A Catholic-Personalist Critique of Personalized Customer Service

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This article presents an ethical analysis and critique of personalized service in the tradition of Catholic social teaching (CST) that is both Catholic and Personalist. It tackles the ethical issues involved when service delivery is personalized, issues that affect both the consumers and the service providers. It focuses on nonprofessional services that are offered by low-skilled blue-collar workers through corporations that are organized to produce efficient service to a high volume of consumers. Customer service involves intersubjectivity, that is, interaction between two persons as subjects. Ethics in the service context is not only about treating consumers in a just manner; the threats to the personhood of the service providers are also significant, for their work cannot be separated from their very being. By focusing on the ethical issues of emotional labor and consumerism of human service, the study will argue that the human interaction in personalized service runs the risk of alienating us from our authentic selves and from each other. If the objective of personalized service is to create authentic human relationship in the service encounter, the latter can arise even in a nonpersonalized service. We do not have to *personalize* our actions in order to create genuine human interaction. Instead, what we must do is to treat each other as persons.

Introduction

A Customer Service All-Star and Personal Stylist in a store in the southeastern United States believes getting to know the customer on a personal level leads to more repeat visits. "I try to figure out everything I can about my customers and get to know their family, too," he said. "If a man doesn't like to shop, I try to get him in the fitting room with a few things, offer him a cup of coffee, then

keep bringing him stuff to try on. Meanwhile, I'm asking questions, "Do you wear a tie to work? Do you have kids? What kinds of hobbies do you have?" When the customer leaves, I make notes in my personal book. That way, when I follow up or they come back in, they feel like they're dealing with a friend.[1]

In the small businesses of the past, customers and service providers knew each other for a long time. They exchanged not only business transactions or pleasantries but also personal information as well. Business owners immediately received feedback from their customers, most of whom were friends and neighbors, and they could personally fix service problems. As towns and counties were urbanized, we saw the rise of chain businesses owned by stockholders of big corporations and run by professional operational managers. Many customers came to rely on the brand name as an indicator of the kind of service to expect. At the same time, companies began to expand their brand activities "to encompass not merely information about the particular products they offer, but about the kinds of people that their customers can expect to become and the kinds of lifestyles they should expect to attain."[2] The use of technology made possible the routinization of some aspects of the service process. Automation and standardization provided low cost services, but they also resulted in replaceable rank-and-file service providers. In most cases, services were based on guidelines and procedures supplied by directors who worked away from the business location and were carried out by a minimum-wage earner who did not know her customers very well. The intimate and permanent associations among small business store owners, local diners, and neighborhood beauticians with their clients were replaced by fortuitous and casual business encounters.

Eventually, large corporations realized the importance of delivering exceptional customer service when they started to compete with each other. In the global economy, companies have to expand and grow in order to maintain their market share. Financialization of industries puts pressure on business leaders to focus on short-term goals as revenue and sales reports are monitored almost on a daily basis. Internet reviews, blogs, consumer feedbacks, and social networks enable customers to share information about services and express their assessment. Goodman notes that in these days, "Twice as many people hear about a bad experience as about a good experience. Also, people tend to pay more attention to bad word of mouth."[3] Attracting new customers becomes expensive as advertising turns global, while retaining the old ones is difficult. As a result, companies become more customer-driven. They realize the need to tailor their products to their clients and establish a relationship with them by connecting to their senses and feelings. Businesses know that "when people interact at a human

and emotional level, there are greater opportunities for the enhancement of strong relationships and mutual commitment."[4] This approach to service, which aims to turn business transaction into a form of personal relationship for the purposes of customer retention and increased business opportunities, is called personalized or customer-centric service.[5]

Personalized service focuses on the quality of customer experience that is defined as "how your customers perceive their interactions with your company."[6] As sociologist Arlie Hochschild puts it, "Impersonal relations are to be seen *as if* they were personal. Relations based on getting and giving money are to be seen *as if* they were relations free of money."[7] Personalized service is not equivalent to customized service. The latter entails adapting the business to the local customs and to the lifestyles and needs of customers. Personalized service appeals to specific interests and preferences of the customer who must be treated as a unique individual. This involves two things.

First is the anticipation of the needs and wants of customers by recording previous dealings and tracking down their personal information through the use of customer information systems and related database storage. The wide use of online transactions make them an efficient tool for collecting information from current and potential customers. Because of the power of social media to influence the market, many hotels hire full-time people to monitor the web in order to anticipate the needs of their in-coming guests or gather comments regarding their stays.[8] Airlines advise their employees to go out for breakfast with their valued clients to know their preferences. In upscale establishments, personalized service's scope and range are almost unlimited. Sherman observes, "Workers must be on the lookout for needs the guest might not articulate or even be aware of."[9]

