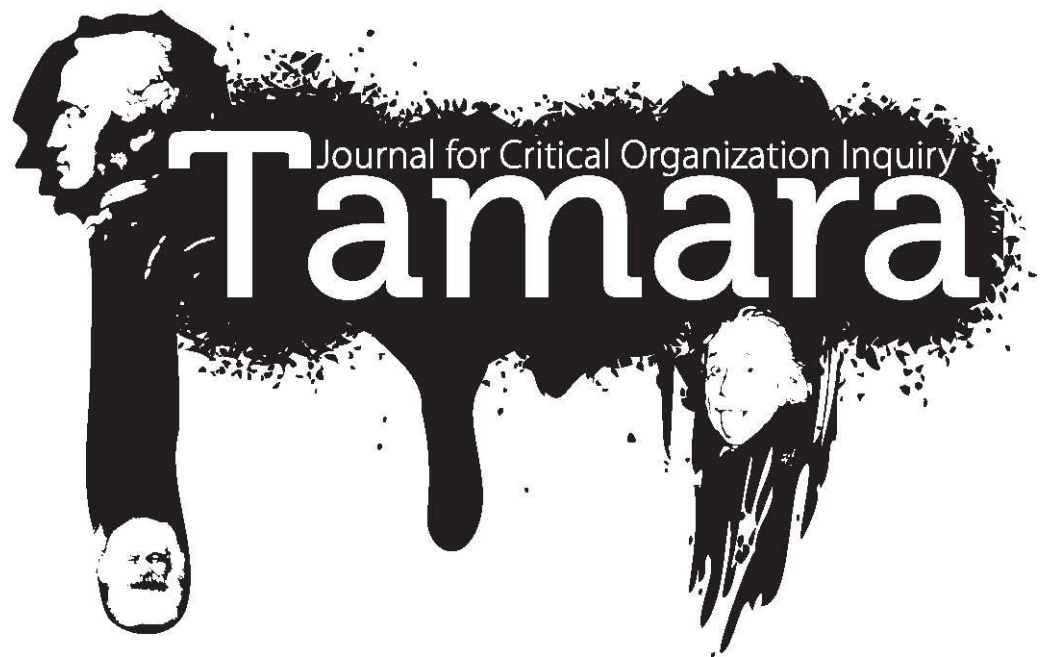


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## Emotions and the market: How are emotions made economically effective?

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### Abstract

The paper provides an analysis of mechanisms leading to the commodification of emotions. Describing key cultural processes, characteristic of the culture of late capitalism -- psychologization of an individual subject and economization of social spheres of life -- I identify the relation between emotions and the market in each of those processes. I argue that in order to intentionally engage emotions into work and market-oriented activity, they need to be rendered objects of a “specific kind of expert knowledge, characteristic of new “specialists of emotions.” Construction of the knowledge on emotions requires their detachment from an individual subject, their ontologization and commensuration. However, operationalized and designed emotions need to be authentically felt and experienced by an individual, since the affective engagement is expected to generate, directly and indirectly, an economic outcome. Therefore, the detachment of emotions requires complementation with its mirror mechanism - reattachment of emotions into a subject. In this review paper, I depict both mechanisms, using examples from the fields of HR management, marketing and market research.

### Introduction

The interdependence between emotions and modern capitalistic market seems obvious and natural today. It is common knowledge that consumers need to be seduced by the marketed and advertised product, and that consumption, as well as work, is to be an expression of one’s personality. Tastes and preferences seem saturated with emotional qualities. Stock markets are regularly hit by panics, everyday work is expected to lead to self-fulfilment, while the choices of consumers are much more often an expression of a mood or momentary desire than a rational calculation. However, the “naturalness” of this description is also very symptomatic of the contemporary stage of late capitalistic culture (Sennett, 2007; Thrift, 2005) and historically relatively new.

In this conceptual review, I identify and analyze the key mechanisms that condition this process of “emotionalization” of the market to occur. I provide examples of economization of emotions in the fields of HR management, digital technology

and marketing, briefly emphasizing cross-cultural context in those fields. I argue, that in order to render emotions economically effective, they need to be simultaneously detached from and re-attached to an individual subject. I critically address these mechanisms in the conclusion.

Illouz (2007) describes contemporary culture as “the emotional capitalism,” “in which emotional and economic discourses and practices mutually shape each other thus producing (...) a broad, sweeping movement in which affect is made an essential aspect of economic behavior and in which emotional life – especially that of the middle classes – follows the logic of economic relations and exchange” (2007, p. 5). However, it is hard to manage emotions. In everyday life and popular literature, emotions are often perceived as uncontrollable forces of nature, genuine and sometimes difficult to understand. As an expression of one’s personality (“true self”), emotions may “distract” rational thinking, and are sometimes presented as its opposite. The topic of the relation between emotions and thoughts, affects and rationality, has a long history of philosophical and anthropological inquiry (Lutz, 1986). The contemporary understanding of the role of emotions can be seen as a result of those debates. “Emotions stands in important and primary contrast relationship to two somewhat contradictory notions; it is opposed, on the one hand, to the positively evaluated process of thought and, on the other, to a negatively evaluated estrangement from the world” (Lutz, 1986, p. 289). In “a middle class Euroamerican model” (ibidem, p. 288), emotions display a powerful motivational force, therefore are highly tempting for the market economy. But in order to make emotions usable and useful for -- by definition highly calculated -- economic activities, they need to be tamed.

