

〈翻訳〉

‘The Loneliness of Being a Father’¹ by Endo Shusaku²

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Most fathers who see Shakespeare’s *King Lear* probably do not think of it is a fictitious story concerning a certain king in the distant past. I expect that they think that the play depicts the true nature of what it is to be a father.

Everyone knows the story of *King Lear*. This pitiful father who loved his daughters is in the end abandoned by them and has to lead a sad and lonely life. He is finally rescued by his youngest daughter but for all that it probably does not mean that his wound is completely healed. In the end he is all by himself.

What exactly is a father though, I wonder? In the case of animals, fathers are always solitary. The ones who attend to the rearing of the offspring are mothers. Fathers are extremely irresponsible. Even if they happen to meet their own offspring, some of them even pretend not to know them.

As might be expected, it is impossible for humans to lack a sense of responsibility towards their children. However human beings, who are fathers, are solitary in a different sense to animals, who are fathers. Or their fate is to be made to be left by themselves.

Many of you must be able to remember such an experience. Suppose at the time when you had not yet become a wife, you were sitting in a happy circle in the living room with your siblings and mother. At that time your father suddenly comes in.

All of a sudden conversation comes to a halt and immediately the atmosphere is spoiled. Father tries to join in the conversation and everyone tries in some way to come up with a topic but everything becomes awkward and before long one child after another

1 Chapter 14 of the book *Kekkonron* (On Marriage)

2 Endo Shusaku (1923 ~ 1996) Catholic novelist. Won Akutagawa, Tanizaki & Noma Prizes. The fact that there is often a moral dimension in his books has led some to compare him to Graham Greene.

leaves the room until in the end only mother is left to talk with father. And then the father feels the pain of being isolated from his family.

I wonder why this happens? Even the father does not understand the reason. Although he tries his best to be a dad who understands his children, it doesn't pan out. The children feel something unnatural in getting along with their father. The father even has the feeling that, essentially he gets on well with his children when, unlike him, their mother is constantly nagging and scolding them. Many fathers must feel this kind of grievance.

However if we think about it, this grievance is unreasonable. This is because, in my opinion, for sons, fathers are essentially nothing but rivals and for daughters essentially they are merely temporary guardians.

One person who precisely analyzed the psychology of the son to his father was Freud. Even if we don't accept Freud's Oedipus complex, for the son, the father is the first oppressor in his life, who imposes restrictions on him or a competitor who he has to outdistance. To put it plainly, either he is someone scary or an opponent who has to be triumphed over. For the son, a friend is a far more suitable interlocutor than his father, since the friend will understand him better. For a son, having a complete friendship with his father is difficult.

For daughters, fathers are after all merely temporary guardians. When they reach a certain age, for most daughters, the husbands, who will appear some day, will be the men who will look after them throughout their lives. Fathers will come to feel instinctively that they have been merely temporary guardians. The daughters of King Lear both set great value on their husbands and thought nothing of sacrificing their father for their husbands. That drama expresses the extent of the daughters' heartlessness when faced with the choice between husband and father.

However most fathers cannot bring themselves to accept this harsh reality. They don't even attempt to do so. So setting aside the time when children are still small, when they reach adolescence, they start to become alienated from their father and he does not know what to do.

The sweet sound of the word 'home' brings to mind the kind of warmth, like being near an oil stove, which comes from family members loving each other, communicating with each other and being able to understand each other. However since the father's life is neither that of his son nor his daughter, home becomes no more than a temporary, tran-

sient place to rest. The word 'home' only applies for a short period when children are not yet conscious of having their own separate existence and completely entrust their daily life to their parents.

In due course the day will arrive when one's home will be destroyed. The time will come when one's home will break up. However many fathers might constantly cling to the illusion that their home will continue for ever.

On the day that his daughter gets married, I expect that the dejected father harbours vague feelings of hostility somewhere in the corner of his heart towards the man who is going to be his daughter's husband. This is probably the jealousy felt by the temporary guardian towards the true guardian. And this father will only be able to forgive the husband of his daughter from the time that the son-in-law himself becomes a father, producing a grandchild for his father-in-law. Because at this time he will be able to recognize the other man's relationship to him as the father of his grandchild.

When the sweet baby in due course grows up, he or she will probably at some point leave home. If the child is going to live apart from his parents, when he or she has grown up, parents had better think very carefully about how they are going to live their lives after their child has left. To put it bluntly, parents will at some point be left on their own. This is solitude which results from one's child having grown up. Parents must prepare themselves from an earlier point how to live their lives when they are left alone.

'Women and a Taste for the First Rate.'³

In a certain weekly magazine⁴ there was a somewhat vulgar article concerning a rumour about Frank Sinatra visiting Japan.