The second aspect of personalized service is being able to connect emotionally to customers in order to establish a relationship with them that they would consider personal and intimate. To achieve this, personalized service necessitates greater regulation and monitoring of service providers. Because nonverbal behaviors may have greater impact in communication than verbal ones, "work rules that require face-to-face interaction will require greater control of emotional expression."[10] Vocal and facial expressions of service providers, together with their posture and physical appearance must be under control, no matter how stressful the job is. They must never show any appearance of fatigue or boredom or convey that the service interaction is just a part of the routine. They must be deferential with their customers and treat them as special: make constant eye contact; project a sense of warmth or affection; use their names often; use expressions of empathy; show interest in their hobbies, business, work, or family; and other "embellishment of routinized actions with personal referents to make a person feel like an

individual, not just [a] customer."[11] Emotional connection with customers is most necessary when failure in service happens. Customer recovery involves more than fixing the problem. Service providers must reach out and listen patiently to complaining customers, show genuine empathy, express apologies, and try their best to win back their trust and loyalty.

This article presents an ethical analysis and critique of personalized service in the tradition of Catholic social teaching (CST) that is both Catholic and Personalist. It tackles the ethical issues involved when customer service is personalized, issues that affect both the customers and the service providers. The study focuses on nonprofessional services that are offered by low-skilled, blue-collar workers in a corporate setting. According to Williams, "When the person is the object of one's action a whole ethical structure enters into play that is absent when the object of one's action is a thing."[12] This is because "two-sided mutual relations can and do exist between persons."[13] Customer service entails mutual dependency and inter-subjectivity, that is, interaction between two persons as subjects. Every form of customer service involves the personhood of the service provider. Because it also requires the participation of the customer, the personhood of the latter is likewise affected or enacted. Both the service provider and the customers bring into the service interaction their attitudes, cultural and personal values, beliefs, idiosyn-crasies, and expectations. In addition to the physical aspect, the service provider also engages in intangible services—it is not only the act of serving that matters but also the manner by which it is performed. Ethics in customer service is not only about treating customers in a just manner. The threats to the personhood of the service provider are also significant, for their work cannot be separated from their being. This study will argue that the human interaction in personalized service runs the risk of alienating us from our authentic selves and from each other. It will present what is an authentic human service from the perspective of CST and how it differs from personalized service. If the objective of personal-ized service is to create human relationship, economic transaction itself has the potential for authentic participation between persons and for the development of a relationship characterized by mutual respect and love because every person is a moral subject who is capable of loving and acting in a responsible way.

Personalism places persons and personal relationships at the focal point of theories and practices. According to Melé, "Although there are many different perspectives, scholars of Personalism agree on emphasizing the uniqueness of the person and his or her dignity."[14] The person is a subjective being who is "capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself, and with a tendency to self-realization."[15] Reflection on human experience reveals the uniqueness of the person—her intelligence and freewill. She is essentially

distinct from nonpersons; she is the subject of her own experiences and actions. While not to be thought of exclusively as a moral philosophy, Personalism gives strong emphasis on ethical concerns. This is because its distinct feature is the recognition of the intrinsic value and interrelationality of the person, which excludes the possibility of treating her as an instrument, a thing, or a means to an end. In the words of John Paul II, the Personalist principle "is an attempt to translate the commandment of love into the language of philosophical ethics."[16] The person is a being for whom the only suitable consideration is love.

Personalism "is fundamentally phenomenological in character and is based upon descriptions of our observation and participation in reality."[17] It takes into consideration the data gathered by sciences and our lived experiences as part of our community. Because metaphysics is essential to ground the person's dignity,[18] CST analyzes and judges human experience in the light of divine truths and Christian metaphysics, while assimilating insights from contemporary philosophy, especially the subjectivity and irreducibility of the person. Created in God's image and likeness, the person has a transcendental dignity that takes primacy over social, political, and economic realities. She "is the source, the center, and the purpose of all social life."[19] At the heart of CST is the concern for the promotion of the genuine development of the person in all dimensions: "whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will."[20]

Emotional Labor and Alienation

Catholic Personalism claims that the basic unit of economic analysis is the person in action who is "engaged and being changed by those activities principally by the work that they do."[21] When it comes to the morality of work, a fundamental issue in Personalism is the danger of using the person as an instrument of production.[22] Marx calls this condition alienation and it generally occurs when work is separated from workers as they are made to perform tasks that are not expressive of their own self-conscious nature. Basing his analysis on the production process that took place in the factories of his day, Marx laments fragmented and highly repetitive assembly line work that does not allow self-expression and decision-making opportunities, turning workers into cogs in the machine. CST recognizes alienation as the central problem of our time that affects every type of work in all societies. It is the feeling of powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, or self-estrangement in work. John Paul II acknowledges, "Alienation is found also in work, when it is organized so as to ensure maximum returns and profits with no concern whether the worker, through his own labour, grows or diminishes

as a person."[23] Workers are valued solely for their labor power and capacity to produce rather than as human beings endowed with rationality and autonomy.

