Comparison between Ancient Chinese Civilization and Ancient Greek Civilization

Meihuai Ke
Meihuai Ke, Huangshi, China, kemeihuai@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: To avoid confusion of ideas caused by unclear concepts, this paper tries to divide and define "civilization" and several concepts related to "civilization". The basic principles of Socrates system civilization and Laozi system civilization are the same in terms of ideological and theoretical origins. The so-called Western Civilization is the pragmatic and civilized ideological theory of Socrates system civilization. And the so-called Chinese Civilization is the doctrine of Confucius and Mencius which opposes Laozi civilization system, and it is barbarism rather than civilization. Both the Western Civilization and the Chinese Civilization are "branch" rather than "source", and they are not "civilization" itself. So the author comments on Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations Theory and proposes that the theory has unclear division, unclear concept, and improper use of words, which has caused ideological confusion and also affirmed the correctness of Huntington’s ideas.

KEYWORDS: civilization; ancient Chinese civilization; ancient Greek civilization; Socratic system; Laozi system; universal value; featured value

Introduction

In 1993, Samuel P. Huntington, a professor of political science at Harvard University, put forward a famous theory that ideology will no longer be the driving force of global conflicts, while culture, religion and self-identity will be the main sources of conflict after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Soviet Communism. Future wars will not break out between countries, but among different civilizations. The possible conflicts include western civilization in Europe and North America and the Chinese civilization made up of China and many of China’s Asian neighbors. Huntington believes that the post-Cold War world is a world including seven or eight civilizations, thus, the commonness and difference of cultures will affect the confrontation and union between countries. There are two forms of conflict between different civilizations: (1) at the regional or micro level, conflicts arise between neighboring countries belonging to different civilizations, which are particularly prevalent between Muslim and non-Muslim countries or groups; (2) At the global or macro level, conflicts in the core countries arise between the major countries of different civilizations, which are typical problems of international politics.

As soon as Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations was put forward, it immediately became a hot topic in the academic circles of the world. Some people are in favor of it, and others disapprove of it. A lively debate about all kinds of exposition of "civilization" arises in the world. Today, I am also coming to join in the debate.

1. Distinguish and define several concepts

Sometimes, controversy over the theory of thoughts is not the incorrectness and divergence of the viewpoints, but the language fails to express the meaning, which means ideological confusion led by unclear concepts. The same is true of the debate about “civilization”. Above all, we must distinguish and define several concepts: civilization, ideology, universal value, featured value, traditional ideology and culture, custom, religion, ancient Greek civilization and Western civilization, ancient Chinese civilization and Chinese civilization.

The definition of "civilization". This word is a polysemous word in the Modern Chinese Dictionary. In the third meaning, it refers to Western colors (customs, habits, things) in the old
days. In the daily life of modern and contemporary Chinese, “civilization” is the antonym of "barbarism", and "civilization" which means civilized and rational is a commendatory term; while "barbarism" which means barbaric closed, rude and unreasonable is a derogatory term. In the academic world, "civilization" is used in the origin of traditional ideology and culture, such as ancient Greek civilization, ancient Athenian civilization, ancient Roman civilization, ancient Babylonian civilization, ancient Chinese civilization, ancient Indian civilization, and so forth. It can be seen that "civilization" is used as the concept of ideological theory, and its connotation and extension are profound and extensive. The connotation of "civilization" is goodness, wisdom, which is the opposite of "barbarism." The extension of "civilization" includes three aspects: firstly, the principle of perfection in philosophical origin; secondly, the goodness of human nature in Ethics, the human rights in political science, and the pragmatism of Democracy; finally, good customs and habits. The connotation of "civilization" is stable and unchanged.

The definition of "ideology". "Ideology", including good and evil, or "civilization" and "barbarism", refers to the ideological theory of Ethics and Politics formed at a certain historical stage. The good ideology of civilization produces and maintains the human rights and the democracy, while the malignant ideology of barbarism produces and maintains the kingship and despotism. "Ideology" is unstable and changeable.

The definition of "universal value". "Universal Value" is the pragmatic theory of the kindness and wisdom of "civilization" in Ethics (Politics), emphasizing the pragmatic value of Ethics (Politics) shared by all human beings. Its main content is "human rights" and "democracy". The connotation of "universal value" is stable and constant.