Whether it is true or not, I don't know, but according to the article, there are a number of Japanese women eagerly looking forward to the arrival of Sinatra as they wish to go out and enjoy themselves with him.

Well that is fine. They are free to do as they wish. Other people should not interfere. However the reason that I gave a wry smile when I read the article was because of the following reason given by the owner of a certain upscale bar for why she wished to go

3 Chapter 16 of the book *Kekkonron* (On Marriage)

4 Many of the weekly magazines typically contain more detailed coverage of the news than daily newspapers, some of which coverage may be sensationalist and scandal-oriented.

out and enjoy herself with Sinatra.

She said, 'I have a taste for whatever is first rate. Even men, since I have slept with a man with the title 'Sir' from England. Next time if I sleep with a foreigner I have decided on Sinatra or Robert Hossein⁵. To be frank, I am a show off. I have a specially-made 18 carat putter. My clothes are ordered directly from Paris, and as for my car, in July I changed it to a Rolls Royce. As my father was a politician, since I was a young girl amongst the first class things in my life, I was surrounded by top-rank people.'

In all likelihood the article was only half true. It was true that this bar owner was probably showing how to take just a little advantage of the rumour that Sinatra was coming to Japan as publicity for her bar.

However what I found ridiculous were the parts of her story where she says, 'I have a taste for whatever is first rate. Even men, since I have slept with a man with the title 'Sir' from England' and 'As my father was a politician, since I was a young girl amongst the first class things in my life, I was surrounded by top-rank people.'

When I was young, if I happened to meet a woman who said such things I would be aghast and probably wonder if she was an idiot. However perhaps because of having grown old, I now think that this kind of woman is somewhat cute and even feel like patting her on the head as if she were a child.

In addition to that, I might also feel this way because I am a man. If a woman reads this, far from thinking that the bar owner's utterances are cute or making her wish to pat the bar owner on the head, I'm sure she would be offended and filled with displeasure.

Why would this be tolerated by a man but cause only displeasure in a woman? The reason is simple.

The feeling that a man will have to a woman who utters such a remark is that she belongs to the opposite sex. He will feel that she is like a member of a different race who has strange ideas unlike members of his own sex. So because he feels that her utterances reflect the fact that she is of a different race with its own manners, customs and ways of thinking, this also probably makes him feel like patting her on the head as if she were a child.

However a woman who hears such an utterance will first and foremost be conscious that the speaker is another woman like her. For example even if the speaker is a fool or

5 Robert Hossein (1927 ~) French film actor, director and writer.

very conceited, she is just another woman. In other words a woman will recognize the fact that she shares the same sex as the woman who makes such a kind of utterance and as a result will feel disgusted. This must be like when Japanese see their fellow countrymen abroad urinating outside and think, surely all Japanese are not thought of as a race who do such a thing, and suddenly feel uncomfortable.

However the part of the article where we feel the person to be a woman is 'Even men, since I have slept with a man with the title 'Sir' from England.' If we think carefully about this, this British 'Sir' might be a great person (in fact he is not great at all) but merely sleeping with him does not make the woman's own value increase. It does not mean that everybody will respect her.

In spite of this, the part of her which thinks that the person who sleeps with the 'Sir' has a taste for the first rate is thought of as extremely ridiculous by men whilst her fellow women probably feel an indescribable sense of shame. In other words any woman who is unable to despise the essence of this idea will herself believe it to be true. Although she suppresses this idea in various ways, when she is off her guard it might appear under another form and may be expressed by her too. Such a fear of herself saying the same thing as the bar owner will be felt by her and she will feel ashamed. So the bar owner's utterance will become still more disagreeable.

Within this we can find a kind of an archetype of a woman. At least there is something resembling an archetype of a woman created within societies with long histories and traditions. The archetype is of someone whose life, whatever she does, in the final analysis, depends on a man.

Another woman who feels deep contempt for the woman who boasted of having slept with a 'Sir' might also skillfully show off at places like a PTA meeting, saying proudly,

'My husband is the head of a section' or

'My husband graduated from Tokyo University,'

so then it becomes no more than a case of the pot calling the kettle black. When all is said and done there is little to choose between the woman who boasts to people of her husband being a section head and the woman who is delighted to have slept with a 'Sir'. Both women are merely under the illusion that their own worth will increase as a result, not of themselves, but of the man on whom they depend.

If it is said 'Isn't this how women are?' female readers would no doubt get angry and retort 'Men are just the same, aren't they?'

However a man who boasts of being a section head became a section head by his own efforts. Even if I brag about my father being a company president, in a man's world, when all is said and done, if I do not have ability myself, I will be kicked out. Let alone if I said, 'I slept with the daughter of Marquis So & So, so now I am first rate,' my friends would probably think I was crazy.

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