At the surface, service providers seem to be less susceptible to work alienation, especially the way the latter has been analyzed in Marxist literature. In customer service, production and consumption happen simultaneously, whereas these two are separate in the traditional factory setting. Customer service involves a wide variety of tasks that necessitate frequent interaction among service providers, managers, and customers. Service industries are less rigidly structured as managers, supervisors, and associates more or less do the same kind of work, though with different levels of authority. Compared to manufacturing, there is minimal division of labor between workers and managers and among the workers themselves. Hochschild argues nevertheless that "if we can become alienated from goods in a goods-producing society, we can become alienated from service in a service-producing society."[24] In the same way as human energy and power can be commoditized as mere instruments of production in the factory assembly line, human emotions can be commoditized when the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself.

Hochschild defines emotional labor as the inducement or suppression of "feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others—in this case, the sense of being cared for in [a] convivial and safe place."[25] It comes in the form of (1) surface acting that refers to external appearances, for example, facial expression, tone of voice, or posture when one displays an emotion that she does not truly feel, and (2) deep acting—when one deliberately modifies her actual feelings by suppressing negative emotions and controlling inner thoughts or imagination so that she can foster the emotions demanded by her work role. Emotional dissonance results when one fails to reconcile what she actually feels with the required emotional displays. Through direct and indirect surveillance, the use of mystery shoppers, socialization, contract requirements, and by a system of institutional and informal rewards/ incentives and punishments, management controls the employee's outward expressions and her display of desired emotions. Inability of service providers to display the desired appearance of emotion "would justify termination under most situations."[26]

Emotional management is a common human experience. We do it in our daily interactions to create smooth interpersonal relationships or as a matter of social rule. Emotional labor in customer service, however, is different because the relationship between the customer and the provider is not premised on freedom and equality, but is analogous to that of master and servant where unequal exchanges are normal. Service providers must be warm and personal in dealing with cus-

tomers, but when the latter snap at them even when they did not do anything wrong, they are not supposed to take it personally. Indeed, many jobs put burden on the emotions of workers. Fire fighters and airline pilots, for example have to control their fear or anxiety. In these cases, however, emotional control is "not directed toward other people, nor can the result of it be judged by the state of other people's feelings."[27] Service providers, for their part, manage and control their emotions in accordance with service standards, corporate brand image, and other occupational strictures or display rules set by the management. They must follow certain standards on their overall comportment and communication procedures. For example, some companies have specific instructions on the size of one's smile (at least three inches), appropriate greetings, check-in and recovery procedures, the number of steps to take in pointing direction, how the menu should be presented, and the use of branded words and scripted lines. Physical labor is not alienating in itself, and the same can be said of emotional labor.[28] The latter becomes a source of alienation when it is routinized, commoditized, appropriated, and turned into a source of profit in personalized service. It is a matter of routine for service providers to be cheerful and patient, to say sorry and empathize, to speak with caring tones, "to accept uneven exchanges, to be treated with disrespect and anger by a client."[29]

Since the publication of Hochschild's seminal work on emotional labor based on her ethnographic study of flight attendants, several descriptive and correlational studies have been done to determine the effects of emotional labor on different service providers, including bank tellers, adventure guides, fast-food and hotel workers, restaurant servers, call-center operators, retailers, beauticians, and hairdressers. Studies indicate that emotional labor is closely associated with stress and burnout,[30] emotional exhaustion leading to emotional numbness, decline in job satisfaction and increase in turnover rate,[31] poor self-esteem, depression, cynicism,[32] contact fatigue, emotional exhaustion, drinking problems, drug abuse, and absenteeism.[33] In the end, emotional labor may lead to self-estrangement, not only because the worker fails to express herself through her work but also because she is forced to dissociate herself from the job and create a personality distinct from her real self. Service providers have to suppress their authentic emotions and true selves and are made to generate a new persona or a false self that pleases both the management and customers. In the process, they may experience the "difficulty determining the relationship of the persona to the 'real' person that they believe themselves to be."[34]

Alienation in customer service, contrary to alienation in manufacturing, has the tendencies to foster normalization due to its face-to-face and interactive nature, leading both the service providers and the customers to take alienation for granted.

Customers "who lack real relationships can get used to superficial interactions and lose the ability to sense genuine emotion."[35] Emotions are an integral dimension of our embodied subjectivity. Our body is not only an intermediary between us and the material world but also among ourselves. Through our emotions, we express ourselves and interrelate with each other in many different ways. When we lose access to our genuine emotions, we also lose an important means of communicating with each other and interpreting the social world.

Consumerism of Human Service and Commoditization of Human Relationship

It is not enough to offer good products to compete in today's market. For Jonathan Tisch, "Today's consumers are looking for something more—a relationship with an organization that will truly enrich their lives."[36] Personalized service is about selling human relationships.[37] Research indicates that personalized service is important in creating customer loyalty.[38] Most of us would like to do business with someone we know and trust. It is also a way to recover from inadequate service because one bad experience is sufficient to lose a customer. If transactions are grounded on a personal relationship (real or imagined), such periodic lapses may be forgiven.

