Art and Industry: A Duologue in Three Scenes

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Scene One

ART (climbing a ladder): You’re an entrepreneur?

INDUSTRY (shuffling papers on a desk): Not unless there’s a dollar in it.

ART: I thought you were an impresario … an arts administrator.

INDUSTRY: Give up! I’ve done a course.

ART: What are you now?

INDUSTRY: A consultant.

ART: Who pays you to consult?

INDUSTRY: Oh, the corporate sector mainly.

ART: What, business?

INDUSTRY: Yeh … Corporate sector – free enterprise.

ART: Do you get enough work?

INDUSTRY: No.

ART: So how do you make a living?

INDUSTRY: My wife is an art gallery.

ART: Why are you doing this?

INDUSTRY: Well, it’s a long story. You see, actually, I’m an artist…

Scene Two

ART (on a phone, up a ladder): We are ‘starving in a garret.’ Will you help?

INDUSTRY (at a desk, answering phone): It will do you good.
ART: We are starving in a garret. Will you help?

INDUSTRY: Get a job.

ART: We are starving in a garret. Will you help?

INDUSTRY: Help yourself first.

ART: We are starving in a garret. Will you help?

INDUSTRY: Would you like to paint my portrait?

ART: We are starving in a garret. Will you help?

INDUSTRY (aside): I could use that line.

ART: I've got an idea for a play.

INDUSTRY: Great, what is it?

ART: It's based on a philosopher.

INDUSTRY: It won't sell.

ART: He's a very famous philosopher:

INDUSTRY: Oh yeh? Works in Hollywood...?

ART: Friedrich Nietzsche.

INDUSTRY: Of course! The Maltese Falcon! Now watchya gonna do with Mr Nietzsche's play? What's it about?

ART: Pain.

INDUSTRY: People won't like that.

ART: It's very topical.

INDUSTRY: In Hollywood maybe.... Why not make a movie?

ART: Okay.

INDUSTRY: What's the pitch?

ART: What's that?

INDUSTRY: The pitch!

ART: Oh. No. You see I thought we'd done the bit where I get involved in advertising.

INDUSTRY: This is the movies, first thing you need is a pitch.

ART: But we're talking about ten thousand dollars for an installation in an art gallery.

INDUSTRY: You still need a pitch!

ART: Well, I don't have one.

INDUSTRY: And you call yourself professional!
ART: That's it. I can't even talk to you. I'm going to the Experimental Film Fund.

INDUSTRY: Ah yes. Peter Weir started out with them ... after advertising. We got rid of it in ... the late seventies.

ART: The Creative Development Fund then.

INDUSTRY: Served its purpose.

ART: The No Frills Fund....

INDUSTRY: It's called 'New Media' now. Are you using computers?

ART: No. It's a play – or a film – about pain – about Nietzsche.

VOICES: You're a pain! Shut up about Nietzsche! Fascist!

INDUSTRY: This is getting very complicated. What do you know about C.G.I. and Interactive CD ROMs? (aside) This'll keep her busy.

ART: Nothing.

INDUSTRY: And you call yourself a (looks at CV) contemporary artist! Here.

ART: What's this?

INDUSTRY: It's an application for a course in Creative Genius 101.

VOICE OFF: Yeh, go and learn how to use a computer!

ART (looking into the distance): My great folly: 'I set myself in the market place. And when I spoke to everyone, I spoke to no one. In the evening, however, tight-rope walkers and corpses were my companions; and I myself was almost a corpse' (Nietzsche, 1892: 296).

INDUSTRY: Entrepreneur: 'entreprendre', to undertake; 'inter', among; and 'prehendere', to take ....

ART: To come between, or among and take. Take what?

INDUSTRY: Responsibility and risk!

ART: Power, profit, credit.

INDUSTRY: Advantage; take advantage.

ART: I am an artist. I have become an entrepreneur!

INDUSTRY: What is your capital base!

ART: Solitude

INDUSTRY: I am an entrepreneur. I have become an artist!

ART: How do you survive?

INDUSTRY: Family.

ART: How do you eat?
INDUSTRY: I was a lawyer.
ART: Where do you sleep?
INDUSTRY: My wife is an art gallery.
ART: What keeps you going?
INDUSTRY: My husband is a board member.
ART: I have an idea for a poem!
INDUSTRY: What is it?
ART: It's expensive, a very expensive poem.
INDUSTRY: Tell me its name?
ART: 'My Husband is a Bored Member'.

