such as the state and we therefore no longer have ideological *state* apparatuses. Instead, the basic social structure of Zhuangzian friendship acts as a horizontal *ideological apparatus* that reproduces a concern for a radical – that is, not merely formal – equality and a desire to work towards the flourishing of all, and that therefore further reproduces Zhuangzian friendship in turn.

A society structured on the basis of Zhuangzian friendship, then, would be one focused on responding to the other in terms of their own concrete specificity. This response arises from a concern for the other on the basis of *ci* – compassion – and operates without *imposing* a moral understanding on the other in doing so. Rather, the response is governed not by the nature of the acting subject, but as a response to the nature of the object that is being related to. In then being interpellated as concrete individuals by other concrete individuals, we gain an appreciation of, and ability to relate to, concrete individuals on their own terms.

What's more, Rehman points out that, though the kind of horizontal interpellation of something like Zhuangzian friendship is still ideological in Althusser's sense, there is '[no] reason why such horizontal 'recognitions' are to be defined as necessary "mis-recognitions"' (2013, 178). That is, horizontal interpellation may be ideological, but it is nonetheless an ideology in which people's real relations and their ideological understanding of those relations are in harmony.

Given the above, institutional structures that develop Zhuangzian friendship via a vertically interpellative education in historical materialism are perhaps required in the first post-capitalist stage of socialism. But institutions in the final, communist stage are merely growths arising from the collective projects of radical equality and human flourishing, and

ideally exist as nothing more than a tool for facilitating these projects. Instead of in-terpellating subjects with an ideology, such institutions act as open spaces in which individuals have the opportunity to learn about – and support – others; as places in which we can develop – and reproduce – relations of Zhuangzian friendship. In this way, with the help of the institutions that have arisen in a bottom-up way, we construct each other's selves without requiring the consolidation of the *moi*; we remain a *je*, fragmented but responsive to the world as we encounter it.[3]

    This kind of repurposing of the institutions of ISAs can perhaps split the difference in Althusser's description of ISAs in socialism. At times Althusser seems to suggest that ISAs continue to exist, and under this account, the *institutions* of ISAs *do* continue to exist. What is more, they also continue to *allow for* (if not *engage in*) interpellation, though of an 'utterly different' kind. On the other hand, ISA institutions under this description have so transformed their structure and mode of operation that it can meaningfully be said that ISAs – as previously understood – no longer exist: they should now be thought of instead as IAs (Ideological Apparatuses). There are no institutions that interpellate with 'state' ideology since there is no longer a state ideology in a world of horizontal interpellation. Hence, this understanding of the institutions of ISAs in a post-capitalist society can make some sense of Althusser's seemingly contradictory statements regarding post-capitalist ISAs.

Conclusion

The *Zhuangzi*'s approach to the Confucian rites and the Confucian self can offer a new way of thinking about the role of ISAs in a post-capitalist society. By rejecting the self, in the sense of a unified being constructed via social norms, the *Zhuangzi* points to a way of being with others that is beyond the subjectification of ISAs. Instead, the focus is transforming one's heart into a mirror that reflects the world without filtering our re-sponses through social norms or general concepts. While this may initially take place through the vertically interpellating subjects with historical materialism, ultimately the role of reproduction will be filled by the horizontal interpellation of Zhuangzian friendship. Hence, ideological *state* apparatuses will cease to exist, but ideological re-production will nonetheless continue to occur, perhaps supported by bottom-up (non-state) institutions. In this way we can square Althusser's seemingly contradictory statements about the role of ISAs under socialism.

ORCID iD

Michael Hemmingsen https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9436-139X

Notes

1. Here Althusser draws on Antonio Gramsci's broader conception of the state. Institutions that function to reinforce the state ideology are considered part of the state, even when those institutions are privately owned (1971).
2. Given that socialism arises organically from capitalism, just as capitalism did from feudalism, while the final shape of socialism may seem inevitable in hindsight, predicting its form in advance is extremely difficult. As Perry Anderson puts it, 'When a truly revolutionary movement is born in a mature working class, the "final shape" of theory will have no exact precedent. All that can be said is that when the masses themselves speak, theoreticians – of the sort the West has produced for fifty years – will necessarily be silent' (1979: 106).
3. Of course, there is a great deal to cash out in the above description. I have very little to say about the concrete form these institutions might take. However, this should be expected: predicting the concrete form of future stages is difficult or impossible. The best we can do – which I try to do here – is to describe what future institutions may need to be able to *do*, even if I necessarily have little to say about *how* they would go about doing those things.