Benedict XVI writes, "The human being is made for gift, which expresses and makes present his transcendent dimension."[39] She is a being who is made to be in communion with other persons. John Paul II writes, "As a person, he can give himself to another person or to other persons, and ultimately to God, who is the author of his being and who alone can fully accept his gift."[40] However, a business organization that is understood as a unit of economic enterprise is not a person. A business encounter between two strangers who want to maximize their self-interest may turn them into neighbors, but it does not necessarily transform them into brothers. To get to know a person by gathering her private information without her permission and using this for increased profit or control is not the basis of an authentic human relationship. As a being-in-relation-to, persons demand reciprocity. The customer is not merely a source of revenue or a task to be performed; the customer is a being who deserves genuine respect and care. Conversely, service providers are autonomous subjects with rights and dignity.

Personalized service makes customers vulnerable to manipulations. Boyce claims that customer relationship management (CRM) is not about learning the "needs of individual customers and delivering value to them … but on identifying, attracting, and retaining the most valuable customer to the firm, CRM is centrally about maximizing profitability, not maximizing customer service and

satisfaction per se."[41] Thus, it is susceptible to ethically questionable practices such as price or service discrimination, denial of service, and unauthorized use of customers' information.[42] In most cases, customers are mere passive receivers rather than active participants in establishing "relationship" with the company. In contrast, "authentic relationship marketing is based on caring for the individual, not on increasing long-term profitability."[43] Consumerism of service begins in the training of service providers where they are usually taught how to role-play empathy in various scenarios, memorize scripted lines and brand words, develop people skills, and learn how to engage their customers and treat them as friends. Service providers must show the appropriate emotion in order to generate the desired response from customers: increase in sales/consumption, higher tips, patience, favorable feedback on comment cards and online reviews, and repeat business. For Ford, emotional displays in customer service, together with other sales tricks and false fronts (phony smiles, fake fraternization) can be considered as deceptive practices that are good for business but may be detrimental to customers.[44] They manipulate customers to consume more than what they desire. Some customers who develop stereotypes of service providers may react negatively if they think they did not receive the kind of personalized service that they think they should have. They may learn to prefer poor or deceptive service done with feelings and empathy that may not be real to efficient, reliable, and honest service. On the other hand, personalized service may be detrimental to the firm and to customer loyalty if it fails to create the right frame of mind on the part of customers, or when the latter perceive the firm as unethical. A study among bank tellers shows that those who engage in personalized service are perceived by customers as more courteous, but less ethical and effective.[45] Some customers can distinguish unfelt emotion or insincere apology, and "synthetic compassion can be more offensive than none at all."[46]

Each person is a unique historical individual, but all persons have equal dignity. The latter does not come from one's financial status, purchasing power, or the position that she occupies in the business transaction. That all customers must be treated as persons means that all of them must be treated equally. It is wrong for the industry to discriminate customers based on social class, sex, religion, or appearance. The Second Vatican Council is unequivocal in its declaration that "a man is more precious for what he is than for what he has."[47] But personalized service does not only employ human emotions for corporate uses, it also demands more time and human resources that may impede the efficiency of service to all customers. Service providers commonly use their first impression of customers to categorize them and base their service priorities and style of interaction on such categorization. Generally, the rich are given more efficient service, more

attention, and stronger claim for emotional labor. The denial or delay of services to less-valued customers who usually belong to minority or disadvantaged groups are at times "meant to discourage a certain individual or group of individuals from returning to an establishment."[48] Human service is commoditized so that it becomes more available to those who can pay more, rather than to customers who are in need (e.g., disabled persons, senior citizens, pregnant or nursing mothers).[49] This is confirmed by a number of empirical studies.[50] For example, male customers usually received priority in service, but "questionable behavior directed toward female customers was looked down upon more so than the same actions directed toward male customers."[51] Morris and Feldman report that employees at Disney World are expected to be more accommodating to high-status visitors while "many flight attendants believed that they should engage in longer and more sincere displays of positive emotion to passengers in first class and business class, and they actually did so."[52] Another study indicates that customers who are well-dressed or in formal attire receive better and more cordial treatment in anticipation of their big purchase or high tips. As Vilani-Yavetz and Gilboa find, "On the other hand, service employees will offer cheaper deals to poorly dressed customers at the expense of good service."[53]

Part of personalized service is to offer loyalty programs to the most valued customers. However, loyalty in this sense is not a virtue, but a means to generate future revenues. Their purpose is to retain customers and to reward those who are loyal to the brand, to make them feel "special, important and appreciated."[54] These rewards come in various forms: special accommodations, invitation to exclusive events, special discounts, or access to executive lounges and terminals. However, they create double standards of service. As one marketing study remarks, "Firms that utilize these programs are explicitly shifting resources away from nonparticipating customers in favor of customers who participate in their loyalty programs that may lead to accusations of discriminatory customer treatment."[55]

Discrimination in personalized service may give wealthy customers the idea that they are unique and deserving individuals, making wealth "an individual trait analogous to morality and intelligence."[56] Personalized service generates new forms of inequality—not between the proletariat and the capitalist or between the rich and the poor but between the customers who demand more personal attention and the service providers who are obligated to comply. In some pet-friendly establishments, even animals are entitled to human labor as they are provided with special beds, caretaker concierge, and in-room dining service. Unlike the traditional class inequality where workers and capitalists rarely interact in the process of production, customer service involves face-to-face interaction that might lead to normalization of inequality.