INDUSTRY: Unfortunately, due to the current economic situation, we regret to inform you that we are unable to provide financial support for your poem 'My Husband is a Bored Member' at this point in time.

ART: My Husband is a Bored-Member. A poem after Erasmus. The bored members' 'concern is for a soft life and so in order to keep their minds untouched by care they give audience only to men who know how to say what is pleasant to hear. They believe they properly fulfill all the duties of a prince [/ipal shareholder] if they devote themselves to hunting and keep a stable of fine horses, if they sell magistracies and commands at a profit to themselves, if they devise new methods everyday for reducing the wealth of their subjects' (Erasmus, 1511: 174).

INDUSTRY: I also am a poet. I have written a column for the newsletter of the Chamber of Commerce. It's called 'Now let us turn to the arts' after Erasmus. 'What else has fired men's natural talents to devise and hand on to posterity so many disciplines which they think remarkable if not their thirst for fame?' (Erasmus, 1511: 102)

ART: Click on 'natural.'

INDUSTRY: ‘With all their toil and sweat and sleepless nights men have thought to gain some sort of reputation, emptiest of acquisitions, and thereby showed themselves complete fools. Meanwhile it's folly to whom you owe so many of life's major blessings, and the nicest thing of all is that you have someone else's madness to thank for your enjoyment’

(Erasmus, 1511: 102).

ART: 'It is in the brain that everything takes place' Oscar (Wilde, 1905: 97).

INDUSTRY: We like it, in fact, when we find that we really have nothing to say about the book we've just read or the film we've just seen. Absence of thought is a sign one is progressing toward tranquillity.

ART: 'It is in the brain that the poppy is red, that the apple is odorous, that the skylark sings' (Wilde, 1905: 98).

INDUSTRY: Contemporary art is an integral part of modernisation and continues the great traditions of our proud cultural heritage.

ART (picking up phone): Hello. I am an artist seeking a major sponsor for a significant
work of three-dimensional art which will ‘mock at the whited sepulchre of respectability’ (Wilde, 1905: 110).

INDUSTRY: Our policy is to only consider assistance where there is a reasonable link between the activity being sponsored and the export of cattle semen.

ART: Perhaps it is true ‘that in a labour market it is the worker who becomes something abstract and the market which finally becomes something absolutely concrete’ (Sartre, 1960: 117).

INDUSTRY: By all means send in your proposal. It will be considered, by the Marketing Executive, in the context of commitments, including support services for children with leukaemia, cancer and other serious illnesses; junior rugby league; golf and horse racing. Since the Asian economic crisis, a larger part of the corporation’s marketing budget is being directed towards mainstream media advertising.

ART: Deleuze was right: ‘Marketing is now the instrument of social control and produces the arrogant breed who are our masters’ (Deleuze, 1995: 181).

INDUSTRY: Art provides a rich source of talent, creativity, and content for our internationally successful commercial arts and entertainment industries.

ART: Fidel Castro, Havana, 1961: ‘There can be, of course, artists, and good artists, who do not have a revolutionary attitude towards life, and it is for precisely that group of artists and intellectuals that the Revolution constitutes a problem (Castro, 1961: 273).

INDUSTRY: Hear hear!

ART: ‘For a mercenary artist or intellectual, it would never be a problem; he knows what he has to do, he knows what is in his interest, he knows where he is going’ (Castro, 1961: 273).

INDUSTRY: ‘Arts and culture constitute an important industry for all modern western democracies’ (McMullin, 1998: 1).

ART: ‘Facts are not merely finding a footing-place in history, but they are usurping the domain of fancy, and have invaded the kingdom of romance. Their chilling touch is over everything. They are vulgarising mankind. The crude commercialism of America, its materialising spirit, its indifference to the poetical side of things, and its lack of imagination and of high unattainable ideals, are entirely due to that country having adopted for its national hero a man who, according to his own confession, was incapable of telling a lie …’ (Wilde, 1891: 25).

INDUSTRY: Mr. Wilde. Most artists are good, honest people. How can you speak on the one hand of ‘unattainable ideals’ whilst on the other suggesting that art is some form of mischief! Surely art is concerned with transcendence and truth not lies.

ART: ‘The very truth of me thou dost require.
The very truth is this, my friend dear:
The very truth thou wouldst not gladly hear’ (Moore, 1551: 335).

INDUSTRY: ‘The Arts do more than entertain – they help define who we are, they add ‘soul’ to a community, they constantly challenge us to look beyond our own horizons’ (Alston, 1998).

