

# The Comparison of the System of Lao Zi's *Tao Te Ching* and Socrates' *Plato's Complete Works of Plato*

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**ABSTRACT:** The origins of definition of philosophy put Laozi system and Socratic system in philosophic origins. As a result, the similarities between the two systems are presented. After discussing the similarities between the two systems, the "Clash of Civilizations" has short legs.

**KEYWORDS:** Socratic system *Complete Works of Plato*, Laozi system *Tao Te Ching*, philosophy, philosophical origin, civilization

## Introduction

In all the ideological and cultural phenomena that appear in human beings, the highest level of knowledge is the metaphysical principle of philosophy. The earliest, the best and the most satisfying philosophical theories are the origin of philosophy.

## 1. Defining philosophy and defining its origins

### 1.1 The definition of philosophy

#### 1) The definitions of Socrates

*Complete Works of Plato* says that philosophers are lovers of wisdom, and he loves not only one part of wisdom, but all of it (Plato 2002). In other word, philosophy is the study of love for all wisdom.

In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle (2003) said: "Intelligence is about the science of certain origins and causes."

#### 2) The definition of Philosophy in *My Concorde*

Philosophy is that people use natural intellect in their souls to explore and comprehend the knowledge of the initial, highest natural wisdom with kindness, curiosity and inquisitiveness to love all of it. In other words, Philosophy is the use of human reason to speculate or comprehend the original cause and ontology of human beings and the creation (Meihuai 2014).

#### 3) Main Basis of Philosophy

The definition of the above philosophy contains the basic components of philosophy: metaphysics, ethics and physics, and epistemology. Aristotle divided philosophy into several types, according to the basic elements of it, that metaphysics is the first philosophy, physics is the second philosophy, logic belongs to tool work, and political science, literature and art are not philosophical.

#### 4) The Nature of Philosophy

Originally, philosophy, goodness, is the crystallization of human innate goodness and natural wisdom. But as time goes by, people's kindness and natural wisdom are blinded by the expansion of material desire, and there is pseudo-philosophy, fabricated into a set of theory and philosophy, of pursuing wealth, power, and fame. This pseudo-philosophy is a vicious philosophy that begins as blasphemy. Thus, two opposite philosophies of different natures are brought into being: the philosophy of goodness and the philosophy of evil.

#### 5) The Wrong Philosophical Definition

1. Bullock (1998) definition of philosophy. A word cannot be defined as a no-objection with a single formula, used as a general term for various intellectual activities, which combine a high degree of generalization with assertions that rely almost entirely on reasoning rather than observation and experience. If, in other words, a single short formula is used to define philosophy, then the least objectified formula is: philosophy is thinking about thinking. This definition distinguishes philosophy from a variety of first-order thinking, that is, thinking about a particular part or aspect of

its ideas, methods, and discoveries of practical things (ie, science, history). The main components of the unanimous recognition of philosophy are epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. Each of the main forms of intellectual activity that does not have a universal scope has its own philosophy: science, history, religion, art, and others.

This definition is the most excellent and authoritative definition of Western philosophy since the Renaissance. However, compared with the definition of Socrates, the statement of it is not concise, and there is some misunderstanding content. First, tracing the viewpoints of the Socrates and the Plato system in the origin is lacking. It, a collection of many philosophical schools, only stays in many philosophical schools in the West. Secondly, it is acknowledged that there is a philosophy of rational activity that does not have a universal scope and there is no distinction between “first” and “second” as Aristotle did. Meanwhile, the wide definition makes the philosophical definition too ambiguous that as long as it is thinking or intellectual activity, it is philosophy, and even minor ones can be a philosopher. Socrates once criticized: "If curiosity can be regarded as wisdom, then you will find that many absurd characters can be called philosophers. Third, it is not enough to define it only with thinking, which makes the partial definition. Thinking is only a concept in philosophical epistemology, which has other main components. Fourth, thinking for ideation is the superlative degree, ranking for the first. The talking, philosophy is different from all kinds of first-order thinking, is the mistake of synonymous repetition and circular reasoning. Fifth, this definition abandons the original meaning of "PHILO-SOPHIA" and it is not correct to leave "fundamental".