Authentic Human Relationship in Customer Service

The service industry shapes and influences customer expectations. By empha-sizing personalized service through advertising, branding, employee training, and service evaluation, the industry is also creating a demand for it. There are customers, however, who still consider reliability and efficiency, rather than the warmth of personal pampering, as the most important indicator of customer service quality.[57] Many of them prefer not to engage in small talk or unnecessary delays. Emotional connections alone will not do the trick: "firms must provide high quality products and services to achieve customer loyalty."[58] Nonetheless, this does not imply poor service or withholding service from clients. Service providers are always expected to assist/serve the customers; to be efficient, polite, and professional; but they are not obligated to satisfy all the wants and demands of their customers. They ought to apologize when mistakes happen, but it must be said with conviction and honesty. When customers' expectations cannot be met, the organization must develop communications to inform them about what they should expect.[59]

Catholic social teaching holds that authentic human social relationships of love, reciprocity, and loyalty can be conducted within economic activity itself—not only outside it or "after" it.[60] Despite its instrumental nature, customer service should not result in the diminishment of any of the parties involved. Every form of service interaction can and ought to be motivated by love. James Franklin points out that "in all those roles, there is necessarily personal interaction and there is the opportunity to do it well and lovingly, or not."[61] The simultaneity of production and consumption in service makes us realize how we depend on each other. "This ever greater interdependency," writes Edward O'Boyle, "makes humans more aware of others and thereby more fully aware of themselves as human persons."[62] This can lead to mutual enrichment between customers and service providers. Love *per se* is not incompatible with economic transaction as long as it is not included in the transaction, for love comes into being and has value only when it is freely given. *Caritas in Veritate* teaches that "economic, social, and political development, if it is to be authentically human, needs to make room for the *principle of gratuitousness* as an expression of fraternity."[63] This statement "would puzzle most contemporary economists," Oslington writes. "Economists look for some kind of exchange or contract when something appears to be a free gift."[64] A closer look at the service economy reveals that gratuitous-ness and fraternity are central to it. Customer service is about addressing some of our basic or intimate needs—food, travel, clothes, accommodations, and

special/solemn celebrations—involving assistance to individuals who may be in vulnerable condition because of hunger or tiredness, being on the road for too long, preparing for an important conference, or being disoriented in an unfamiliar city. Problems addressed by service providers are complex and insufficiently delineated. They cannot be objectively defined by simply using the traditional contract- or policy-based approach, for they have a great deal to do with inter-personal interaction. For Franklin, contracts and policies provide "a necessary baseline, but gratuitousness goes beyond it as a free expression of love."[65]

Love in CST is not a sentimental expression or a romantic feeling. Truth is the light of love. Without truth, love degenerates into sentimentality—it "becomes an empty shell to be filled in an arbitrary way. In a culture without truth, this is the fatal risk facing love."[66] Love manifests itself through commitment and action. It involves the application of the principle of reciprocity—treat others as you would like to be treated—which is "the heart of what it is to be a human being."[67] The person is not only capable of existing or acting with other persons, she is also capable of participating in their humanity and offering herself as a gift, especially to those who are in need or suffering. Beabout and Echeverria point out, "We are made for self-donation, for communion with other persons. This is why man can fully discover his true self only in making a sincere gift of himself."[68]

Benedict XVI reflects, "All people feel the interior impulse to love authentically."[69] In her study on emotional labor, Pugliesi notes that the latter is a result of interpersonal emotional management "imbedded in the non-personal relationship between workers and clients."[70] But with love, positive emotional engagement with customers is possible even without extensive use of emotional labor. For John XXIII, love makes it possible to feel the needs of others as one's own.[71] We are not alienated from our true selves when we manifest genuine empathy and care toward the other. Benedict XVI adds, "The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them."[72] Loving or showing concern for the well-being of customers should not be a mere surface acting, a tool to get customers' loyalty, a means to profitability, or a form of emotional manipulation. While "good care typically takes notice of the individual character and the contextualized way of development of capacities and powers of the person to whom the care is aimed,"[73] caring for customers should not be based on their demands, social class, or economic value but on their worth as persons.

