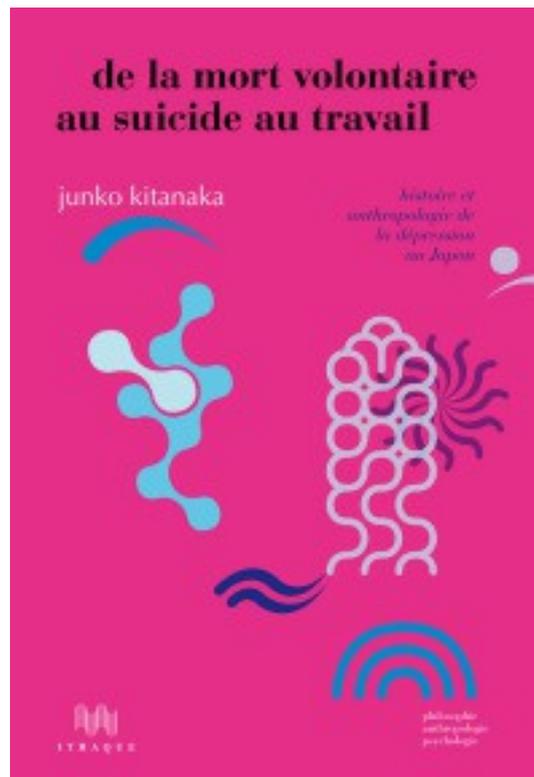


Psychological labor, overwork depression, and suicide : Comparing France and Japan

Inalco, 2 rue de Lille, 75006 Paris, Salle des actes
Vendredi 23 mai, 10h-17h

Workshop organisé par le Cermes3 et le CEJ, en présence de Junko Kitanaka,
par Pierre-Henri Castel, Christian Galan, Alain Ehrenberg, Nicolas Henckes et Maurice Cassier



The aim of this workshop is to bring together a number of specialists from different disciplines in order to discuss Junko Kitanaka's contribution from a comparative perspective. To what extent our understanding of work-related suicide and depression in France could benefit from her description of what happened in Japan? What could be the relevant similarities and differences between the two countries? Are there practical consequences to be drawn from these differences, in terms of public policies or grassroots interventions, and which ones? And finally on a more general level, what do we learn from such an investigation about the local appropriation of global trends?

For Junko Kitanaka's book, *Depression in Japan : Psychiatric Cures for a Society in Distress*, now translated in French, stands at the crossroads of at least four major directions of investigation in present-day social science.

1. Anthropology of medicine and mental health : one key point of Junko Kitanka's argument is that the meaning of "depression" and "suicide" is overdetermined by culture and history. Even when the medicalization process, which is a global process, appears to standardize the meaning of these words (through pharmaceutical marketing, among other factors), they still remain rooted into local medical practices, cultural beliefs, and political fights with a strong historical background. Depression, in this respect, demonstrates that, rather than one and only one biomedicine, we may be facing a highly diverse collection of *local* biomedicines. In this context, how psychological labor can sustain a systematic comparison? And how such a comparison between Japan and France could

help us to understand the common and specific meanings and uses of "depression" and "work-related suicide" in both societies?

2. Sociology of work and industry : can "psychological labor" (English for both "souffrance psychosociale" and for "travail psychologique") be constructed as a social or political universal? For it seems to rely heavily on cultural definitions of autonomy, mental health, and even of what count as an "individual" in Japan and in France. The dialectic of the local and the global seems to undermine the evidence of a sweeping "domination" of the neoliberal paradigm worldwide. But it might not boil down to a mere political issue of local "resistance" to globalized capitalism. On the contrary, local resources, contextual forms of subjectivation and empowerment, all point to a more complex and dynamic interplay between socio-economic constraints and new opportunities for a greater autonomy of individuals. A core issue, in this respect, is the emergence of a new "psychiatric science of work", within the framework of the risk society. To what extent, on the one hand, this new science in the making, dealing with people's stress at work, does foreshadow a new form of social control? To what extent, on the other hand, the current medicalization of psychological labor is to be hailed as an "scientific" stopgap against the over-exploitation of emotions and cognitive abilities of workers?

3. Another striking feature of Junko Kitanaka's work is to de-estheticize the otherness of Japan : bringing her country closer to us, she shows that in the aftermath of the Lost Decade, and with the new policies implemented by Junichiro Koizumi and his successors, many seemingly "Western" moral and psychological plagues just bursted out in Japan as if there were no more Japanese "exceptionalism". How could Junko Kitanaka's book contribute to reshape the field of Japanese studies in France ? Is the entry through medical anthropology more relevant than any other ? In other words : how should we proceed to expand the inquiry?

Matinée

Pierre-Henri Castel : Bridging the gap between medical anthropology and the sociology of work : Junko Kitanaka's on psychological labour.

Alain Ehrenberg : From idioms of distress to an anthropology of adversity in individualistic society : Propositions for a radical intellectual shift.

Nicolas Henckes : Standardized, localized and embodied. A commentary on the sociality of biological psychiatry in Junko Kitanaka's ethnography of the clinic.

Après-midi

Christian Galan : Does Japan really exist ?

Sarah Terrail Lormel : Social phobia in Japan : A counterpoint to Junko Kitanaka's description of depression.

Bernard Thomann : The evolution of work ethics in Japan.