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研究課題名(和文) Constructing a Theory of Laughter Founded on Deleuzian and Non-Western Approaches to Subjective Temporality and Concepts of the Self

研究課題名(英文) Constructing a Theory of Laughter Founded on Deleuzian and Non-Western Approaches to Subjective Temporality and Concepts of the Self

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研究成果の概要(和文)：本研究は、笑いにおける様々な文化的、心理的な機能を進めてきたが、そこでの最も重要な知見は、一人笑いが、従来の先行研究で指摘されていたよりも、日常的な行為であるということであり、一人笑いは代理的な社会行動の一形態としてだけでなく、一人笑い自体が自分自身を楽しむために起きているという証拠が発見された。また本研究では、先行研究において一人笑いが等閑視されている理由、一人笑いが自己感覚にもたらす一時的とはいえ根源的ともいえる効果についての理由を明示した。一人笑いが、社会規範の範囲外で起こる怪しいものと位置づけられていることも示した。さらに本研究では、一人笑いへの態度について文化間で相違があります。

研究成果の概要(英文)：This study confirmed that laughter performs various important cultural and psychological functions. The most significant finding was that solitary laughter is probably more common than is typically assumed by scholars in the field of humor and laughter research. Evidence was found that solitary laughter may be enjoyed for its own sake, not only as a form of vicarious social behavior. The researcher offered possible reasons for the tendency to overlook solitary laughter, including its momentary but potentially radical effects upon the individual sense of self. Drawing on references to solitary laughter by ancient and modern philosophers, including Augustine and Deleuze, it is suggested that solitary laughter may be regarded with suspicion because it operates outside of social sanction and control. The study also showed evidence of differences between cultures in terms of attitudes to laughing alone, with Japanese being most conspicuous in expressing inhibition towards such behavior.

研究分野：哲学

キーワード：laughter time subjectivity Deleuze solitude being

## 1. 研究開始当初の背景

In recent decades laughter has received increased research attention across numerous fields, including psychology, sociology, cultural studies, neuroscience and medicine. Laughter is increasingly regarded as a significant human behavior with social, psychological and physiological effects. In philosophy, as in literary studies, laughter has long been a minor subject of study, but here too there has been increased academic output. The increased philosophical interest in laughter has been particularly strong in French philosophy since the 1960s, when philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva drew attention to the experience of laughing as marking a break in the flow of discourse. This was not a new insight, however. The German philosophers Immanuel Kant (in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) and Arthur Schopenhauer (19<sup>th</sup> century) had commented briefly upon this phenomenon, though not regarding it as behavior significant enough to justify deep and extended study.

In the 1960s, as countercultural activities and thinking spread across many industrially developed nations, the idea that laughter represents an interruption in the flow of discourse was seen by some to suggest a radical potential in the experience of laughter, particularly when it was spontaneous and shared with others. Laughter was seen by some to have the potential to play a role in changing the way in which communication is perceived. It was suggested that laughter could mark a change in a person's relationship with reality and their sense of identity,

opening more playful attitudes and social relations, a theme previously explored by this researcher. Laughter thus came to serve as a symbol of a kind of philosophy of liberation. However, the extent to which this radical view of laughter is justified has not been deeply examined.

## 2. 研究の目的

The philosophical idea that laughter contains radical potential could expand the scope of research on the subject of laughter being done in other disciplines such as psychology, sociology and medicine. Conversely, if the radical potential proposed by some philosophy is not supported by analysis within and outside of philosophy then the idea is likely to be ultimately ineffectual. The primary aim of this project was to examine the notion of spontaneous humor-induced laughter (as distinguished from polite and forced social laughter) as a disruption of discourse, of subjective time and of subjectivity itself. This would be undertaken through relation to Deleuze, to other philosophy and fields of study, and also to viewpoints from outside the western academic tradition. It was hoped thereby to make a small contribution to a broader understanding of the operations of laughter across a variety of contexts, and to facilitate better cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural cooperation in the area of ongoing research.

In accordance with this broad statement of purpose, the research project sought to provide at least tentative answers to more specific questions. These included: If the kind of radical effect of laughter proposed by philosophers such as Deleuze

is specific to a certain kind of laughter, what are the defining features of such laughter? Are there differences across cultures in attitudes towards laughter?

### 3 . 研究の方法

The research was conducted initially through reading and interpretation of philosophical texts, especially numerous texts by Deleuze or relating to that philosopher. The main focus was Deleuze ' s essay "Nomad Thought " which elucidates the importance of incorporating the effect of laughter in reading the philosophical writings of Nietzsche. This in turn required further reading of Nietzsche. A large amount of reading was also done on philosophers and cultural theorists inspired by Deleuze or extending the work of Deleuze, including Brian Massumi and Anca Parvulescu. Different research papers around the work in progress were delivered to the International Society for Humor Studies annual conference (twice) and an international Deleuze Studies conference to gain feedback and further cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary insight into the subjects of Deleuze and laughter.

In order to pursue a genuinely cross-disciplinary approach that would uncover points of intersection between fields, much reading was also done on the psychology and sociology of laughter and humor, as well as the neurological effects of laughing. Furthermore, reading perspectives on laughter from various Asian cultures, such as Japan, Thailand and India, expanded the cultural range of the investigation. Fictional literature was also examined. On top of the literature

review and interpretation, social surveying through questionnaires was done to better understand the experience of laughter and attitudes to laughter across cultures. The aim was to integrate data obtained from all of the above sources.