The definition of "featured value". The featured value is the political science concept with national conditions and national characteristics. The connotation of "featured value" is changeable.

Traditional ideology and culture. In a region, a sort of "ideology" becomes the ruling thought in the longer historical period, then, the traditional ideology and culture is formed. If the "ideology" changes in this region, the original traditional ideology and culture will be changed into another traditional ideology and culture. “Traditional ideology and culture” has the distinction between good and evil, civilization and barbarism. Vicious "traditional ideology and culture" is the huge obstacle to the reform of "ideology" and sometimes requires a political revolution to change.

Customs and habits. A traditional ideology and culture deeply into the daily life of ordinary people will produce a custom." Customs and habits" have the distinction between good and evil, civilization and barbarism, that is, the difference between good customs and bad customs. Customs and habits are variable and difficult to change. They are gradual and not mutuated.

Religion. The strict definition is that religion is a kind of awe-inspiring belief in the supernatural and super-social mystical power that people feel, thus restraining and regulating their own words and deeds. The Dictionary of Modern Thoughts, edited by the British A. Bullock, said: "But compared with any previous era, the 20th century is a more secularized century. …at least when it comes to Christianity, one of the reasons for communism success is that it can combine society with new theories and hopes when the traditional religions of that society are no longer fully eloquent or full of vitality. As a Jewish jurist, Max was influenced by semi-Christian philosopher Hegel, which is not a meaningless thing. Nationalism is also a religion in a less rigorous sense."[5] Therefore, there are many religions and different interpretations of the same religious doctrine which lead to different religions groups. And the nature of religion maybe good or evil, so there are religious conflicts and even religious wars.

An explanation of ancient Chinese civilization (Chinese civilization) and ancient Greek civilization (Western civilization). These words cannot be defined as concepts and only can be
illustrated. They are named after the region where "civilization" appears. The cultural phenomenon that arose in ancient China was named "Ancient Chinese Civilization", and it is also known as "Chinese Civilization". In the same way, the cultural phenomenon that appeared in ancient Greece was named "Ancient Greek civilization", which is also called "Western civilization."

2. Ancient Greek civilization and "Western civilization"

Ancient Greek civilization refers to the human rights and democratic civilization of ancient Athens. Socrates summed up the ancient Athenian civilization, and Plato turned Socratic thoughts into the Socratic system, that is *Platonis Opera* [1]. It may be questioned that there were many philosophers before Socrates in ancient Athens, and all of them were the creators of ancient Greek civilization [6]. The answer is: many philosophers before Socrates only left some missing words and no systematic theory; Some philosophers' thoughts and theories are not good and intelligent, but malignant and emotional, thus, they cannot be called the “civilization” in the origin of thought and theory. Others may question that ancient Greek civilization not only includes the ancient Athenian civilization, but also contains other regional civilizations. The answer is: according to the definition of "civilization" above, the cultural phenomenon outside ancient Athens is a barbaric "ideology" of uncivilization, which cannot be called "civilization".

According to the definition of "civilization", the word "Western civilization" is not accurate to some extent. After the formation of Socratic system, the ideological and cultural schools that emerged from western countries include "civilization", "barbarism", "king power", "autocracy", "human rights" and "democracy". Some are opposed to the Socratic system while others inherit this system. It was not until Locke in England, Montesquieu and Rousseau in France and Samuel Adams in the United States that they lifted the Socrates torch to illuminate the western world, promoting "human rights, democracy" to "universal value", then forming a mighty world democracy trend and cleaning up the uncivilized barbaric "king power, autocracy", and awakening all mankind to yearn for the best American life with practical "civilization" theory and fight against the barbaric "kingship, autocracy". Therefore, "Western civilization" is a pragmatic ideological theory of the Socratic system civilization, not "civilization" itself.

3. Ancient Chinese civilization and "Chinese civilization"

Ancient Chinese civilization refers to *Tao Te Ching* of Laozi in ancient China. *Tao Te Ching* is "good and intelligent", which is not only the origin of ancient Chinese civilization, but also the origin of the ancient China's "hundred schools of thought" [7]. Like ancient Greek civilization, the ancient Chinese thoughts and cultures before *Tao Te Ching* had both good and evil, and it was not systematic. Thus, it could not be called "civilization".

