

of paradise in *Dream of the Red Chamber* was truly built on the exclusive spiritual nobility of the true aristocracy.

Cao Xueqin had no intention of going against imperial power and ethical rituals. On a spiritual level, Cao Xueqin highly agreed with his own social class, and among the hearts of commentators who were in the same cultural circle, such as Zhiyanzhai, they also were deeply proud of their own class culture. The most basic of these is the name “Daguanyuan [Grand View Garden]” that the “Daguan [Grand View]” is a manifestation of the Confucian culture. Among the traditional culture of the elite, especially among the upper class that shared in imperial power, the Confucian culture had long been deeply rooted in its genes and souls, constructed as the basic understanding of the universe, and its ultimate concern was the practice of imperial power, which was to “have a grand view of the whole world.” Therefore, the descriptions of the collapse of paradise and the “end of the world” in the novel came from the contrast between the spirits of the true “aristocracy” and their unworthy

descendants. For the so-called aristocracy, in addition to their high level of financial and material enjoyment, they also needed to have character and cultivation that far exceeded those of the common people. Having received a poor education and undergone spiritual degradation, the unworthy descendants could no longer support the huge and heavy responsibility and outer shell. This was also the beginning and ending of the collapse of a century-old family, and it was also the basic tone of *Dream of the Red Chamber* as a literary work of remembrance and repentance.

Therefore, the elegy written by the author is not just about the weakness of a transcendental “human” who cannot retain his youth during the flow of the cosmos, but it was also Cao Xueqin’s self-repentance about emphasizing individualism so much as to disengage from collective responsibility and unable to continue the family line and carry on the family mission. This painful projection is manifested in Jia Baoyu, the protagonist of the entire novel. Only gazing through this character on the fate of his dying family, a work of remem-

brance that is out of this world can be truly shown.

In an era and class system very different from today’s world, the feudal and ethical code itself probably had a meaning that may be completely different from our modern understanding, and the readers must be faced with the test of accepting and respecting an alien culture. Through “A Grand View of The Red Chamber,” Professor Ou hopes to advocate this new understanding of the main theme of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and this is an important message she wishes to convey to the many readers who enjoy *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Reference

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The Ancient Greek concept of justice

In Greek mythology, the goddess Dikē (Justice) is a daughter of Zeus and Themis. She has two sisters, Eunomia and Eirene, and together they are called the Horae and embody order and harmony. Since modern times, the physical embod-

iment of Justice has had three main characteristics: a sword in her right hand, scales in her left hand, and a blindfold over her eyes, representing her fairness in judgement. Contemporary concepts of justice, including judicial justice, procedural justice,

distributive justice, and rectified justice, are all rooted in ancient Greek political and ethical philosophy. As a virtue, justice is closely related to the idea of order and harmony in ancient Greece. To understand justice, this book therefore returns to “the original

position” to explore the ancient Greek concept of justice.

The ancient Greek notion of justice is commonly thought to have undergone a process of development; that is, it changed from a culture of shame to a culture of guilt. This book, however, challenges this traditional interpretation, arguing that different writers in different genres were all concerned with the times in which they lived and reacted to their environment through their work. Although different writers might understand justice differently, their discussion of the harmony of the ethical relationships among humans, the order of polis, the attunement of the individual soul, or even the orderly workings of the cosmos all illustrate the core idea of justice: the maintenance or recovery of an orderly state.

The discussions and arguments in this book touch on epic works, elegiac poetry, tragedy, and philosophical works and explore the notion of justice held by writers from the 8th century BC to the 4th century BC, such as Homer, Hesiod, Lycurgus, Solon, the elegiac poets, early Greek philosophers, Aeschylus, Plato, and Aristotle. Readers are urged, through the beautiful words and vivid stories, not only to grasp how the ancient Greeks understood the notion of justice and applied it to their own society, but also to reflect on their own lives and the moral and political problems we face today.

In our efforts to realize justice in our modern societies, what can we learn from the ancients? In the ancient Greek texts, we can find traces and suggestions of the elements of the successful

practice of justice in moral and political life: procedural transparency, public participation, proper legislation, the principle of fairness, freedom of speech, the rule of law, the law-abidingness of citizens, and the punishment of wrongdoers.

Reference

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