As an irreducible reality, the person's authentic nature can only be approached inwardly. From a Personalist perspective, "persons are essentially moral subjects, namely human beings that must justify their free actions to their conscience."[74] Human service is not inherently alienating or demeaning. Like other acts of the

person, "it provides a moment where the person can also fulfill himself with reference to morality and the objective good."[75] If caring is internalized and performed willingly, not simply as an outward display or a matter of company policy but as something that needs to be done for the good of the other as a person, caring for customers acquires a moral dimension that could enable both the service providers and the customers to experience their personhood in an authentic way. It becomes a moral responsibility of service providers to be trustworthy, to help someone in need, to not promise something outside of one's capability "just to make business," to be patient with disoriented customers—never pressuring them for sales or decisions and "not exploiting their vulnerability but rather caring and being aware of their dispositions."[76] These can happen without necessarily experiencing anxiety or self-estrangement. Instead, caring for customers becomes a natural expression of service providers as moral subjects, which does not conflict with their autonomy. What makes emotional labor more difficult is the lack of congruity between the felt emotion and what is being expressed by the service agent. This can turn into emotional dissonance. Extending morality to service can transform it into an act of the person that has interior dimension. This can lessen the alienating effects of emotional labor, for interiorization helps mediate the relationship between emotional labor and one's psychological well-being.[77] Interiorization of service lessens emotional dissonance, which, among the different dimensions of emotional labor, is the one reported to have negative correlation with job satisfaction.[78]

The ethical principle of subsidiarity enunciated in CST could be an effective management tool in the industry.[79] Subsidiarity requires managers to respect their employees as autonomous subjects and "co-entrepreneurs," by entrusting them to make responsible decisions without going beyond the limits of their positions. It is based on the morality of respect for persons who desire the enhancement and flourishing of their potentials. Subsidiarity involves job autonomy and empowerment. Giving service providers more discretion in accomplishing their tasks and wider latitude in expressing themselves naturally (without being rude or condescending), while minimizing direct supervision, surveillance, and monitoring can strengthen their sense of efficacy and alleviate some of the alienating effects of emotional labor. When service providers are in control and have a high level of job engagement, it diminishes the experience of inauthenticity and generates affirmative feelings about work. Closeness of monitoring positively correlates with frequency of emotional displays, leading to emotional exhaustion. A study shows that "individuals with high job autonomy suffered fewer negative effects of emotional labor than did those with low job autonomy."[80] Empowerment is

also essential in handling service recovery. A service agent will "feel abuse, especially if she is not empowered to do much about customer complaints."[81]

Genuine customer loyalty should be a result of regular and long-term interactions between service providers and their clients. Writing about authentic relationship marketing from a Christian perspective, Risner et al., state, "Relationship occurs over the course of time. It gradually develops and assumes some level of continuation. While some relationships will last a lifetime, others will have a shorter but sill substantial existence."[82] Loyalty should be based on trust that the company earns because of its integrity and credibility—by being factual in its advertisements, not promising something that the company cannot deliver, and not delivering the kind of service that cannot be delivered consistently to all customers. While all customers receive a basic standard of treatment, frequent patrons might be entitled to some kind of reward program. This practice can be justified on the ground that it is open to all and voluntary, and even if it may create the appearance of unequal service, members pay for extra services through the amount of revenues they bring in by their constant patronage or by the membership/enrollment fees. What is important is to provide all customers, whether eligible or ineligible with "clear and straightforward information about the mechanics of its selection criteria and program rewards."[83] It might be better, however, to design a loyalty program that simply rewards repeat customers with cumulative points that can be applied as credits to their purchases, but does not include preferential treatments that are not offered to nonmembers.

Conclusion

The needs of all customers and the common good of our society are not best served by personalized service, for the way the latter is commonly theorized, marketed, or practiced at present does not consider the significant ethical issues. Every person deserves respect, benevolence, and care, whether she is a service agent or a customer. While personalized service is person-centered, it follows a consumerist and a narrowed "philosophy of man: reducing the totality of man's being to the sphere of economics and the satisfaction of material needs."[84] This is at odds with the position of CST that rejects any understanding of business from a purely economistic term. Catholic social teaching affirms a holistic understanding of the person as a dynamic and autonomous moral subject who is socially embedded and is capable of transcending her self-interest. We do not have to *personalize* our actions in order to create genuine human interaction, what we must do is to treat each other as persons.

By subjecting the private management of human emotions to commercial logic of assembly-line production, personalized service diminishes the nature of service providers. More than their bodies, their emotions become instruments of production. What is unique, intimate, and personal is branded, reproduced, and standardized in order to provide uniform service and gain more profit. *Centesimus Annus* contends, "When man does not recognize in himself and in others the value and grandeur of the human person, he effectively deprives himself of the possibility of benefitting from his humanity and of entering into that relationship of solidarity and communion with others for which God created him."[85] In her qualitative study on the hospitality industry, Sherman cautions that the kind of interaction we have in personalized customer service "might spread to social intercourse, generally changing norms about how people should treat one another."[86] Personal interaction may become a matter of routine, something superficial and almost meaningless. The industry might also solidify existing class distinctions, reinforcing the practice that the rich are more entitled to the labor and emotion of others, and legitimizing the prevailing stereotypes about class, ethnicity, and gender. Personalized service might blur the distinction between "needing a service" and "needing to be served" and create greater preference for luxury consumption. This may harm human development in the long run as it will cause resources to be used on services that do not meet authentic human needs.[87] Genuine noncommodified personal relationship that is built over time and is based on mutual respect and self-giving may be devalued in favor of readily available and emotionally charged human encounters that the industry provides under the guise of personal caring.