When Laozi was still alive, *Tao Te Ching* triggered a "Zhou Jingwang Reform" which was similar to "Solon Reform" in ancient Athens. However, Shan Mugong who had the power of the armed forces colluded with Confucius in Lu (a student of Laozi) and the powerful state of Jin to poison Zhou Jingwang and to kill his eight sons. They assassinated reformer heir Wang Zi Chao (Ji Chao) who was crowned by Zhou Jingwang and then escaped to Chu country, and killed the Confucian Mr. Wang Binqi (Laozi's student Wenzi), expelling Laozi, letting Confucius replace Laozi to take over the library in Zhou Dynasty, and making Zhou Jingwang's political and democratic reform failed. After Confucius became the library official of the Zhou Dynasty, he immediately burned all the books that were disadvantageous to the "kingship and autocracy", and replaced *Tao Te Ching* with the "Royal Thirteen Classics" which safeguarded "kingship and autocracy". Then, he created Confucianism. Confucius and historian Zuo Qiuming in Lu called this political event “Wang Chao Jiao Lu”, which means that the
Zhou Dynasty made connection with the Lu Dynasty. Han Fei, a collection of Legalists divided from Tao Te Ching, angrily called it “Shan Shi Qu Zhou” which represents that Shan Mugong seized the power of Zhou Dynasty.

After Shan replaced Zhou dynasty, Confucius's Confucianism has been established, and Mencius developed it as "The Way of Confucius and Mencius". Emperor Wu of Han promoted the Han Confucianisms "dethroned all other schools of thought and honored Confucianism alone", the Song Confucianism revived and formed into a system, and then it became "exclusive" and comprehensibly practical in the Ming Dynasty and the Qing Dynasty. During 400 years from the 14th century in the Ming Dynasty to the 20th century in the Qing Dynasty, Confucianism became the ruling ideology and culture of parents and emperors. As the time went by, it also became the traditional ideological culture and affected the customs and habits of ordinary people's daily life. Instead, Tao Te Ching in ancient Chinese civilization was suppressed, misinterpreted, and even abandoned, therefore, the brightness of "Laozi System" civilization was obscured. During the Revolution of 1911 and the May 4th Movement, although intellectuals in China advocated "Down with the Confucianism", they still did not know the "Laozi System" and still groped in the darkness. Meanwhile, Western humanists, the so-called "China hand", couldn't even understand the "Laozi system" civilization, couldn't distinguish the "Laozi system" and "the doctrine of Confucius and Mencius", mistook "the doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" as "Chinese civilization" and created the "Clash of Civilizations" between "Chinese civilization" and "Western civilization". However, Tao Te Ching was handed down by Taoists, Taoism and enlightened monarchs in the form of "the philosophy of Huang Lao", and as a kind of civilization, it was displayed around the world with a strong power.

It can be seen from this that the ancient Chinese civilization is Tao Te Ching of the Laozi system, which is the origin of Chinese philosophy and "Hundred schools of Thought". "The doctrine of Confucius and Mencius" is "branch" rather than "source", and it is "barbarism" but not "civilization" and. It is barbarism rather than civilization. It is a malignant ideology rather than a good ideology. In addition, it is a kind of malignant traditional ideology and culture rather than a good one, which will lead to bad customs and “characteristic value” rather than good customs and “universal value”.

Therefore, the use of the expression "ancient Chinese civilization" is more accurate than the expression "Chinese civilization". If the so-called "Chinese civilization" mainly refers to "the doctrine of Confucius and Mencius", it is not "civilization" but "barbarism".

4. Compare Socratic System Civilization with Laozi System Civilization

Both of the Socratic system and the Laozi system are actually one system and one kind of civilization in terms of the rationale. The difference is that the two systems used two different languages, through which the same ideological theory was expressed. It can be summarized as follows:

(1) The metaphysical principles of the two systems are the same.

Both the Tao Te Ching and the Complete Works of Plato clarified the basic principles of metaphysics. In terms of the ontology, Laozi's concept is "eternal Taoism"(noumenon) while Socrates’ concept is "perfectionism"(the idea of supreme goodness). In terms of the theory of creation, Laozi’s concept of the demiurge is the “biggest Taoism” which grow out of the “eternal Taoism” and Socrates is the “soul” of the concept of the perfectionism.