2. Hu Shi's (2004) definition: The definition of philosophy has never been certain. If must given a definition, then the knowledge, the researches on the important things in life all need to a fundamental solution, essentially, is called philosophy. Hu Shi's definition only stays on the surface of philosophy and does not capture the core content of it. That is to say, the definition only focuses on the usage of philosophy, ignoring the essence, which belongs to the pragmatic views. This progressive definition involves the ethical outlook on life and discards the metaphysical component. But the used concepts have no intelligence, thought, and idea, etc.

3. The definition of Taiwanese philosopher Wu Kunru (2005): The question what philosophy is can be condensed, literally, it is love wisdom, and wisdom is philosophy. Using knowledge well is wisdom. And arranging life is a specific function of philosophy. Philosophy is human philosophy, God does not need philosophy, and material world does not understand philosophy.

The definition of Wu Kunru is complex. Although it is based on love wisdom from the origin, it is also affected by the views of Western philosophical schools and Hu Shi. First, love of wisdom is not equal to Socrates' love all wisdom. The partial love of wisdom cannot be philosophy. Second, using knowledge well is wisdom. However, this wisdom is not in the definition of Socrates, not natural wisdom. Because knowledge has empirical knowledge, the emperor used knowledge to make a name for himself, and a famous adviser used power tactics knowledge to conspired and intrigued. Can this be considered as philosophical wisdom? If can, then Liu Bang, good at planning when against enemy, could be considered as a philosopher. The definition is ridiculous. Third, arranging life and using knowledge are Hu Shi's pragmatic views, which are the end of philosophy.

The above three are classic philosophical definitions. In addition, there are many erroneous philosophical definitions, for example, the definition of German philosophers, the definition of empiricists, the definition of materialists, the definition of evolutionists.

### ***1.2 Defining the philosophical origin***

Origin is the derivation of the school and the source of philosophy is the source of various schools of thought. The philosophical system that is called the philosophical origin has four characteristics, the earliest, the best, the highest wisdom and the most satisfying. The earliest refers to the earliest people who created the philosophical system in ancient civilizations. The best is that the principles of metaphysics and pragmatic ethics and political science are all good. The highest wisdom means the highest artistic concept, the most rigorous logic, and the most precise wording. The most satisfying covers three major factors of philosophy, not words that are incomplete.

## 2. The Laozi System and the Socratic System are Philosophical Sources

The ideological and theoretical system with the earliest, the best, the highest wisdom, and the most satisfying four characteristics in ancient and modern China and foreign countries is only the Laozi system and the Socratic system, the philosophical sources of human beings. In ancient Chinese civilization and ancient Greek civilization, although there were also philosophical papers, some of them were good and some of them were bad, the perfection was not good, and the logic was not strong, before the Laozi system and the Socratic system, and it cannot be a theoretical system due to incomplete text. The discourse of Laozi's *Tao Te Ching* (Laozi 2012) and *Complete Works of Plato* (Plato 2002) is a kind of ideological and theoretical system, kind and logical, covering the three elements of philosophy. Confucius's writings and Aristotle's writings are later than the *Tao Te Ching* and *Complete Works of Plato*. *Guanzi* is the work of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, not the work earlier than Laozi. After the emergence of the *Tao Te Ching*, there were other thinkers in ancient China, and after the emergence of the *Complete Works of Plato*, Aristotle has his monograph and Western Europe has its many ancient philosophical works. Therefore, the Laozi system of *Tao Te Ching* and the Socratic system of *Complete Works of Plato* are the philosophical origins of East and West. For human beings, it is lucky that God gave birth to Laozi and Socrates in the same century, giving them the chance to awake to the truth, in the case where the East and West are separated from each other, giving them the possibility to create a philosophical system with the same ideological content in different languages and expressions, which proves that everyone has the same good deeds and human beings have universal values for the benefit of mankind.

