

Agnès Vandevælde-Rougale

*Laboratory for Political and Social Change (LCSP),
Paris Diderot-Paris VII University, France*
a-vandevælde@orange.fr

Words as masks: about the importance of denial in management*

Abstract: This article draws on a socio-anthropological research, which questions the effects of managerial discourse on the individual by considering experiences of workplace bullying. It studies the observation that despite the gap between what management says and what management does, words of managerial discourse are still widely used, by managers and employees alike. French philosopher, ethnologist and psychoanalyst Octave Mannoni (1899–1989), reworking Freud’s concept of fetishism, showed in an article entitled “I know very well, but nonetheless...” that a belief can survive the denial (disavowal) of reality. Recognizing fantasy as a fantasy is not sufficient to reduce its power over the individual. Based on a case study, the present article demonstrates that the paradoxical logic phrased by Octave Mannoni can help us understand how managerial discourse can exercise its influence on individuals, despite discrepancies between what is said and what is implemented in the organisations. It presents the hypothesis that words can work as “masks” do in some traditional tribes, thus being the means supporting a belief that sustains management authority.

Keywords: authority, clinical sociology, denial, managerial discourse, workplace bullying

Introduction: “This is the real world, and Care Bears don’t exist”

When people talk about work, at times they become indignant about some of the managerial practices, such as being asked at the last minute to work overtime, credit being given to someone else for work that one has done etc. Neverthe-

* The ideas developed in this paper have been presented in a lecture entitled ‘I know very well, but nonetheless...’ When words function as masks, or about the importance of denial in management” («Znam ali ipak...») Kada reči funkcionišu kao maske, ili o značaju poricanja u menadžmentu) given at the Agora seminar on 1st December 2016, organised by the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade. I thank Prof. Dragana Antonijević PhD for her introduction and Prof. Vesna Vučinić PhD for having invited me to share my work.

less, be it in case of petty annoyance or of proved bullying behaviour, it is quite frequent to hear statements from the listeners such as “what can we do?”, “this is the real world”, and for those who were watching an American cartoon with a group of multi-coloured bear characters in the 1980’s (Care Bears, or “mece dobrići”, “medvedići dobrog srca” in Serbian), it is not rare to add “and Care Bears don’t exist”. Of course, everybody knows that the world is not a cartoon full of teddy bears caring for each other. But still, it happens that we become indignant or shocked when faced with what we consider at the same time to be “normal practices”. Drawing on work done in behavioural psychology, the emotion we feel can be understood as a sign that there is a discrepancy between our representation of the world and the reality we experience (Rimé 2009). Building on this interpretation, we can say: “we know that the working world is not ideal, but still, we believe that it could be”. This paradoxical logic has been phrased in 1964 by Octave Mannoni, a French philosopher, ethnologist and psychoanalyst. How can it help us understand what is happening at work today?

In a context where individuals are more and more reluctant to submit to sheer force or order from their hierarchy but are looking for meaning, organizations often resort to corporate discourse, for instance on their “career” webpages, where the employee is said to be granted the opportunity to develop both professionally and personally if joining the company. This discourse is part of a broader managerial discourse (Vandeveldé-Rougale & Fugier 2014), which can be apprehended through managers’ or employees’ talk as well as documents issued by organizations. Managerial discourse encompasses discursive practices that convey a utilitarian view of the subject and human relations. It serves as a tool to manage human beings as resources, which are utilized to maximize profit or limit expenses within organizations. It illustrates a phenomenon underlined by Pierre Bourdieu (1982, 2001), namely that the dominant language can participate in maintaining, while hiding, power relationships, thus legitimizing authority.

In order to understand the process by which managerial discourse contributes to exercise power over individuals in organizations, I conducted a research based on fieldwork in France and in Ireland (Vandeveldé-Rougale 2014, 2015, 2017). I adopted a clinical approach, which is both comprehensive and interdisciplinary, rooting on complementarities between psychoanalysis and socio-anthropology. Clinical sociology assumes that processes can be studied through singularities based on specific cases. The individual is considered as a subject, in the plurality of his/her dimensions: embodied, moved by unconscious drives, determined by personal and collective history, but also actor, contributing to society, able of reflexivity and resistance. S/he is seen as a locus for understanding social life (Gaulejac 2009).