(2) The ethical principles of the two systems are the same.
The basic concepts of Laozi's ethics are: goodness and austerity (simplicity), "five goodness" (five behaviors of kindness), no desire, desire, few desire, five colors, up virtuous, down virtuous and so on. Socrates’ concepts are: perfectionism, virtues (justice, wisdom, courage, moderation), opinions and beliefs, beauty itself, beauty phenomena, necessary desires, unnecessary desires, and so on.

(3) The political views of the two systems are the same.

Both of them believe that the human historical movements are all circular movements, and the transformation of the political system is the same. The figure of the regime transformation of Laozi: Tae Sang (ancient primitive society) → Qin yu zhi (relative and honorable society) → Wei zhi (frightening autocratic society) → Mu zhi (maternal society) → “I am natural” in "a small Utopian society" ideal country. The figure of the regime transformation of Socrates: healthy city and state → honorary political system → oligarchy political system → primary democratic political system → Tyrant political system → “philosopher as king” ideal country.

(4) The epistemological views of the two systems are the same.

① The method of cognition of two systems is the same method which is from gradual enlightenment to epiphany. Laozi’s “self-knowledge”, Socrates’s “identifying yourself”; Laozi’s “the knowledge will depreciate day by day when in Daoism” and the rational speculation of Socrates’s “reconnaissance pseudo-wisdom”, which is a process of gradual enlightenment. Laozi's "keep in the house, to know the world", Socrates thinks wisdom can go straight to the world of ideas, all of which have reached the realm of the epiphany of ontology of heaven and earth.

② The world blueprints conceived by two systems are the same. Both of two systems divide the world into four parts: the world of ideas (Laozi called it the big Tao world) → the world of ideas and images (Laozi called it "the indefinite world") → the world of substance (Laozi called it the world of "all living thing in nature") → The world of substance and images (Laozi called it "the five colors make people's eyes dizzy").

③ The division of the knowledge level of two systems is the same. The ontology of knowledge of "the idea of the goodness": absolute truth (Laozi called it the knowledge of Tao that the sage obtained and knew the knowledge that cannot be known) → ideology knowledge: relative truth (Laozi called it the knowledge of Tao that inferior literati obtained → opinions and beliefs: empirical knowledge (Laozi called it the knowledge of Tao that the medium literati obtained) → Emotional knowledge: the poetry and art (Laozi called it the knowledge of the Tao that the superior literati obtained).

(5) The personal virtues and experience of them are the same.

Both of Laozi and Socrates are holy sage for being kind to the world. Laozi wishes saints to enter the world to govern the country. The mission of Socrates’s life is to scout hypocritical wisdom. They all have the virtue of justice, temperance, courage and wisdom. Both of them felt upon dark days for being unapproved by the society and suffered a lot. Socrates was sentenced to death, and Laozi was forced to flee.

(6) The experience of the two systems is the same but not all the same.
The experience of their theory is almost the same. Both of their theory are not accepted by the society at that time, and also distorted and rejected by the post-autocratic society, even slandered by evil people. Nietzsche scolded “Socrates is the greatest villain of mankind.”[2]. Qian Mu said: “Laozi is a conspirators”[10].

The theories of Socrates and Laozi have always been inherited and passed down. The Socratic system has its successors in the west: the Cicero system, Augustine theology, the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, the Locke system after the Renaissance, the Rousseau system after the Enlightenment, etc. Laozi system has its successors in the east, too: Zhuangzi system, Lv Buwei system, metaphysics system, Li Zhuowu system.

However, the experience of theories is a little different after the Western Renaissance. The Su Bai system was first used in the west society and confirmed as a source of Western philosophy, forming a vast world of democratic trends. Laozi system has been misinterpreted so far, not accepted and used by the local community, and has not been recognized as the source of oriental philosophy.