### 4 . 研究成果

The most significant outcome produced by this research project is something that was not among the original aims. In order to attempt to identify cross-cultural similarities and differences in uses of laughter, associated psychological experiences and attitudes towards laughter, self-report surveying was conducted. The survey included questions on the subject of solitary laughter, designed partly to test the theoretical assumption advanced by influential social psychologists in the area of humor and laughter research that genuine solitary laughter is extremely rare and can be regarded as largely insignificant. The decision to test that assumption was made partly due to the fact that the laughter of Nietzsche, which Deleuze focuses upon in his essay "Nomad Thought," was typically solitary. Other philosophers, such as Augustine, also refer to solitary laughter.

The survey found that an extraordinarily high proportion of the 119 respondents reported sometimes laughing alone, and that a very high percentage of these laughed alone even without the aid of media such as books, television or the Internet. In other words, the results, while by no means conclusive, challenged the assumptions that solitary laughter is uncommon and that when it does occur it

represents a kind of vicarious social event. In short, the research suggested that people do laugh while alone, sometimes without reference to even imaginary others. An important implication of that is that laughter is not entirely reducible to social functions such as communication and smoothing social interaction. That is to say, laughter has sufficient effects at the level of the individual in order to encourage it even in isolation. This is consistent with the benefits of laughter demonstrated through physiological studies of laughter's effects.

Preliminary results of the above study were first reported in a presentation titled "Steps Supporting Greater Cultural Diversity in Theoretical Discourses on Laughter" given at the International Society for Humor Studies 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Oakland, USA in July 3, 2015. This paper attempted to demonstrate the value of cross-cultural research through reference to a significant difference in the survey results between respondents from East Asia, particularly Japan, and respondents from other countries (19 countries altogether, but with low numbers of respondents in most cases). While still reporting experiences of solitary laughter at very high levels, Japanese respondents were far more likely than respondents from other countries to claim to never laugh alone. This interesting difference clearly demonstrated the importance of surveying broadly across cultures.

The researcher published an article based on the survey results and

speculating on the subject of solitary laughter in an article titled "The Enigma of Solitary Laughter" in the *European Journal of Humour Research* in the Fall of 2016. As far as the researcher has been able to determine, this is among the first academic articles to be published internationally solely devoted to the subject of solitary laughter as a phenomenon in and of itself. A presentation on the subject was also given at the International Society for Humor Studies 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Dublin, Ireland in June 2016.

From here the research project attempted to investigate the implications of the study of solitary laughter for understanding the kind of radical laughter proposed by Nietzsche, later by the French philosopher Bataille, and then Deleuze. The preceding study, supplemented by later surveying, had revealed a remarkable contrast between on the one hand contemporary social psychology which contended that laughter is essentially social behavior, and on the other hand, the laughter survey results that showed a large majority of respondents not only laughed alone but maintained a positive attitude towards such behavior. Psychology has rarely treated the subject of solitary laughter, but when it has done so, it has tended to regard it as illusory and perhaps even pathological. This raises the possibility that academic discourse may be reinforcing specific social norms of behavior where laughter is concerned. By asserting that laughter is essentially a social behavior and ignoring events that do not fit that model, influential social

psychologists may be unconsciously imposing a restriction, as if laughter outside of a social context should be excluded from consideration. Laughter without social sanction may thus be perceived as an aberrant, even dangerous, behavior.

The researcher advanced this hypothesis in a presentation titled "The Queerest Comic Corruption: Laughing Alone" delivered to the 10<sup>th</sup> Deleuze Studies Conference in Toronto, Canada in June 2017. Here it was argued that there may be a sense in which all spontaneous laughter is at the moment of its occurrence a radical event. The contemporary philosopher, social theorist and Deleuze scholar Brian Massumi, for example, claims that laughter is one of the most common and significant behaviors of disruption of the normal flow of discourse and consciousness. In the Deleuze conference paper the researcher examined ways in which Deleuze's writing on Nietzsche's laughter is in important respects consistent with the history of theories of laughter. At the same time Deleuze indicates that laughter has a capacity to veer away from the dominant culture, particularly when it is isolated, as in the nomadic lifestyle and philosophy of Nietzsche. It may therefore be possible to view laughter as potentially a boundary event between social being, grounded primarily in norms established through the past, and a more dynamic "becoming" in which identity itself is continually in process.

From that perspective it may be possible to view laughter, with the help of Deleuze, as a familiar yet contentious event.

However, since the disruptive event of laughter opens the possibility of liberation beyond traditionally, socially defined being, society has strategies to keep the laughter constrained within social boundaries. To use the vocabulary of Deleuze, laughter is constantly "reterritorialized." The assertion that laughter is essentially social and that without social context it is in some way pathological is an example of such a strategy of reterritorialization. This argument is made in an article recently prepared for submission for publication by the researcher titled "Nomad Laughing: Setting Laughter Adrift." The major implication is that laughter can be a significant rupture in discourse and even in being, for which reason it is subject to various forms of control. Solitary laughter, since it appears to escape from a social context in which it may be monitored, delimited and sanctioned, is therefore typically regarded with a degree of suspicion. We may speculate whether the apparently significant differences found between cultures in self-reports of solitary laughter is an effect of the perceived threat of such behavior to social harmony, since the inhibition of solitary laughter seems to be especially strong among Japanese and to some extent Chinese. The ultimate implication of the study is that the behavior deserves further cross-cultural research.

5 . 主な発表論文等  
(研究代表者、研究分担者及び連携研究者には下線)

[雑誌論文](計 1 件)

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3 WEEKS, Mark, “Solitary Laughter: Breaking the Silence”, International Society for Humor Studies 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Dublin, Ireland, 2016年6月29日.

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〔図書〕(計 件)

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6. 研究組織  
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