In the framework of this research, I interviewed people about their experiences in the workplace. One of my postulates, based on works in psycho-sociology, is that it is easier to see what is hidden (including hidden power relationships)

in a time of difficulty and crisis, than in a time of wellbeing and tranquillity. Therefore, I chose to consider workplace bullying, which has been defined by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in Ireland as “repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual’s right to dignity at work”¹. Illustrations of workplace bullying can be found in contemporary literature from various countries, such as the example of a boss who repeatedly lacks respect to her employees and piles up work for them, both related with professional and personal issues, while the employees strive to fulfil her wishes in the hope of getting some reward in terms of professional career (Weisberger 2003), or the example of the rising ill-being of an employee who progressively finds herself frozen out of everything, isolated and with no work to do, due to manoeuvres of the manager she dared contradict in a meeting (Vigan 2009).

Taking into account narratives of bullying experiences in organizations where corporate communication stresses that the workplace is a place for individual fulfilment and professional development, enabled me to observe that a belief in the promises of managerial discourse persists, in spite of the discrepancy between reality and the now wide-spread discourse developed by organizations to attract skilful employees (Vandevelde-Rougale 2014, 2017). After having briefly presented Mannoni’s work on denial, this article will show with a case study that it can help understand the process underlying this phenomenon. It presents the hypothesis that words can work as “masks” do in some traditional tribes, thus being the means supporting a belief that sustains management authority.

“Je sais bien mais quand même”

This French expression, which can be translated as “I know very well, but still...” or “I know very well but nonetheless...”, renders the split of the fetishist disavowal that had been theorised by psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Fetishism consists in the displacement of desire and fantasy onto alternative objects or body parts (e.g. a foot fetish or a shoe fetish), in order to obviate a subject’s confrontation with the castration complex. Freud came to realize in his essay on “Fetishism” (1927) that the fetishist is able *at one and the same time* to believe in his phantasy and to recognize that it is nothing but a phantasy. And yet, the fact of recognizing the phantasy *as phantasy* in no way reduces its pow-

¹ See the *Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work* released by the HSA (2007). Accessible on: http://hsa.ie/eng/Topics/Bullying_at_Work/#WhatisBullying (retrieved on 20/01/2017)

er over the individual. While the fetishist knows perfectly how things really are, he suspends the symbolic efficiency of this knowledge and acts as if he does *not* know it. Octave Mannoni builds on this idea. In an article entitled “Je sais bien mais quand même”, first published in 1964, he studies how a belief can survive the contradiction brought by the reality of experience.

Basing his work on the Freudian axiom that “there is no unconscious belief” and on the Lacanian axiom that “belief presupposes the Other as its support”, Octave Mannoni shows that the psychic phenomenon of denial of reality can be part of institutional deceptions (mystifications) that transform the belief. He underlines that the subject first “disavows or repudiates the refutation of his belief that is imposed by reality” (Mannoni 2003 [1964], 69) but also that “the reality that is observed does not remain without effect” (*ibid.* 70). So, “a belief can be abandoned and preserved at the same time” (*ibid.*), surviving the contradiction of experience by transforming itself. Octave Mannoni insists on two key elements: the *word* (in French “parole”) of others (the ones representing the authority, the initiated), which would make the belief, and the existence of *uninitiated and deceived people* who support the belief. He bases his reasoning on the example of the belief of the Hopi in Katcinas – an example, which Claude Levi-Strauss (1952) also mentioned in an article about the belief in Santa Claus in France in the early 1950’s. Claude Levi-Strauss stressed the importance of a split between those who know and those who believe in order to maintain authority. Octave Mannoni enriches this perspective by showing that this split is inscribed in the psyche of the individual.