Some experts specialize in researching and managing people’s emotions to achieve business goals and objectives. These “emotions’ specialists” include experts in the fields of HR, marketing, market research and also politics. With the use of psychological paradigms, theories and techniques, their job is to elaborate and practice the most accurate methods of understanding and influencing human emotions. Therefore, the management and economization of emotions might be also analyzed as a professional accomplishment of this group of experts. In order to characterize this type of work, first I need to describe the important cultural factors that make it possible to engage emotions in the creation of economic value.

## Frame - cultural processes

There are important processes, specific for Euroamerican, late capitalist culture, in which the linkage between emotions and the market (or economy) is rooted, spotted and described. The first is the psychologization of an individual subject (Giddens, 1991; Rose, 1998). Its main consequence is the de-socialization of the cultural image of the person and the definition of an individual with inner, psychological qualities. In the culture of Western individualism, emotions and feelings become the criteria by which a person evaluates and defines him/herself. The prime tool of self-discovery is reflexivity. Reflexivity may be seen either as an application of power (Rose, 1999; Sennett, 2000) or as a chance to develop individual autonomy (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 2007; Giddens, 1991). In both cases, inner life and emotions comprise a person’s relationship with the world and denote his or her personal and social value in a contemporary, individualistic culture. Psychologization of the individual subject also changes the definitions of consumer and worker. Psychological expertise and therapeutic culture support both managerial (e.g., Illouz, 2007; Miller & Rose, 1995; Rose, 1999) and marketing theories (Applbaum, 2004; Zwick & Cayla, 2011) by providing conceptual justifications for emotions- and feeling-oriented image of human nature in late capitalism.

A distinctive element of psychologization is the requirement of self-work (Foucault, 1988; Rose, 1998). Therapeutic discourse tends to portray modern subjectivity as a process of constant self-discovery and self-development (Giddens, 1991; Jacyno, 2007). Not only are people entitled to undertake self-insight and reflect on themselves in order to reach self-improvement, but they are expected to do so, while it is perceived as a path to realization of the particular vision of a “good life.” This vision is built with elements constitutive for the ethos of the new middle classes (Bellah et al., 2007; Jacyno, 2007; Reich, 2010) and has strong moral implications (du Gay, 2007; Luckmann, 2002). Core values to this ethos, such as authenticity, autonomy, self-expression, self-development, self-reflection and pursuit of self-fulfilment, are highly psychologized and emotions-oriented. Having its roots in humanistic schools of psychotherapy (Rogers, 2012), this type of self-work therefore embodies a culturally valued “way of life,” constructing emotionally conscious and sensible individuals, aware of their own dispositions, talents and preferences. It is not hard to notice that such an individual is also a model worker and consumer, perfectly aligned with late capitalist culture. This observation also corresponds with Foucauldian argument for both work on the self and technologies of the self as tools for creating a “governmentable” individual subject, suitable for the socio-economic system (Foucault, 2005, 2008).

Furthermore, psychologization goes along with basic characteristics of postindustrial capitalism (Lash & Urry, 1987; Thrift, 2005). First, the supremacy of service industries demands a focus on the emotional and interpersonal aspects of job

performance in addition to the growing importance of “soft skills” (Hochschild, 2012; Illouz, 2007; Urciuoli, 2008). Consumer satisfaction, perceived as a main indicator of a service quality, is mostly decoded with emotionally saturated criteria. Second, in service-oriented capitalism we observe the development of concepts and practice of affective (Hardt, 1999) and emotional labour (Illouz, 2007). The way in which the conceptualization of emotional labour changes over time allows us to underline cultural tendencies that are particularly salient in this paper.

The first and by far the most influential sociological problematization of emotional labour was presented in Hochschild’s book *The Managed Heart* ([1979], 2012). Basing her analysis on the work performance of flight attendants and debt collectors, Hochschild described emotional labour as an individual effort for moderating and controlling one’s emotional expression in order to induce a desirable impression in the other person (a client). According to Hochschild, the actual feeling that the service worker experiences in a given moment is secondary, while the work is focused on the external expression of emotion and attitude. In consequence, emotional labour consists also in person’s ability to manage a possibly incoherent feeling experience and emotional countenance. Such an approach to emotional labour has been confronted since the first publication of Hochschild’s work (Hochschild, 1989; Wouters, 1989).

More recent elaborations (Hughes, 2005, 2010; Illouz, 2007) describe contemporary labour, also an emotional one, as engagement of the whole person into the working process. In other words, all elements of a person’s constitution, among which are one’s emotions, attitudes, dispositions and talents are to be incorporated into the generation of economic value (Heelas, 2002; Thrift, 2005). It means that work entails more than just behavior, or even an impression made on a client. Actual feelings and sentiments need to be addressed and moderated for a job to be done properly.

Emotional labour is linked directly to emotions and to the economy. It is a characteristic example of how psychologization entwines the latter, founding for late capitalism, cultural process -- economization. Economization is the colonization of different spheres of social life with economic logic.<sup>1</sup> Economic criteria of evaluation and assessment are applied to the non-economic spheres of life, such as family, intimate relations, child rearing, lifestyle and health. A striking example of this process is an adaptation of economic categories like “exchange,” “investment” and “work” to describe (and experience) personal and intimate relationships (Bauman, 2013; Illouz, 1997; Galician, 2004). Similarly, the language of self-work, self-realization and development of talents is visibly economized, while efficacy, utility and effectiveness tend to be main criteria of assessment (Bauman, 1993; Sennett, 2007).