5. The battle between the universal values of the West and the featured value

The “universal value” in the west is the civilization of the Socratic system in ethics and political science. Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau have completed pragmatism of the "universal value" of "civilization" in ideological theory. The British Revolution, the French Revolution, and the American Revolutionary War have practically completed the pragmatism of the "universal value" of "civilization." It is particularly worth mentioning that Samuel Adams, the father of the American Revolution, has no books but short speech and essays, but he is the greatest and most perfect pragmatist of “universal values”. His life is to fight against the "kingship and autocracy" to achieve "human rights, democracy" . He has a hard life in his own life, and he has to rely on the support of another American revolutionary father, John Hancock, to survive. He earnestly strives for the "human rights, democracy" for Americans. He does not want personal reputation, and he is always behind the scenes. He gives the chance of appearing in public and getting honors to the man of the same line. The two US subcontinental meetings were planned by him, and the host was not him; he directed Jefferson, John Adams, Henry Lee and others to draft the Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution, and gave copyright to others; his most worried and hateful thing was that "kingship and autocracy" appearing in the United States after independence, so he gave Washington military command several times, and then retake Washington’s command several times , so that Washington would not become Napoleon; he created the "one-minute militia" and believed that the power of the citizens was invincible; he insisted the citizens’ holding-gun rights which could prevent and resist the emergence of "kingship and autocracy"; he initially opposed the establishment of the central government, and the establishment of the parliament, the court and the state government, but because of the impermissible circumstances, he agreed the establishment of a presidential central government; he was the governor to curb the president’s unified state power; he did not let the government control public opinion. The right of reporting in the newspaper was handed over to the citizens. Once Washington being the president, the eyes of citizens' public opinion are closely focused on the president, criticizing the president's words and deeds, even attacking the president evenly. People affirmed and praised the achievements of the president until the president leaves office and so on, which made him the soul of the Americans. Therefore, the soul of Samuel Adams is attached to every American. The universal value of the "human rights, democracy" of the American sages is preserved. The so-called reformer president who attempts to change the universal values of the American sages is useless[4]. Americans felt that the world has changed during World War II. The civilization of universal value in the United States was violated by Japanese militarism. In order to preserve the universal civilization in the United States, it gave up "isolationism" and
participated in world political affairs. The Americans found that there is no "kingship and autocracy" in their own country, and that "kingship and autocracy" in other countries not only endangered the people of the country, but also endangered the value of the United States. It can be seen that the "kingship and autocracy" are all ambitious and must eliminate the "kingship and autocracy". In that way, the United States is safe. Soon, the United States became the world police, making the dictatorships in all countries feel fearful and be anti-American, and the people in the world who are suffering are yearning for the United States.

The featured value is to adhere to Confucius and Mencius, the principle of maintaining the "kingship and autocracy", not the Laozi system civilization. The so-called characteristic value over thousands of years is an exaggeration. In fact, it is only the path of Confucius and Mencius over 400 years since Zhu Hongwu. The so-called Chinese modern Confucianism applies the modern color to the "Confucius and Mencius", pretend to be universal value.

When the universal values of the west collide with the featured value, the wars of two values produce for inconsistence. The war of these two values is the war of two ideologies, not the war of two civilizations.

Conclusion
"Civilization" is kind and wisdom in terms of its intrinsic nature. No matter where "civilization" appears, its nature is the same; "civilization" is a "source" rather than a "genre" in its extension, and it is shared by all mankind and there is no war of "clash of civilizations"; the concept of "civilization" is sacred, which cannot be replaced by other concepts, and cannot be used in general terms. Therefore, Huntington’s "Clash of Civilizations" is unclear, the concept is unclear, and the words are incorrect.

All schools of thought and theory are pragmatics deriving from the "civilization" of ideological and theoretical origins. There are misinterpretations, misuse, and also positive solutions, good use to "civilizations". Both are not "civilizations" themselves. Misinterpretation and misuse of "civilization" will form a malignant ideology, traditional ideology and culture, customs, and characteristic values, which are barbarism rather than civilization; positive solutions and good use of "civilization" will form a good ideology, traditional ideology and culture, customs and universal values which are civilizations. These two opposing schools of pragmatic ideological theory are constantly conflicting and fighting. They are conflicts between two ideologies, traditional ideology and culture, customs, and characteristic values, and are conflicts between civilization and barbarism. Therefore, if Huntington’s "Clash of Civilizations" is changed to "Conflicts of Ideology, Traditional Ideology and Culture, Customs, and Characteristic Values", then the proposition is correct, and the correct ideological views that conform to its content will not or rarely cause controversy.

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