According to John Paul II, "if the production and consumption of goods become the centre of social life and society's only value, not subject to any other value, the reason is to be found not so much in the economic system itself as in the fact that the entire socio-cultural system, by ignoring the ethical and religious dimension, has been weakened, and ends by limiting itself to the production of goods and services alone."[88] Customer service is a social encounter, to a large extent it is a reflection of our social values. The way we do customer service reflects the kind of society we have become. Preference for personalized service is perhaps a mistaken response to our inability to create lasting and genuine relationships in our personal lives, to our existential isolation, or to the socially and economically fragmenting and depersonalized world we live in. In the words of Benedict XVI, "Man is alienated when he is alone, when he is detached from reality, he stops thinking and believing in a foundation."[89] Will personal relationship be the most in-demand commodity in the future? As long as consumerism is well entrenched in our society, "when people are ensnared in a

web of false and superficial gratifications rather than being helped to experience their personhood in an authentic and concrete way,"[90] the demand for personalized service would increase. The *Law of Gift* that governs human relationship would be replaced by the law of use.

Notes

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2. James Caccamo, "The Ethics of Branding in the Age of Ubiquitous Media: Insights from Catholic Social Teaching," *Journal of Business Ethics* 90 (2009): 301.

3. John Goodman, "Quantifying the Impact of Great Customer Service on Profitability," in *Best Practices in Customer Service* (New York: AMACOM, 1999), 19.

4. Leslier Valenzuela et al., "Impact of Customer Orientation, Inducements and Ethics on Loyalty to the Firm: Customers' Perspective," *Journal of Business Ethics* 93 (2010): 278.

5. Jack Mitchell, *Hug Your Customers* (New York: Hyperion Books, 2003), 19.

6. Manning Harley, *Outside In* (Boston: New Harvest, 2012), 7.

7. Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 106.

8. Mike Depatie, CEO of Kimpton hotels, says, "We have three full-time people that all they do is monitor mentions of Kimpton on Twitter, our Facebook pages and other Facebook pages. If people say, 'I'm going to the Monaco in Denver for my anniversary,' we pick that up. Then we do something to surprise and delight them and then we make them a customer for life." See Barbara DeLollis, "Hotel CEOs talk loyalty points, Wi-Fi and security," *USA Today*, February 7, 2013.

9. Rachel Sherman, *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 32.

10. Andrew Morris and Daniel Feldman, "The Dimensions, Antecedents, and Consequences of Emotional Labor," *The Academy of Management Review* 21, no. 4 (1996): 999. Service providers are also required to smile when they talk on the phone. "Most people don't know this, but when you smile it actually changes your intonation and makes you sound cheerier. There's a real estate firm that actually puts a little mirror on their phones so their agents can check that they're smiling while they're talking." See Mitchell, *Hug Your Customers*, 108.

11. See Wendy Zabava Ford, *Communicating with Customers: Service Approaches, Ethics, and Impact* (New York: Hampton Press, 1998).

12. Thomas Williams, "What Is Thomistic Personalism?" *Alpha Omega* 7, no. 2 (2004): 190.

13. Gloria Zúñiga, "What Is Economic Personalism? A Phenomenological Analysis," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 4, no. 2 (2001): 161.

14. Domènec Melé, "Integrating Personalism into Virtue-Based Business Ethics: The Personalist and the Common Good Principles," *Journal of Business Ethics* 88 (2009): 229.

15. Pope John Paul II, encyclical letter *Laborem Exercens* (September 14, 1981), no. 6.

16. Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (London: Cape Publishing, 1994), 201.

17. Joseph Selling, "Is a Personalist Ethic Necessarily Anthropocentric?" *Ethical Perspectives* 6, no. 1 (1999): 61.

18. Pope John Paul II, encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio* (September 14, 1998), no. 83.

19. Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), December 7, 1965, no. 63.

20. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 3.

21. Edward O'Boyle, "Personalist Economics," (2014), 35. Mayo Research Institute, revised July 29, 2014, available at http://www.mayoresearch.org/files/PERSONALIST %20ECON%20III.pdf.

22. "For Lacroix, personalism is an attitude, a speculative aspiration and an intentional direction of thought awoken by social and political situations which are alienating to the human person." See Williams, "What Is Thomistic Personalism?" 166.

23. Pope John Paul II, encyclical letter *Centesimus Annus* (May 1, 1991), no. 41.

24. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 7.

25. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 7.