Psychologization and economization seem to work together, creating the cultural conditions for the contemporary market economy. Interestingly, this cooperation undermines Bell’s classic thesis about the cultural contradictions of capitalism (2001). Writing in the 1970s, Bell observed that axiological logics of the culture and of the market cannot be reconciled. Economic logic was based on rational calculation rooted in the protestant ethic (Weber, 2005), while cultural logic was hedonistic and focused on self-expression, pleasure and leisure (Campbell, 1989). It is evident that this diagnosis is now outdated (Sennett, 2007). As a result of a somewhat surprising alliance between a market and psychotherapy, contradictory factors turned out to have been adjusted.

The most evident example of this phenomena is the cultural success of desire, the lifeblood of the capitalist economy (Adkins, 2006; Heelas, 2002; Illouz, 1997, 2009; Marcuse, 2012). Desire replaced need as a fundamental source of individual motivation. The use of psychological techniques, based in the Freudian theory of drives, spread quickly through PR, HR and marketing practices (see also Dembek, 2013). But desire, having its sources in the inner life of an individual, is also constructed and responded to by the market activities, above all -- consumption of products and experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). In spite of originally emancipatory ambitions of psychotherapy (self-discovery, autonomy, recognition of one’s strengths and preferences), its achievements comprise the fundamental mechanisms of contemporary market culture.

Ongoing individualization, stress on self-work, domination of economic logic in different spheres of social relations, as well as an impact of therapeutic culture -- all result in devolving the responsibility for individual success, failure and in general -- life at the very person (see also: Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991a). The individual subject tends to see itself as a set of assets (Urciuoli, 2008) that can and should be used to realize one’s potential. From the perspective of this paper, this is

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<sup>1</sup> I’m using this term differently from the proponents of “economization” research program in economic sociology Çalışkan, Koray, and Michel Callon. 2009. “Economization, Part 1: Shifting attention from the economy towards processes of economization.” *Economy and Society* 38(3): 369–98. doi:10.1080/03085140903020580.

important, because to meet these requirements, a person must be able to recognize and analyze his/her emotions and also to manage them (Hughes, 2005; Rose, 1998).

## How to put emotions to work?

Putting emotions to work on the market is realized by intentional efforts of specialists, who possess specific psychological and technical expertise. In this segment I discuss the conceptual tools used by these “specialists of emotions” in order to engage people’s emotions in the economic process. These tools are complex and culturally determined; they are rooted in the general condition of the contemporary culture, that is, above all, objectification and separation of the means from the ends (Arendt, 2013; Bauman, 1993). They require simplification through conceptual breaking down of complex problems into separate tasks (Bauman, 1993).

Complexity reduction demands the ability to detach any factor and quality from its context and to objectify it. In terms of the management of emotions, this process can be described as “emotional ontology” (Illouz, 2007), according to which emotions can be abstracted from the subject in order to explain and control them.

[Emotional ontology] or the idea that emotions can be detached from the subject for control and clarification. Such emotional ontology has made intimate relationships commensurate, that is susceptible to depersonalization, or likely to be emptied of their particularity and to be evaluated according to abstract criteria. (Illouz, 2007, p. 36)

Ontologization of emotions signifies their abstraction from individual experience. They become objects of intentional action, management and influence. It is worth noting that ontologization corresponds with the other important analytical concept: commodification (Giddens, 1991; Illouz, 1997), understood as an ontologization of emotions for the purposes of market exchange. Both concepts are directly and indirectly linked to the creation of economic value. Commodified emotions may be either a means of creating this value (e.g. emotional labour, immaterial labour) or a subject of interventions (e.g. consumers’ emotions are addressed, commodities are saturated with emotions in order to make them more desirable).

Ontologization of emotions is a conceptual mechanism that enables analyzing, moderating and putting actual human emotions to work. It is necessary for the fields of marketing and HR management in order to identify and address particular emotions and attitudes. Their identification and objectification, in the broadest sense, creates particular, technical knowledge of emotions that is to be intentionally used. In other words, people's emotions become an object of expert knowledge and, in consequence, a resource for the experts who use it for the realization of the business goals.

In the field of HR, this knowledge is operationalized into “soft” interpersonal skills that can be understood as professionalized social and personal competencies (see: Dembek, 2012). To influence other people, to communicate effectively with them, to understand their motivations, to moderate relations when there is conflict -- these abilities are core competencies of a contemporary manager (see e.g., Drucker, 1999). It is significant that most of those qualities refer directly to a person’s emotional disposition (Dembek, 2013a). Recognition of one’s emotions and those of an interaction partner, empathy, “emotional intelligence” (Goleman, 2005), and control over expression of emotions, are necessary “tools” of work both in services and in management (Cunliffe, 2014). Salespeople need to create a good emotional atmosphere for their clients and managers -- and for their subordinates.

This atmosphere creation is, however, technically quite circumscribed and has clearly defined goals. Managers must consciously moderate emotional relations among the workers, and set an example of emotional maturity and intelligence (Hughes, 2005). The criteria of expected emotional expression and behavior are usually stipulated in company’s human relations management policy (in the competencies profiles), often developed in cooperation with specialized consulting firms. It means that managers are expected to use their emotional skills such as empathy, ontologized and technically described by HR consultants and other experts.