## 3. The Tao Te Ching and the Complete Works of Plato

The *Tao Te Ching* is written in Chinese ancient scriptures, with only 5,000 words. The *Complete Works of Plato* has more than five million words translated into modern Chinese. Maybe someone would say that as far as the content is discussed, how more than 5 thousand words can be compared with more than 5 million words? My answer is that this is the difference between different language and expression, and has nothing to do with the content. In terms of language, the content of ancient Chinese ancient texts is difficult to express in dozens of sentences in modern Chinese. Using modern Chinese to explain the whole content of the *Tao Te Ching* needs a lot of text. Nevertheless, the *Complete Works of Plato* is written in Latin, and the translation into modern Chinese characters will be reduced. In terms of expression, *Tao Te Ching* is a purely holistic paper, and *Complete Works of Plato* is a dialogue of sub-themes. If the ideas of the various works of Plato are concentrated into a complete theory, and the number of words is less than one million words.

In terms of ideological thought, the basic principles of the three elements of philosophy covered by *Tao Te Ching* and *Complete Works of Plato* are the same. It is proved that they are two systems in different regions, but a same system in terms of ideological content.

## 4. The metaphysical principles of the two systems are the same

Both *Tao Te Ching* and *Complete Works of Plato* discuss the basic principles of metaphysics. Laozi's ontology concept is permanent rule and Socrates is the most noble good. In the theory of creation, Laozi's concept of the Creator is the correct reason (Ceres, ultimate perfection, human nature) of being and non being after permanent rule, and Socrates' is the soul of the most noble good (God, good idea, human nature).

The first basic principle is that the ontology is the beginning of the universe (a girl becomes a mother), nothing is stirring around, and nothing exists but at the same time, everything exists without creation directly. The creator is the mother of all things in heaven and earth, when the girl becomes a mother. For the coexist of being and non being, dynamic and static combination, the heaven and earth has come into being. Second, the process of creation. Laozi's philosophy is the Way bears sensation, sensation bears memory, sensation and memory bear abstraction, and abstraction bears all the world. For Socrates, the form is one, and when one form divides into two, the real object is brought about so that more objects are emerging. Third, Laozi has a theory that the body and the

spirit are one, and the theory that correct reason is not dead, and the Ceres is not dead, and the theory that restoring human nature. Socrates has the theories that Soul Creationism, Soul Immortalism, and Reincarnation.

### **5. 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

The first basic principle is that the two people share the same idea, human nature. For Laozi, permanent rule has no partiality, the universe is unconscious; it regards everyone as insignificant, the saint has a heart for the people, no injustice. For Socrates, the concept of goodness is the biggest problem, and the beauty itself is the most beautiful object and defining justice.

### **6. The same political system of the two systems**

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 (tyranny political system) → "philosopher as king" ideal country.

The basic views of governing the country are the same: 1) Socrates advocates freedom and equality, democracy and the rule of law, and philosophers are kings and do not let politicians go their own way. 2) For Laozi, the nature includes naturalization of people, the natural richness of the people, the redress of people, and the simplicity of people. People must follow the laws of nature and follow the natural operation and follow the rules of natural logic, doing what they should do. Laozi insists that the legislation is made by people engaged in law, law enforcement is carried by rule of law, and the sage is indifferent. Socrates believes that citizens represent legislation, court enforcement, and administration is a straw dogs. 3) They all oppose the war of aggression of injustice and advocate the necessary war.

### **7. The two systems have the same educational perspective**

Both of them opposed the rulers' indoctrination of their subjects. Socrates uses the "ground hole metaphor" to describe the description. For Laozi, people should learn from nature and consider the heaven and earth as a teacher. What is a sage but a guide to peace and harmony? What is a materialistic traveler but the sage's focus? For the student not to value the teacher or the teacher not to love the student or for the followers not to acknowledge the leader or the leader not to care for the followers, is the cause of great confusion. This is a key to peace and harmony, teachers and leaders remind others of who they are and their oneness with infinity. Kind people should be treated by kindness; for those who are not kind, they are treated well, so that people can be kind, so that everyone is good. For the trustworthy person, trust him; for those who are not trustworthy, also trust him, so that you can get good faith, so that everyone is trustworthy.

### **8. The two systems have the same epistemological views**

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.

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).

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).

### **9. The personal virtues and encounters of the ten and the two are the same**

They are all philosophers of the world. Laozi wants the saints to enter the world to govern the country. The mission of Socrates life is to detect false wisdom, and all have the virtue of justice, temperance, courage and wisdom. They were unfortunate at the time when the society was not recognized, and Socrates was sentenced to death (Plato 2002) Laozi was forced to flee written in "Chinese culture changes before Shan defended the Zhou Dynasty" by Wang Zhenjin in 2014.