The Hopi are a Native American tribe located in the South-western United States; Katcinas are believed to be spirits or gods, which can take different forms, and the Katcina dancers are masked members of the community who represent those spirits at religious ceremonies. Considering the autobiography of a Hopi Indian (Talayesva 1942), Octave Mannoni shows that *magical thinking is based on denial of reality and on the guarantee given by authorities*. He presents this process as follows: first, the Hopi child, considering the guarantee given by people he trusts, believes that Katcina dancers are the gods. Then, “The young Hopi, sure of the (non-magical) existence of the Katcinas, flies into a panic at the thought that it might be refuted by reality. He recovers by preserving his belief at the cost of a transformation that makes it “magical”; his people’s institutions help him do so” (Mannoni, 88). Initiation indeed enables the young Hopi to adopt a mystical dimension: the belief in the invisible presence of the spirits when the men dance with masks; in other words, the presence *nevertheless* despite the proof given by reality.

Octave Mannoni identifies a second movement of transformation of the belief: *the attribution of the magical belief to the credulous* – so with the belief in Santa Claus for instance, which is attributed to small children (Levi-Strauss

1952). But the deceiver can also become his own credulous and thus contribute to maintaining the belief that s/he had rejected. Octave Mannoni recalls that Casanova, an Italian adventurer and author from the 18th century, gives an example of this process in his memoirs: The adventurer is preparing a plan to deceive some peasants. Among other things, he prepares “a huge circle of sheets of paper that he bedecks with cabalistic signs. He has read a good many books on the occult; the critics note that he invents nothing, but simply follows the usual procedures” (Mannoni, 85). Dressed as a magician, Casanova enters this paper circle at night; but he is then surprised by a thunderstorm and is thrown in a state of panic. When recounting his experience, Casanova states that: “In the terror which overtook me I persuaded myself that if the flashes of lightning I saw did not strike me down, it was because they could not enter the circle” (Casanova 1822, in Mannoni 2003, 86). He stays in the circle, under heavy rain, showing that although he knew very well that the circle wasn’t magic, still he believed that the circle could offer magical protection from lightning.

Considering these examples, Octave Mannoni stresses that “there are several ways of believing and not believing” (*ibid.* 82) and that “a belief may be retained without the subject’s knowledge” (*ibid.* 77). The attribution to others, with the support of the social institutions, renders beliefs insubstantial, difficult to grasp – so with some irrational beliefs or so-called superstitions for instance. Although they are not repressed, the subject is not aware of them, and they are only revealed by unexpected reactions or effects. For instance, even if one knows that saying that a living person is dead will not kill him/her, still one prefers not to use the alleged death of a person as an excuse... This can be interpreted as a sign revealing the persistence of a belief in the magical powers of words.

Managerial discourse: A discourse sustained in spite of mismanagement

How does Octave Mannoni’s insight on the phenomena of belief and denial help understand the persistent use of managerial discourse despite the contradictions brought by real managerial practices of the so-called “human resources”? To illuminate this point, let us consider the experience of Sybil, a 35-year-old Irish woman that I interviewed on her experience of workplace bullying. When I met her, she was on leave. She left the company some months later.

Sybil’s narrative

Sybil graduated from university, with a degree in social sciences. Recently married and mother-of-one, she joined Finance-X², a multinational in the finan-

² Names of the people and of the company are pseudonyms.

cial sector, as task manager. There, she was supervised by a line manager who pressured her, overloading her with various tasks while nagging her for petty things, such as the way she was sitting on her chair. Not having been promoted since she joined the company, she requested a meeting with the head of her department (HoD) and a member of the human resources department (HR), where she asked to know what her line manager was reporting about her work. She said:

“I told them [HoD and HR] [...] ‘what are they actually telling you about my work? Because I’ve done such a fantastic work here for three years now, I mean, if anyone comes to the table and asks questions, I’m the only one who knows the answer. And yet I’m the worst paid and I’ve never been promoted. What information are you being told about my work?’”

And she adds: “it turns out that my line manager was saying I was doing ten documents a day. I was doing like fifty! She’s misrepresenting my statistics. So then, when I understood this, I started – because nobody could understand what I was doing, and some of the documents took ten seconds, other documents took like two hours – so what I did to cope was, [...] I’d always make sure my stats were about twenty every day. Because I got from the head of department that I should be processing between kind of fifteen and twenty a day, to meet my target, to have met for my performance review. So that when it came to performance review time, I could produce the evidence and say ‘but look, I’ve done fifteen to twenty every day, why can’t I be promoted?’”

