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Un ga aru:
Sound
Symbolism,
International
Puns and
Contingency

1. What are puns, and what is their role in psychoanalysis?

Freud has detected puns in dreams also; so what are they doing? The attempt to answer takes us down the pleasure quarters street above whose arcades flutters a faded awning labeled »Sound Symbolism«. If one starts to talk about puns, it is important to clarify what kind of thing one considers them to be. I must also state briefly what I consider psychoanalysis to be doing. Regarding them together acts upon their intuited similarity, but rather than amplifying meanings read into puns, I will be going the other direction: taking meaning out of psychoanalysis. Because the meaninglessness of sound symbolism, like any kind of symbolism, is essential to its function as symbol (not index or icon), arbitrariness is strictly observed by communities of users trying to be sane. That is why poetry and dreams are assigned a special magic playground and made taboo in the daytime world. One can see how Lacan's structuralist focus on psychoanalytic grammar makes it more reusable in changed cultural contexts. Kuki Shūzō's observations on puns and contingency as an aesthetic effect help to consider how we use sound similarity for meaning making, even if his thoughts concerning old philosophical questions of the relation of necessity and contingency remain open-ended.

2. Helpful shades

It has been asked, notably by Lacan, whether or not the Japanese are in need of psychoanalysis, or are already supplied with something that fulfills an analogue function. The depths of meaning contained in the Sinojapanese writing system make Greek mythology look pale as a source of imagery for organizing feelings. One might rather compare it with the combinatoric depths of Kabbala alphabet handling. But sticking with mythology *sensu strictu*, Kosawa Heisaku had once proposed to Freud a setup called the Ajase complex after prince Ajase, a case of matricide in Japanese mythology, which, rather than the tragic fulfillment of the Oedipus saga, ends with the characters maturing and accepting ambiguity in their relations.¹