### **10. The sufferings of the two systems are the same and different**

Their theoretical, not accepted by society at that time, encounters were roughly the same. Unfortunately, they were also distorted and rejected by the authoritarian society of the later generations. Nietzsche (2016) screamed: Socrates is the biggest villain of mankind. Qian Mu scolded that Lao Tzu was a conspiracy (Mu 2007). The theories of Socrates and Laozi with a long history have always been inherited and passed down. In the West, the Cicero system, the Augustine theology philosophy, the Thomas Aquinas theology philosophy, the Locke system after the Renaissance, the Rousseau system after the Enlightenment, etc. are all successors of the Socratic system. In the East, the successors of the Laozi system are Zhuangzi system, Lu Buwei system, metaphysics system, and Li Zhuowu system.

However, the encounter of their theories is very different after the Western Renaissance. The Socrates and Plato systems are first used in the West, recognized as the source of Western philosophy, forming a vast world of democratic trends. The Laozi system has been misinterpreted so far, not accepted and used by Chinese, and has not been recognized as the source of Eastern philosophy.

### **11. Incomplete philosophical system**

A. Bullock said intellectual activities with incomplete universal scope had philosophy, such as science, history, religion, art (Bullock, 1988) . If we agree with A. Bullock's point of view and call this incomplete theory a philosophy, then at best it can only be called an unsatisfactory philosophical system. In other words, all philosophical theories that cannot cover the basic elements of philosophy are not satisfying. This unsatisfactory philosophical system is not the highest philosophical wisdom, but the numerous philosophical schools that emerged after the Renaissance with a large number and continuing to increase. In particular, the Germans have this unsatisfactory philosophical system and used it to steal the philosopher's crown. The most influential and most harmful philosophical systems are Hume's empiricism, Kant's a priori theory, Spencer's theory of social evolution, Hegel's dialectic, Feuerbach's materialistic atheism, Bergson's theory of life evolution, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's voluntarism, Weber's social theory, Sartre's existentialism and egocentricity, Heidegger's theory of social-ego, Deconstructionism by Derrida, Foucault, and Rorty, as well as hedonism and skepticism, etc. In China, there are Confucian emperors, materialism, legalism, and so on.

## 12. Concluding remarks, comment on Clash of Civilizations

A famous theory was put forward by Samuel P. Huntington, a professor of political science at Harvard University, in 1993. That is, after the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of Soviet communism, ideology will no longer be the driving force of global conflicts, and culture, religion, and identity will be the main sources of conflict. Wars will not erupt between countries, but between different civilizations. Among the possible conflicts are Western civilizations in Europe and North America, and Chinese civilizations composed of China and many Asian neighbors of it. Huntington believes that the post-Cold War era world is a world of seven or eight civilizations; cultural commonalities and differences affect the confrontation and unity between nations. There are two forms of conflict between civilizations. At the regional or micro level, conflicts, particularly prevalent among Muslim and non-Muslim countries or groups, occur between neighboring countries that belong to different civilizations. At the global or macro level, conflicts in core countries occur between major countries of different civilizations, which are typical problems of international politics (Huntington 2002).

The Eastern Laozi system and the Western Socratic system in the philosophical origin are kind, intelligent and non-malignant, without pseudo-intelligence, and the ethics and political science that are derived are universal values rather than characteristic values. The basic principle is the same without conflict. If the connotation of civilization is kindness and wisdom, the extension is on the philosophical origin rather than the ideological genre, and there is no clash of civilizations, with the limit divided between civilization and barbarism. If there is malignant and pseudo-intelligence in the connotation and extension is in the school of thought, then of course there is a clash of civilizations with ambiguous limit. The concept of civilization is sacred and cannot be replaced by other concepts. It cannot be used in general terms. Therefore, as far as philosophical origins are concerned, Huntington's clash of civilizations is unclear, the concept is unclear, and the words are incorrect. If changed into value conflict theory and ideological conflict theory, then the division is clear, the concept is clear, and the word is accurate.

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