When discovering that her line manager has misrepresented her statistics, Sybil doesn’t question the performance assessment and promotion system, or the definition of what performance is, but designs a strategy in order to be able to meet the expectations of the department, so that she will be ready to talk back if she doesn’t get promoted. Despite not getting any recognition for her work, Sybil shows that she still trusts the performance assessment and promotion system within the company. She demonstrates her continuous belief that if she meets the assessment criteria, she will be promoted, even though the three previous years have shown otherwise. Here, the paradoxical logic expressed by Octave Mannoni can be recognized. Sybil’s denial can be phrased as follows: “*I know very well that I am the worst paid and that I haven’t been promoted for the past three years although I’m doing a great job, but still I believe that my work will be recognised*”.

*Upholding the belief:
The subjective cost of a human resource*

When studying the process of denial, Octave Mannoni underlined that “the reality that is observed does not remain without effect”: the reality transforms the belief and, as shown by Freud, it also transforms the subject, which is split in two parts, one refuting and one upholding the belief. Sybil’s case illustrates this fact, as can be seen through excerpts from the in-depth interview I conducted with her (Vandeveldelde-Rougale 2014):

“I felt desperate a lot of the time. Kind of trapped. Desperate and trapped. Financially because... I had bills to pay, I didn't know how, how can I survive, how can I support my child and myself if I don't work? I have to work. And I suppose there's always like the promise that if you get this work experience and have this on your CV that you'll progress in life”

She adds that, when faced with more and more tasks: “I kind of dissociated from what was happening and [...] this thought would be going through my mind: ‘focus on the skills, learn as much as you can’ [...] saying to myself: ‘okay, I see what [my line manager] is doing. She's overloading me with work. She's shuffling all the work on me. Well, I'm going to learn how to do everything [...] and I'm just going to get as much as I possibly can out of this job, all the skills are gonna go on my CV’ [...] So that's how, that's how I coped with being overloaded with the work”.

Sybil here recognizes that she is splitting into one part that is desperate and cannot see any positive issue to the bullying and lack of recognition she experiences at work, and another part that still believes in the possibility of a successful career. Upholding this belief contributes to her investment in the organization, with increasing efforts to learn and fulfil her tasks. Until she breaks down after a petty nagging incident. Sybil stated:

“They got', they reduced me down to ... shaking, shaking. Like the job was over, they destroyed the job for me. They destroyed my reputation, there was no chance, you know. [...] I just had to basically abandon the job”.

She then went to see a doctor and went on sick leave. When she was due to go back to work, she suffered from a panic attack: “the time was getting near... ... And then I just felt some kind of screaming episode. ... of stress.”

During the interview, when considering her future, she shows that her splitting persists, by both upholding and refuting a famous aphorism from the German philosopher Nietzsche (1998[1889]: 6): “whatever does not kill me, makes me stronger”. She said:

“I do feel really hopeful for the future, but... hm... I'm not going to start saying ‘what doesn't kill you makes you stronger’, I'm not going to start using these clichés... [although she did when we first met], it really has stripped away a lot of my strength. It stripped away a lot of my inner resources.”

And then, she added: “I've even been thinking about doing something like diversity consulting! [...] that's the kind of person I am. Like any situation, I just believe that every situation you can learn something in, no matter how bad it is.”

Sybil's example shows that denial helped her to cope with difficult work situations, up to a point when she broke down, but also that denial can persist even after the employment contract with the company has been broken. Sybil is still in denial after having left the company; a denial that can be rephrased as follows: “I know very well that I'm weakened after the difficulties I encountered, but nevertheless, I believe that I have learnt something that will be useful for my professional career”.

A question arises here: What is upholding this process of denial so that a belief in professional development can subsist even in adverse professional conditions?