We may observe a similar process of mobilizing the knowledge on emotions in the field of marketing and market research. This field, comprising a set of actual knowledge practices and a broad worldwide ideology (Zwick & Cayla, 2011), occupies an awkward place between economy and culture (Slater, 2011), aiming to render local habits and emotions productive to the global system provisioning goods and services. Practitioners of market research produce economically useful information about consumers’ needs, preferences and motivations and practitioners of marketing devise strategies aimed at promoting and selling branded products. In doing so they have long been allied with psychology, drawing upon, among other schools, psychoanalysis, Watson’s behaviorism, Allport’s “social self,” Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Dichter’s motivation, and most recently neuropsychology (Slater, 2011, p. 27). Marketers and market researchers routinely frame

consumers as psychological beings and their emotions and unconscious preferences are the focus of marketing practice. Research conducted by practitioners offers plenty of instances of “emotional ontology” (Applbaum, 2004; Zwick & Cayla, 2011), in which a particular emotion (e.g., joy) is detached from consumers, fine-tuned so it becomes unique to the desired brand image (e.g., Coca-Cola), and then communicated back to consumers in hope of aligning their emotional state with marketing goals.

How can idiosyncratic qualities, such as emotions and attitudes, be conceptualized and managed by these experts? In HR, soft and emotional skills are carefully designed within corporate competencies’ profiles that are often itemized in behavioral indicators. It means that each competence is defined using description of its required expression (i.e. how a person with a given skill should behave in a certain situation). For example, in a conversation, it can be checked whether a person actively listens to interlocutor, avoids aggressive language and uses paraphrases to clarify communication. Descriptions of behavioral indicators are divided into scales (often numerical), which reflect levels of competence that a person can have. Inner human dispositions, such as emotions and attitudes, need to be circumscribed and “divided” into technical, measurable and observable indicators in order to become manageable and comparable. In other words, soft skills, some of which are emotional, are rendered commensurate.

Espeland and Stevens define *commensuration* as:

the expression or measurement of characteristics normally represented by different units according to a common metric. (...) Commensuration transforms qualities into quantities, difference into magnitude. It is a way to reduce and simplify disparate information into numbers that can easily be compared. This transformation allows people to quickly grasp, represent, and compare differences. One virtue of commensuration is that it offers standardized ways of constructing proxies for uncertain and elusive qualities (Espeland & Stevens, 1998, pp. 315-316).

Evaluating individual attitudes and emotional dispositions through the observation of one’s behavior and its assessment with the quantitative scales of indicators is a literal example of commensuration. Another example is the varied methodologies of calculating “brand equity,” which translate unique, culturally and psychologically specific qualities of experiences and meanings related to brands into quantitative attributes, which then can impact brand valuation and enable comparisons between brands.

All these described processes are designed to detach emotions from both the individual subject and the complex social relations within which they take place (Illouz, 2007). The consequences of this gesture are substantial -- emotions are being standardized and “de-socialized.” The social relation is analytically and practically perceived as a context for individual emotions’ experience and expression -- the notion of relation is therefore highly “individualized.” In other words, the relation is formed and managed by individuals, who are logically primary towards a relationship.

This mechanism can be illustrated with a brief reconstruction of the way in which a worker’s subject and his/her involvement in workplace relations have problematized. This problematization has been elaborated within a field of psychological expertise for management studies. Initiated by Mayo’s ground-breaking research, the shift towards the humanization of work drew attention to the social aspects of life in the workplace. Human relations management’s tasks focused on the creation of conditions that would improve the “quality of working life.” “This ideal was articulated in the name of the mental health and personal fulfillment of the worker, the ability and morality of the manager, the quality of the product, the efficiency and competitiveness of the enterprise, and the political legitimacy of the corporation” (Miller & Rose, 1995, pp. 439-440). The socio-technical system of the enterprise was approached as a whole, while a worker was seen as a part of complex dynamic of groups, in the network of relations. The needs of a worker -- social, personal and emotional -- were to be met through relationships within an organization.

Since the 1980s, along with supremacy of the neoliberal doctrine in economy and Western culture, the psychological image of a person at work has changed. The “enterprising subject” has emerged and quickly prevailed as an individual subject problematization (Heelas & Morris, 1992; Miller & Rose, 1995, p. 453). “[N]ew way of problematizing production in Europe and the United States tied programs of work reform to a new image of the worker that had been taking shape in industrial psychology and management theory during the 1980s: the worker was an individual seeking to fulfill him- or herself through work, and work was an essential element in the path to self-fulfilment” (Miller & Rose, 1995, p. 454).

Therefore, the crucial change in the conceptualization of the subject consisted in shifting a focus from the social relations at a workplace to individual motivations and pursuits. From now on, relations at work were a “tool” used to create conditions for an individual sense of fulfilment. Along with the rising importance of requirements of self-knowledge, autonomy, constant self-evaluation and development, the ethical significance of an individual identity has become an important issue for management (du Gay, 2007). “The worker was depicted as an enterprising individual in search of meaning, responsibility, and a sense of personal achievement in life, and hence in work” (Miller & Rose, 1995, p. 454).

Hence, the self-aware, enterprising subject perceives itself as a set of assets (Urciuoli, 2008) to be used to achieve self-fulfilment, personal and professional success. Emotions and ability to manage them are important means of attaining these goals. At the same time, the individualized subject and its emotions became a main object of interest and influence from specialists in emotions. In their work, they use concepts and technical tools that objectify and commensurate human emotions in order to measure and manage them. Individual behavior and attitudes are analyzed in the context of relations.