References

Althusser, Louis. 1977. *On the twenty-second Congress of the French Communist Party.* https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1977/22nd-congress.htm (accessed 29th July 2020).

Althusser, Louis. 1979. *For Marx. Translated by Ben Brewster.* London: Verso.

Althusser, Louis. 2014. *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.* London: Verso. Translated by G.M. Goshgarian.

Ames, Roger T. 1994. *The Art of Rulership: A Study of Ancient Chinese Political Thought.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Anderson, Perry. 1979. *Considerations on Western Marxism.* 2nd ed. London: New Left Books.

Cua, Antonio S. 1977. "Forgetting Morality: Reflections on a Theme in Chuang Tzu." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 4. no. 4: 305-328. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6253.1977.tb00676.x

Eagleton, Terry. 1991. *Ideology, an Introduction.* London: Verso.

Eagleton, Terry. 1994. "Ideology and Its Vicissitudes in Western Marxism." In *Mapping Ideology*, edited by Slavoj Zizek, 179-225. London: Verso.

Engels, Friedrich. 1884. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.* https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/ch09.htm (accessed 29th July 2020).

Engels, Friedrich. 1947. *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science.* Progress Publishers.

Fraser, Chris. 2015. "*Zhuangzi* and the Heterogeneity of Value." In *New Visions of the Zhuangzi*, edited by Livia Kohn, 40-58. St. Petersburg: Three Pines Press.

Galvany, Albert. 2008. "Distorting the Rule of Seriousness: Laughter, Death, and Friendship in the *Zhuangzi*." *Dao* 8: 49-59. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-008-9098-1

Graham, Angus C. 2001. *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers.

Hartsock, Nancy C.M. 1991. "Louis Althusser's Structuralist Marxism: Political Clarity and Theoretical Distortions." *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society* 4. no. 4: 10-40. https://doi.org/10.1080/08935699108657985

Holm, Nicholas. 2016. *Advertising and Consumer Society*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Huang, Yong. 2010. "Respecting Different Ways of Life: A Daoist Ethics of Virtue in the *Zhuangzi*." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69. no. 4: 1049-1069. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911810002913

Ivanhoe, Philip J. 2000. *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

Kohn, Livia. 2020. *Daoism: A Contemporary Philosophical Investigation*. London: Routledge.

Lee, Jung H. 2014. *The Ethical Foundations of Early Daoism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Marx, Karl. 1998. *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*. New York: Prometheus Books.

Møllgaard, Eske J. 2007. *An Introduction to Daoist Thought*. London & New York: Routledge.

Møllgaard, Eske J. 2014. "Sage-Knowledge and Equality in the *Zhuangzi*." *Journal of Daoist Studies* 7: 147-162. https://doi.org/10.1353/dao.2014.0005

Montag, Warren. 1998. "Althusser's Nominalism: Structure and Singularity (1962–6)." *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society* 10. no. 3: 64-73. https://doi.org/10.1080/08935699808685541

Rehmann, Jan. 2013. *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection*. Leiden: Brill.

Sotiris, Panagiotis. 2020. *A Philosophy for Communism: Rethinking Althusser*. Leiden: Brill.

Van Norden, Brian W. 1996. "Competing Interpretations of the Inner Chapters of the 'Zhuangzi." *Philosophy East and West* 46. no. 2: 247-268. https://doi.org/10.2307/1399405

Williams, Raymond. 2005. *Culture and Materialism*. London: Verso.

Wong, David. 2000. "Relativism." In *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by Peter Singer, 442-450. Oxford: Blackwell.

Zhuangzi. 2013. *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi. Translated by Burton Watson*. New York: Columbia University Press.