Words as masks

Attention to managerial discourse in the framework of my research lead me to suggest that managerial discourse has a key role in upholding the belief in professional development, as well as other beliefs, such as the belief in fair treatment and respectful work-relations which lead Sybil, and other people faced with bullying from their line manager or other colleagues, to turn to the human resources department for support – generally entering a lengthy and tiresome process which lead them to quit their job while the bully kept his/her place within the company. Octave Mannoni's work on the upholding of a belief is instrumental to understand this process. In fact, he insisted on two key elements: the word of others (the ones representing the authority, the initiated), which would make the belief, and the existence of uninitiated and deceived people, who support the belief. Those two elements can be identified in Sybil's case.

At work, managerial discourse is prominent. It is enunciated by managers (the people with authority) and clearly appears in corporate communication. On the so-called "career" webpage of the website of the company that Sybil worked for, one can read:

"Our culture is diverse and strongly supportive. We give our people opportunities and rewards, as well as tools and support to grow and enrich their careers. So if you strive to succeed, join us and we'll help you to become your very best."

From this, one may infer that Sybil's belief in the possibility of recognition ("reward") and a professional career ("grow", "enrich their career", "succeed"...) within the company can find a basis in corporate communication. In addition, it can be noted that the promise for a successful career is also part of the traditional representation of what a professional path should be, that is a path associating increase in responsibilities and salary, alongside the recognition of the experience gained and the work outputs over time. This belief is nurtured as early as school, where children are encouraged by teachers and parents alike to pay attention in class and to do their homework in order to get good marks, and thus to have higher chances to get on the budget at university for instance or to join famous schools, so as to get a good education and then a good position, a good starting point for a "successful career" – even though parents and teachers alike know that the unemployment rate in the country can make it difficult, even for successful students, to find a job. Here, the hypothesis can also be made that the belief that youth have in the possibility of a successful future also helps in sustaining adults' hope and belief in a better future...

The second element identified by Mannoni as upholding the belief is “the existence of uninitiated and deceived people”. It seems that youth represent these “uninitiated people” that managerial discourse can deceive most easily. The “career” webpage of a company, for instance, is foremost addressed to people considering joining the company, i.e. people not initiated to the way recognition and promotion really work in that company. This is the case in the company that Sybil worked for, where one can see that the text on the career page targets future employees, those who “strive to succeed” and are invited by the company to join: “join us and we’ll help you to become your very best”. Jobseekers may believe in the promise made by the company and therefore apply to its recruitment program. Or they may have doubt about the reality of the promise and choose differently. But doubt retains the possibility of believing, as long as not proved otherwise. With the development of Internet and social media, disappointed employees are trying to regain some power by publicising on management’s misdemeanours on websites such as “ratemyemployer.ca” or “ratemycompany.usa”, which promote “informed career decisions”. Aware of this new trend, people responsible for the companies’ image are trying to devise new strategies, associating both marketing and human resources departments. They try to reduce the discrepancies between corporate discourse and other discourses about the company, and also to relativize critical discourses. In order to continue to attract so-called “young talents”, ready to invest time and energy to fulfil the aim of the organization (i.e. in general to make profit), sustaining the belief in the possibility of a successful career and in companies respectful of individual’s rights is still paramount today.

In addition to the two elements highlighted by Octave Mannoni, a third element can be identified as supporting the belief in managerial discourse despite the contradictions brought up by real work experiences: words of managerial discourse themselves.

In our society, language is usually considered to have a referential value, i.e. to be able to describe the world. Thus, specific meanings are attached to words; a meaning gained through time and history, which may change over time but is fixed at a given time (as shown in dictionaries). Individuals learn the meaning associated with words through education, a process that mobilizes authority figures. Here, it can be stressed that psychoanalyst and philologist Julia Kristeva considers that our use of language is supported by denial: although we know that no word perfectly describes reality, still we speak as if it were the case. She states that: “It is perhaps unavoidable that, when a subject confronts the factitiousness of object relation, when he stands at the place of the want that founds it, the fetish becomes a life preserver, temporary and slippery, but nonetheless indispensable. But is not exactly language our ultimate and inseparable fetish?”

And language, precisely, is based on fetishist denial ('I know that, but just the same', 'the sign is not the thing, but just the same', etc.) and defines us in our essence as speaking beings." (Kristeva 1982, 37).