## Detachment and reattachment of emotions

Both processes described so far, ontologization and commensuration of emotions, are based on a gesture of detachment of emotions from an individual subject and from the actual relation in which they take place. However, in order to commodify emotions and engage them into economic value creation process (business), detachment of emotions has to be simultaneously completed with the mirror process, that is reattachment of emotions into a subject and their re-inscription into subjective experience. Because only “reattached” emotions can be used (e.g. to motivate or influence people), such emotions are perceived as a credible information and source of knowledge about an individual.

The need for this constant detachment and reattachment, results from the requirement towards emotions in contemporary Euroamerican culture: the requirement of authenticity. Authenticity, the fundamental value in the ethos of the new middle classes (Bellah et al., 2007; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Taylor, 1992), can be understood as the accordance between the feeling and its expression (Dembek, 2012; see also Urciuoli, 2008), therefore an expression of the “true self.” Authenticity is important for specialists of emotions, because it proves that the emotion observed or declared is “real.” Based on the assumption that emotions have direct motivational impact on human attitudes and behavior, they must “feel authentic.” In other words, external influence toward “making” people behave in a required way through the impact on their emotions, and consequently their attitudes, can be effective only if emotions are authentic. Thus, emotions have to be reattached to a subject in order to (re)make them authentic.

The history of the notion of authenticity in the late capitalist culture is significant here. The concept has its roots in literary and philosophical Romanticism (see: Berlin, 2001; Illouz, 1997), when it constituted the condition for independence of emotions from the dominance of reason. Authentic emotions and affects emerged as an expression of the individual truth. Thus, authenticity was valued above all for its emancipatory quality. In the 20th century, this cultural pattern was adapted by the counterculture of the 1960s that imbued authenticity with a political character. It became a weapon against an ossified modern socio-cultural system. Youth revolt argued for the liberation from the system’s restrictions in the name of authentic self-identity, via open pursuing authentic wants and desires (see: Marcuse, 2012; Zaretzky, 2008). Strongly supported by the therapeutic culture, authenticity became a fundamental criterion for individual life’s evaluation and even for an evaluation of the very self in the late capitalist culture.

Like the economization of desire, authenticity is highly economized in contemporary HR and marketing theories and practices. Objectified and rendered commensurate for business purposes, human emotions may have economic value only as far as they are authentic. This assumption has several important consequences, that I address in the conclusion of this paper. First however, I discuss examples of different practices in the fields of HR, digital technologies and marketing, in which conceptual relation between detachment and reattachment of emotions arise. I start with an example of managerial soft skills’ assessment and its paradoxically technical character. Then, I discuss the economization of emotions in digital media technologies. Finally, I describe the applicability of the detachment-reattachment mechanism in diverse cultures.

### Work on people

Objects of interest of HRM, and of the psychological expertise involved, are people. Managers and workers are the means to the end of producing economic value (Bauman, 1993; Rose, 1999; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Hence, their personal attitudes and dispositions, emotions and qualities, are perceived as tractable, moderable and manageable (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Dunn, 2004; Illouz, 2007). Such a position is determined by the idea that social and emotional skills can

be taught and instilled. As this is far from obvious, this assumption is necessary for competencies' management and assessment.

The mechanism of commodification of emotions through their detachment and reattachment is present in contemporary HR management practices. Methods of competencies' development, such as behavioral trainings and coaching, as well as assessment techniques, such as behavioral interview, simulations, and 360-degree feedback, are based on reflexive work of abstraction and elaboration of emotions and attitudes, their technical conceptualization (e.g., definition using behavioral indicators related to organizational competencies' guidelines), and then, if needed, their "incorporation" by the working subject (manager) by conscious practicing and training.

Soft skills' training and development naturalize acquired attitudes and behavior. This relates to the ambition to engage the whole person in the working process. Additionally, the normative postulate of the enterprising subject results in delegating a significant part of the responsibility for the outcome, success or failure, to the individual (Beck, 1992). Consequently, actual inner qualities of the individual need to adopt the form required by a company (Roberts, 2008). A given skill -- such as ability to communicate, to persuade and motivate, to recognize and express emotions -- is to be performed "naturally" in a certain way, expected by the organizational culture of the company, and in formal and nonformal patterns. Skills' performance has to be authentic. This requirement has been technically conceptualized, for instance, in the popular model of four stages of competence, developed in 1970s by Burch.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of performance's authenticity results from the fact that most of the interpersonal, emotional and communicative skills are displayed in the social context of relations at the workplace. Effectiveness of a skill depends on, and emerges from, a reaction of an interaction partner. Put differently, someone else's impression often determines whether an individual is skilled or not. Many methods of skills assessment, such as 360-degree feedback, and assessment/development center, are based on collecting and evaluating the opinions and impressions of others of the person under assessment's behavior and performance (see, e.g. Atkins & Wood, 2002). His/her credibility, and therefore perceived professionalism,<sup>3</sup> derives from "being experienced" as authentic by someone else. Lack of authenticity in skills' performance can be perceived as ineffective (since it is recognized as not credible and compromised), and as morally wrong. This illustrates the strength of the normative requirement of authenticity.