26. Zachary Brewster, "Alienation and Exploitation among Restaurant Servers: A Qualitative Analysis," (M.A. thesis: Western Kentucky University, 2002), 37.

27. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 154.

28. In some circumstances, emotional labor has positive outcomes. See Ronald Humphrey, et al., "The Bright Side of Emotional Labor," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 36, no. 6 (2015): 749–69.

29. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 7.

30. Andreea Fortuna, "Role and Consequences of Emotional Labor in the Workplace," *Practical Application of Science* 2, no. 4 (2014): 678–80.

31. See Karen Pugliesi, "The Consequences of Emotional Labor: Effects on Work Stress, Job Satisfaction, and Well-Being," *Motivation and Emotion* 23, no. 2 (1999): 127; Erin Sharpe, "Going Above and Beyond: The Emotional Labor of Adventure Guides," *Journal of Leisure Research* 37, no. 1 (2005): 31; Alicia Grandey et al., "Emotional Labor Threatens Decent Work: A Proposal to Eradicate Emotional Display Rules," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 36, no. 6 (2015): 770–85.

32. Blake Ashforth and Ronald Humphrey, "Emotional Labor in Service Roles: The Influence of Identity," *Academy of Management Review* 18, no. 1 (1993): 97.

33. Morris and Feldman, "The Dimensions, Antecedents, and Consequences of Emotional Labor," 1001.

34. Sharpe, "Going Above and Beyond," 44.

35. Barbara Gutek and Theresa Welsh, *The Brave New Service Strategy: Aligning Customer Relationships, Market Strategies, and Business Structures* (New York: AMACOM, 2000), 282.

36. Jonathan Tisch, *Chocolates on the Pillows Aren't Enough* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 3.

37. Mitchell, *Hug Your Customers*, 25.

38. See Sherman, *Class Acts*, 30; also Gutek and Welsh, *The Brave New Service Strategy*, 277.

39. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 6.

40. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus,* no. 41.

41. Gordon Boyce, "Beyond Privacy: The Ethics of Customer Information Systems," *Proceedings of the Informing Science and IT Education Conference* (June 2002): 110.

42. Edward Malthouse et al., "Managing Customer Relationships in the Social Media Era: Introducing the Social CRM House," *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 27 (2013): 270–80.

43. Jill Risner et al., "Common Grace and Price Discrimination: A Motivation toward Authentic Relationship," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 18, no. 1 (2015): 106.

44. See Ford, *Communicating with Customers*.

45. See Wendy Zabava Ford, "Ethics in Customer Service: Critical Review and Research Agenda," *The Electronic Journal of Communication* 6, no. 4 (1996), http://www. cios.org/EJCPUBLIC/006/4/00642.HTML.

46. Ashforth and Humphrey, "Emotional Labor in Service Roles," 96.

47. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes,* no. 35.

48. James Curry and Brian Kleiner, "New Developments Concerning Discrimination Towards Customers in the Restaurant Industry," *Equal Opportunities International* 24, no. 5 (2005): 101.

49. "Vulnerable groups do need protecting, but authentic relationship expands the focus of concern to all customers that the business serves." See Risner et al., "Common Grace and Price Discrimination," 111.

50. See Ford, *Communicating with Customers*; Zachary Brewster and Sarah Nell Rusche, "Quantitative Evidence of the Continuing Significance of Race: Tableside Racism in Full-Service Restaurants," *Journal of Black Studies* 43, no. 4 (2012): 359–84; George Schreer et al., "'Shopping While Black': Examining Racial Discrimination in a Retail Setting," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 39, no. 6 (2009): 1432–44.

51. Brett Boyle, "The Impact of Customer Characteristics and Moral Philosophies on Ethical Judgment of Salespeople," *Journal of Business Ethics* 23 (2000): 262.

52. Morris and Feldman, "The Dimensions, Antecedents, and Consequences of Emotional Labor," 998.

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55. Lacey et al., "Customer Loyalty Programs," 459.

56. Sharman, *Class Acts*, 261.

57. See George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishing, 2015).

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63. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 34.

64. Paul Oslington, "*Caritas in Veritate* and the Market Economy," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 14, no. 2 (2011): 361.

65. Franklin, "*Caritas in Veritate*," 6.

66. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 3.

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71. Pope John XXIII, encyclical letter *Mater et Magistra* (May 15, 1961), no. 35.

72. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 7.

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80. Morris and Feldman, "The Dimensions, Antecedents, and Consequences of Emotional Labor," 1001.

81. Gutek and Welsh, *The Brave New Service Strategy*, 43.

82. Risner et al., "Common Grace and Price Discrimination," 107.

83. Lacey et al., "Customer Loyalty Programs?" 463.

84. Beabout and Echeverria, "The Culture of Consumerism," 351.

85. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 41.

86. Sherman, *Class Acts*, 263.

87. See Pope Paul VI, encyclical letter *Populorum Progresso* (March 26, 1967).

88. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 39.

89. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 53.

90. Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 41.