ART: My work performs a spiritual function: value-adding whilst building a national identity and opening hearts to new markets.

INDUSTRY: The corporate financial hormones are rampaging!
ART: ‘He is the philistine who upholds and aids the heavy, cumbrous, blind, mechanical, forces of society and who does not recognise dynamic force when he meets it in either man or movement’ (Wilde, 1905: 136).

INDUSTRY: Okay! That’s it! I’m going to build a great art museum. Perhaps then you will believe how much store I place in culture.

INDUSTRY: Plunderer! I avoid museums. ‘The museum gives us a false consciousness, a thief’s conscience’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1969: 72).


ART: As Deleuze says: 'We’re in the midst of a general breakdown of all sites of confinement – prisons, hospitals, factories, schools, the family’, even professions. Now these sites are converging on one another under less visible, non-spatial structures of control: digital codes, credit systems, bar codes, market fluctuations, competition, constant change. 'Control is short-term and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded'. People are less often confined but more often in debt (Deleuze, 1995: 181).

INDUSTRY: Industry today is directed toward products rather than production. We sell services and buy activities. Or focus is sales and markets. Even art has moved away from closed sites and into the open circuits of banking.

ART: Let’s do business then.

INDUSTRY: Sure ... I am an actor too, you know!

ART: Really: theatre, television, cinema?

INDUSTRY: Bureaucracy: I am an impresario and mandarin. I must be seen to manage, to administer. I know many secret codes and passwords. Industry now is composed of ‘transmutable or transformable coded configurations of a single business where the only people’ required are administrators (Deleuze, 1995: 181).


INDUSTRY: I could use that line.

ART: Desk-power!

INDUSTRY: Hey, you! I’ll give you money for that – well – equity at least.

ART: You can't have it.

INDUSTRY: Why not?

ART: I don't trust you.

INDUSTRY: I’ll … I can just use it anyway.

ART: Why offer then?

INDUSTRY: Because this is just the beginning. We could have a meaningful relationship.
ART: I am what I can get from the other as a representative of success in the economic order.

INDUSTRY: Like Rolls and Royce: You make them and I'll sell them.

ART: Can I have a Rolls Royce?

INDUSTRY: Certainly.

ART: Power derives from the degree to which I enact that position without internal conflict. What's next?

INDUSTRY: I need a new angle on cigarettes.

ART: No!

INDUSTRY: Nuclear fusion?

ART: No.

INDUSTRY: Okay, disposable nappies.

ART: Forget it.

INDUSTRY: Pokies then!

ART (turns away)

INDUSTRY: Diet pills? Come on: how about aircraft..? Military hardware?

Scene Three

ART: Hello. I've just spent three years teaching myself how to use Creative Genius 101.

INDUSTRY: Had any exhibitions?

ART: Some small ones, yes. I've got a web site

INDUSTRY: Sure, who hasn't? We're interested in a return to site-specific work. There's some very interesting property out there by young artists playing around with the notion of 'confinement as a fetish in control society'.

ART: Well, anyway, for my work, I need access to some serious digital technology.

INDUSTRY: You may as well have a crack at it, I guess. Here.

ART: What's this?

INDUSTRY: It's a beta version of Artistic Megabuster 8.2.

ART: What about Creative Genius?

INDUSTRY: Give up! Haven't you been to any conferences lately?

ART: Conferences?

INDUSTRY: Yes, conferences. That's where you find artistic people: at conferences and courses concerned with new-media products.
ART: We artists are poor. Conferences cost money.

INDUSTRY: You have to spend money to make money.

ART (starts climbing down ladder): But that's why I came to you. You're an entrepreneur.

INDUSTRY (begins shuffling papers): Not unless there's a dollar in it.

ART: I thought you were an arts administrator.

INDUSTRY: Give up! I've done a course!

ART: What are you now?

INDUSTRY: A consultant.

ART: Who pays you to consult?

INDUSTRY: Corporate sector mainly.

ART: What - businesses?

INDUSTRY: Yeh... The private sector is where it's all happening. Very tough. Competitive. Efficiency is everything.

ART: Do you get enough work?

INDUSTRY: I look for contracts to sub-contract contracts for contractors who have an 'in' with those in the corporate agencies who handle the big government contracts. It's all about knowing the important players and finding your niche in the market.

ART: How do you make a living?

INDUSTRY: My wife is an art gallery.

ART: Why are you doing this?

INDUSTRY: Well, it's a long story. You see, actually, I'm an artist....

(Lights down)

REFERENCES


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