Nevertheless, soft skills, especially managerial ones, are carefully circumscribed and defined, as well as technically evaluated and measured. HR specialists in firms and external consultants compose detailed job descriptions, containing specifications on the requisite soft competencies. In order to be defined, those competencies need to be objectified and inscribed into behavioral scales suitable for a company. These scales (competencies' profiles) are necessary for skills' measurement.

Technical methods used for evaluation and measurement of skills illustrate the processes discussed in this paper. One interesting tool is an assessment/development center (see e.g. Wood & Payne, 2006). It is based on creating laboratory conditions for a skill under assessment to emerge (i.e. to become observable). Put into intentionally designed social situations, such as group exercises, people whose skills are to be evaluated are observed and assessed. In a person's behavior, assessors look for signs that he or she possesses a certain (social or interpersonal) skill. However, possible "signs" are listed on an assessment form, thus the skills under evaluation are expected to manifest in a concrete and circumscribed way.

Moreover, during assessment sessions, skills must not be "acted out," but rather should be performed "naturally" and authentically. "Acting out" is recognized as pretending (i.e. actual lack of a required skill). This shows how the relation between detachment and reattachment of emotions works. In order to recognize and assess competency, something that is evidently emotionally saturated, emotions have to be ontologized and rendered commensurate. But, at the same time, they must be performed authentically (granted that feeling corresponds to behavior), which is perceived as a criterion of assessment.

Analogously, learning soft skills depends on the ability to abstract and reflect on one's own emotions, as and to exercise certain types of emotional reactions and behavior in relations with others. A person needs to detach him- or herself from the emotions in order to learn how to manage them and express them in new ways. Yet, acquiring and applying soft skills

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gordontraining.com/free-workplace-articles/learning-a-new-skill-is-easier-said-than-done/> [20.08.2016]

<sup>3</sup> In this case -- rather organizational professionalism than an occupational one (Evetts, 2013).

require internalization of schemes of behavior and expression, up to the point of making them “one’s own,” natural and authentic.

Both expert, technical knowledge on emotions, and constructed guidelines for competencies in a given organization are in the skilled manager’s “emotional toolset.” Specialists of emotions (HR consultants, trainers, coaches) exercise this knowledge on a working subject (manager), who, being an “enterprising” individual, is expected to cooperate in engaging his/her personal features and attitudes into the creation of economic value (i.e. work), in accordance with the criterion of assessment, such as authenticity. In other words, work on the self (see: Foucault, 2008; Rose, 1999) entwines with professional work to serve an economic goal.

### Work on things and symbols

Emotions also become ontologized, detached, and reattached in other domains of expert practice, including those of designers, marketers, and media workers developing artefacts and symbolic meanings. Practitioners working on things and symbols routinely frame their work in terms of the emotional states they expect to elicit in consumers. Market research focused on notions such as “user experience,” “audience response,” and “brand awareness” identifies and fine-tunes specific emotions. Whether we are talking about a designed object like a smartphone, about programmed software including algorithms and interfaces like Facebook, or a scripted piece of media content like a TV show, such things are increasingly outcomes of intense knowledge work that mediates between inner states of the user or audience member on the one hand, and the interests of the actors in the global distribution system, on the other.

In their work on global culture industry, Lash and Lury note that the relationship between culture (and culturally mediated feelings and emotions) and the market has shifted. Culture is no longer superstructural; “goods become informational, work becomes affective, property becomes intellectual and the economy more generally becomes cultural” (Lash & Lury, 2007, p. 7). Emotions are constitutive for both culture and economy. Having described examples of detachment and reattachment of emotions in HRM practices, it is now time to turn our attention to marketing and market research. I will begin with some examples of emotionally saturated objects and technologies and then discuss the role of marketing in the “epistemology of capitalism.”

Let us start with an interesting case of digital media technologies. According to Miller, “people create machines, software, infrastructures or simply just narratives that in turn script other people in loose or close embrace.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, people create digital tools and software in order to contain and express their emotionality, while those tools simultaneously “program” their users to a certain kind of expression. A good example of such a reciprocal relation between a human and digital tool is are dating platforms as described by Illouz (2007). Designed to introduce users to each other, these platforms provide a mode for relationship establishment, framing it into designed scripts. The design of the digital tool and software results in the design of both “relationship” with a given tool and relationships among users.

Increased interactions between humans and machines have significant social and psychological consequences, especially with the rise of interactive technology in which the relationship with a thing is more alike a human, affective attachment, because we see the object respond. It should be noted that the design of these objects must contain a certain theory of human emotionality, highly individualized concept of an expressive self (see: Halawa, 2013; Jacyno, 2007). The objects are created in a way that allows them to “adapt” to this presumably human type of emotional dynamics. “Computers, video games, mobile phones, iPods, and the like have become a means through which individuals can manage their affective states and create a personal buffer zone against the uncertainties and worries of their world” (Schull, 2014, p. 13).

Both knowledge on emotions and a vision of human emotionality inscribed into objects and technologies, become economized, which means that they serve the market success of these products. For example, the idea and design of smartphone can be seen as an attempt to extend the self (Belk, 2013). Objects are designed to be emotional companions, used to record and broadcast feelings and to allow emotional regulation (e.g. mobile music). “Digital technologies should be understood, at least in part, in relation to the containment of anxiety and emotional conflicts of the self” (Elliott & Urry, 2010, p. 40). Therefore, the technology makes it possible to realize the basic and indispensable human needs identified in therapeutic discourse (here: Klein’s notion of emotional containment) and operationalized into physical device, a product. At the same time, the emotional “bond” established between a person and a device, along with personalization of the device’s

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<sup>4</sup> <http://aotcpress.com/articles/people-machines-script-people/> [20.08.2016]



settings, together result in the creation of an “authentic” experience mediated by digital technology and software. “Investment of affect in virtual objects, such as Facebook, Second Life, or Skype, can function as a form of emotional containment, the storing of affect for subsequent retrieval” (*ibidem*).