From the above – notably the use of the word "career" both in managerial discourse and by Sybil when trying to put some meaning back into her experience of bullying – one can infer that the presence of some words designating some principles and promises (respect, career...) in managerial discourse and the fact that this discourse is spread by authority figures (managers, coaches... and, before them, parents, teachers...), can lead the subject to believe in the "real possibility" that these principles will be implemented within the company. In other words, the subject believes in their "presence" as part of the managerial practices. This mechanism is similar to the one exerted by the presence of Katsina masks associated with the initiation received by Hopi children, that leads the Hopi adults to believe in the possibility of the presence of spirits during religious ceremonies, although they know that fellow adults are behind the masks. The belief in managerial principles prompts the subject to invest him/herself in the company, even if the reality of managerial practices contradicts those principles and promises. The importance given to signs by human beings seeking to make sense out of their environment encourages them to believe. Old sayings such as "where there is smoke, there is fire" can participate in upholding a belief, even a slight one, in elements from the discourse that have been contradicted by reality. This belief can be phrased as such: "where there is the word career/respect/etc. there is a will to promote professional development/sound relationships and ethical behaviour/etc."

Words from managerial discourse can thus be said to support the belief in the possibility of a career (or in the prevention of bullying etc), despite what may be happening within the organisation. This belief in managerial discourse can take several forms. It can be a "first-degree belief", whereby in a process similar to Hopi adults' belief in Katsinas, employees' belief in a managerial ideal can be supported by the belief of the "uninitiated" in the "masks" that are made by words from the managerial discourse, that is by the belief of the children and youth not having experienced (or only slightly) the tension between discourse and real practices. The belief in managerial discourse can also be a "second-degree belief". Indeed, similarly to Casanova's belief in magic, the belief in a managerial ideal can be supported by the belief that it is possible to deceive others, namely by the belief of the people phrasing and enunciating managerial discourse (e.g. the employees of the marketing department drafting the corporate communication) that some people may believe in it. This "second-degree belief" (cynical belief) can in turn lead them to believe in the discourse that they are drafting.

Conclusion: Denial and corporate life

Sybil's case illustrates the persistence of a belief in the managerial system (performance assessment, career perspectives...) that is supported by a word, here the word "career", even though she has been confronted with discrepancies between managerial discourse and managerial practices. This case is far from being unique. Researchers from various disciplines³ have noted and documented the gap between the ideal vision offered by managerial discourse (especially as it appears in corporate communication) and actual reality of managerial practices within organizations. Despite this observation, the use of managerial discourse by managers and employees alike persists. It is as if "everybody knows that ideals expressed by managerial discourse cannot be implemented in reality, but still, people behave as if they could be".

The mechanism of denial, as phrased by Octave Mannoni (1964), is a key to explore this phenomenon. It enables to highlight the elements supporting the continuous belief in the promises of managerial discourse, namely: the word of others (authority figures, such as managers, coaches...) and the existence of uninitiated or deceived people (youth, jobseekers...). Attention to the referential value attributed to language in our society and a parallel with the role of masks upholding Hopi Native Americans' belief in spirits enabled to introduce a third element supporting a belief that sustains management authority: words from managerial discourse themselves, which uphold the belief in the promises entailed by the corporate communication.

Other works conducted in philosophy on ideology and in anthropology on authority, give ground to further thinking on institutionalized denial. Slavoj Žižek thus builds on the formula of cynical reason proposed by Peter Sloterdijk (which reminds of the paradoxical logic phrased by Octave Mannoni) to illuminate what he calls "the ideological fantasy", where people "know that, in their activity, they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it" (Žižek 2008 [1989], 30). Reworking Octave Mannoni's work on denial, American social anthropologist Donald Tuzin (1945–2007) has shown the importance of denial in the organization of cultural systems by questioning the belief as the anthropological and political basis for authority. He conducted an ethnographic study of the belief in *Tambaran* from the Arapesh Iahita, a people from New Guinea (Tuzin 1980; 1997; 2009[2006]). The *Tambaran* was a secret cult that enabled men to dominate women. It rooted on an initiation in several steps whereby the men progressively learnt that the biggest secret was that there was no secret. Institutionalized denial, whereby women and children continued to believe that

³ Notably psychosociology, work psychopathology, sociology. For a synthetically review of litterature in France, see Jean Vannereau (2004).

there was a secret to protect, thus supporting a belief that the men had progressively lost while continuing to believe in the value of keeping the secret (the secret that there was no secret), had a key role in upholding the political structure of this ethnic group. When a group of men chose to reveal to the women of the tribe that the Tambaran didn't exist, the cult collapsed. So did the domination of men over women, giving ground to chaos in the aftermath, as long as new authority centres had not been built (Tuzin 1997). The Arapesh's belief in the Tambaran can be seen as a kind of mirror enabling us to question the functional and political interest we, as part of a society, have to preserve some beliefs "nevertheless", in spite of reality.

After Octave Mannoni's work on the structure of belief, where he shows that credulity attributed to other (a part of the self, another individual or a group) is a means to sustain a belief that has to be refuted when facing reality but which still keeps its meaning and its value, Donald Tuzin's work shows that there can be a functional and political necessity to uphold a belief in order to preserve the identity of a group. This opens up interesting perspectives to further question managerial discourse as an institutionalized means to support the belief in managerial ideology and the authority it exerts on people, so that they go on with the system and continue acting as "human resources" for corporations.

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Anjes Vandeveld-Rugal
Univerzitet Paris Diderot (LCSP), Francuska

Reči kao maske: o značaju poricanja u menadžmentu

Ovaj članak se oslanja na socio-antropološka istraživanja u kojima je autorka ispitala efekat menadžerskog diskursa na pojedinca uzimajući u obzir iskustva nasilja na poslu. Primećeno je da uprkos jazu između onoga što menadžment govori i onoga što radi, menadžeri i zaposleni i dalje koriste reči menadžerskog diskursa. Istražujući frojdov koncept fetišizma, francuski filosof, etnolog i psi-

hoanalitičar Oktav Manoni (Octave Mannoni, 1899–1989), u članku naslovljenom «Znam ali ipak...» pokazao je da uverenje može da preživi poricanje realnosti. Razotkrivanje fantazije kao takve nije dovoljno da umanjí njenu moć nad pojedincem. Zasnovan na studiji slučaja, ovaj članak pokazuje da paradoksalna logika, koju je formulisao Oktav Manoni, može da nam pomogne da razumemo kako menadžerski diskurs može da utiče na pojedince, uprkos razlikama između onoga što se proklamuje i što se primenjuje u praksi u radnim organizacijama. Hipoteza autorke jeste da reči mogu da funkcionišu kao što to čine maske u nekim tradicionalnim plemenima, i da su stoga sredstvo koje podržava uverenje pomoću kojeg menadžment održava svoj autoritet.

Ključne reči: autoritet, klinička sociologija, maltretiranje na radnom mestu, menadžerski diskurs, poricanje

*Des mots comme des masques:
de l'importance du déni de réalité dans le management*

Cet article s'appuie sur une recherche socio-anthropologique qui questionne les effets du discours managérial sur l'individu au prisme d'expériences de harcèlement moral au travail. Il étudie le constat selon lequel, en dépit de l'écart entre ce que dit et ce que fait le management, les mots du discours managérial restent largement utilisés, tant par les managers que par les employés. Dans un article intitulé « Je sais bien mais quand même », Octave Mannoni (1899–1989), philosophe, ethnologue et psychanalyste français, montre, à partir du concept freudien de fétichisme, qu'une croyance peut survivre au démenti de la réalité. Reconnaître la fantaisie en tant que telle n'est pas suffisant pour réduire son pouvoir sur l'individu. À partir d'une étude de cas, le présent article montre que la logique paradoxale formulée par Octave Mannoni peut nous aider à comprendre comment le discours managérial peut exercer son influence sur les sujets, en dépit des écarts entre ce qui est dit et ce qui est fait dans les organisations. L'hypothèse proposée est que les mots peuvent agir comme le font des masques dans certaines tribus traditionnelles, constituant ainsi le support d'une croyance qui soutient l'autorité du management.

Mots clés: autorité, déni de réalité, discours managérial, harcèlement moral, sociologie clinique

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