An explicit example of emotional ontology inscription into technology is Schull’s (2014) study of gambling technologies, practices and addictions in Las Vegas casinos. Her study shows how the makers of slot machines with video poker use a sophisticated understanding of human emotions to create a machine that evokes an experience of being “in the zone,” where the machine maintains the user in a constant state of emotional arousal and state of play, which facilitates gambling. However radical, this example shows what is typical of this dynamic, and how technology reattaches or deploys the knowledge of emotions, so that its users’ emotions are aligned with the goals of design. Regardless of technologies’ functionality (mobile phone, social media platform, video gambling machine), they all create an affective attachment, and an engagement of the user’s emotions into the work that is economically efficient for the owner of technologies.

Economization of emotion is also particularly characteristic of marketing and market research. According to the American Marketing Association Board of Directors, “marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.”<sup>5</sup> In this paper, marketing is an important mechanism in the creation of what Zwick and Cayla (2011) call the “epistemology of capitalism.” “In a desire to enrich the epistemology of capitalism no stone is left unturned; no aspect of the consumer’s inner life, decision-making process, and motivation is too odd, outlandish, or negligible to preclude extensive investigation in the laboratory” (Zwick & Cayla, 2011, p. 5). Marketing, supported by market research, aims to get to know inner, the consumer’s most personal and profound qualities, some of which are emotional, in order to use this knowledge for selling purposes. Along with in-depth interviews probing consumers’ desires, needs and associations, market research uses methods borrowed from therapeutic practice and psychological theory (e.g., the psychology of projection in which the brand is imagined as a person with human qualities eliciting specific emotions, which are fine-tuned to better suit the strategy). Furthermore, marketers have a strong interest in the unconscious, understood in a Freudian way in early marketing, but now more often problematized in neuromarketing and neuroscience. Marketing techniques also use visual means to build emotions into the message content and make it transmittable.

All these examples illustrate the ambition of acquiring deepened knowledge on human emotions, affects and attitudes, often through adapted therapeutic and psychological techniques, in order to put this knowledge into economic work (effective selling). The success of this effort depends on the ability to give the consumer’s a feeling of having an emotional or affective bond with a product or a brand. Detached and ontologized emotions and attitudes are therefore also reattached through this feeling. According to Castells (2009, p. 126), through branding people assign meaning to their consumption and, more importantly, implicate consumer objects in their emotional life. The strength of the brand often relies on whether or not people have an emotional and affective attitude towards it. This emotional attachment needs to be authentic in the sense that consumers can actually feel it. In this case, however, they are expected to remain loyal and sympathetic to the brand. It is also worth noting that an enterprising, inner-driven contemporary individual subject is to consciously build an affective relation with a chosen brand, not to have it imposed on him/herself. In other words, the work of specialists of emotions needs to be subtle and to create the feeling of a free, reflexive choice in the consumer.

In summary, designing and researching emotionally featured objects and technologies, as well as formatting emotions in marketing practices, are based on the detachment and ontologization of emotions, and aim to reattach them to consumers in order to make them authentic, and hence economically efficient. Technology designers and marketers use sophisticated knowledge of emotions, grounded in psychological expertise and therapeutic concepts, to create emotionally engaging objects and contents. Consumers’ affective attachment, generated through these mechanisms, is perceived to have actual economic value, since has an immediate impact on consumers’ preferences, choices and purchasing behavior.

### Cross-cultural work on emotions

The process of commodification of emotions consists in ongoing detachment and reattachment of emotions, their ontologization and commensuration on the one hand, and creating authentic experience and affective attachment on the other. As I have argued in this paper, specific knowledge, constructed and elaborated by the specialists of emotions, is

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx>, approved July 2013 [20.08.2016]

operationalized in order to put authentically felt emotions to work. This knowledge refers to a specific vision of human emotionality, characteristic of Euroamerican late capitalist culture, that underlines a relation between experienced emotions and behavior.

The model of Western, expressive individualism seems to play a role of a universal reference point for the conceptualization of human emotions in the discussed examples. However, it is worth acknowledging, that the issue of cultural determination of emotions (see: Lutz, 1986) has also been addressed in the discussed fields of expertise. It is due to globalization, when firms target the global population and seek global attention. The spread of the Western way of conceptualizing emotions (cf. Watters, 2011) may not suffice.

An example of efforts for introducing cultural diversity into the problematization of emotions for market purposes, is media formats. Television culture is becoming global. With the rise of satellite TV, mediated content like “Rambo” could reach global audiences. In recent years there has been a rise in licenced television adaptations. What is being exported now is not specific content, like episodes of Friends, but a format, which includes script ideas, set designs, and expected ways of audience engagement. The content itself, however, is produced locally. Cases of this include e.g. Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, in India, Poland, the UK, Dancing with the Stars in Poland, and USA. A characteristic example of this practice is the Columbian telenovella Betty la Fea, which was exported to more than 70 countries not only as “canned” (dubbed or unaltered) form of programming but also a format (including characters, setting, scripts) to be adapted (Miller, 2010).

This cultural adaptation, which mediates between global culture industry and local cultures, involves as a key aspect of it -- work on emotions. Consider the ethnographic study by Fung and Zhang (2011) who looked at how the producers of Chinese version of Ugly Betty, Ugly Wudi, performed the cultural adaptation with the goal of aligning the narrative with local emotional norms and ideologies. An example they give is changing the characters’ expressions of sexual identity and coaching the actors in emotional expression so as the audience and the state media build an particular emotional attachment with the story in a way that downplayed the themes of homosexuality and ethnic diversity and diverted emotional work to more acceptable themes of advancement in the modern workplace. Their study is an example of detaching emotions, which in their ontologized form become objects of manipulation and regulation among screenwriters, director and actor, and then reattaching them in broadcast. A documentary Exporting Raymond (Rosenthal, 2010) shows a similar process: the American creator of a popular TV show mobilizes his knowledge of what viewers want and how they can be made to laugh, works with a Russian production team, which makes the case that the Russian emotional responses will be different from anticipated and thus the content should be changed.

The mechanism of detachment and reattachment is widely used in international cross-cultural management and skills’ management. Cultural differences have been ontologized and conceptualized to enable, as “authentically” as possible, adaptation among and within multinational companies and on the international market. Consider cultural intelligence, “a person’s capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts” (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 59). Composed of cognitive, behavioral and emotional elements, cultural intelligence quite technically defines required features and attitudes that determine a person’s performance in cross-cultural contacts. Like other soft skills, cultural intelligence requires a high degree of self-awareness and can be exercised and trained (and thus can be detached and reattached).

Furthermore, cultural differences in emotional experience and performance are addressed in HRM theories and practices, such as managing multi-cultural teams and motivating employees (Adler, 2002). Cultural diversity is conceptualized based on an identification of diverse patterns of behavior, and on the expression and perception of emotions, resulting from (re)constructed differences in attitudes and beliefs. Highly psychologized comparative studies, such as those by researchers such as Geert Hofstede or Fons Trompenaars, are used to adapt behavior and methods of impact, characteristic of Western business culture, to other cultural conditions. Euroamerican patterns are compared with, for instance, Asian and Arabic ones, ontologized, circumscribed and reflected on, so that managers can acquire and incorporate new modes of behavior and expression and then recognize and decode them in international interactions. Again, those new skills are to be trained up to the stage of “naturalization”.

As we can see, the cultural context influences both “detaching” and “attaching” the mechanism of the economization of emotions. Knowledge of cultural differences enrich and modify expert knowledge on emotions, and determines the way in which the expected experience is reattached into a subject. Still however, the “operational” scheme of how the intended moderation of people’s emotions, aiming to create their engagement in economic activity (working, consuming), remains the same.

## Final remarks

The mechanism of detachment and reattachment of emotions, as described in this paper, can be perceived as symptomatic of late capitalist culture. Conditioned by processes of psychologization and economization, this mechanism reflects major cultural patterns, such as the requirement of reflexivity, stress self-work and self-inquiry, and the validation of authenticity. First, the highly individualized, Euroamerican culture is founded on a quite circumscribed image of emotions and of “human nature.” The vision of emotions as motivational and powerful (Bauman, 1993; Bellah et al., 2007; Miller & Rose, 1995) leads to their intentional engagement into economic activities by specialists of emotions (trainers, coaches, marketers, designers). These specializations, relying on psychological expertise, create and exercise technical knowledge on emotions, that is used for influencing people’s actual behavior on the market and at work. However, those attempts may be successful only insofar as those individuals consciously or unconsciously, engage into using emotions in economic activity.

In other words, this relation can be described as rendering emotions governmentable for economic purposes (Foucault, 2008; Rose, 1999). This perspective underlines the importance of the emotional work done by an individual in order to adapt his/her behavior, attitudes and feelings to the economized conditions. Detachment of emotions through ontologization, reflection and self-awareness on the one hand, and reattachment of emotions by their “naturalization” and authentic experience on the other, are technically “designed” by specialists of emotions – inscribed into entrepreneurial subject as its responsibility (see also: Beck, 1992).

Second, the moral aspect of emotions (Lutz, 1986), their relational dimension, has been reshaped by individualization and economization. Relations become conceptualized as a context for an individual experience that is “abstracted” from the social one; I call this gesture the de-socialization of an individual subject. The value of authenticity, assessed either by personal perception (e.g., attachment to a particular brand), or by the experience of an interaction partner (in soft skills’ assessment methods it is to be identified whether a competence is perceived and experienced by others as authentic), become a criterion of success in emotions’ economization. We must underline that the strength of the requirement of authenticity, also as a moral obligation (Bellah et al., 2007; Rose, 1998; Zaretsky, 2008), may have serious consequences, such as burnout (Funahashi, 2013). Along with individual responsibility for emotions’ management, it provides a powerful tool of control (Rose, 1998, 1999).

Therefore, the reflection on detachment and reattachment of emotions can be inscribed in the tradition of critical analysis of contemporary mechanisms of governance and control (Foucault, 2005, 2008; Illouz, 2007; Rose, 1998, 1999; Sennett, 2007; Urciuoli, 2008). What makes it interesting, I believe, is the role of specialists of emotions in creating practical, technical knowledge on emotion to be used on the market. We can see them and their knowledge as a form of operationalization of the soft control mechanisms for economic purposes.

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