

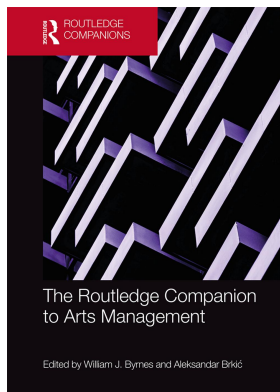
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The desire of the artist and the dharma of the artist manager

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3

THE DESIRE OF THE ARTIST AND THE DHARMA OF THE ARTIST MANAGER

Anmol Vellani

I heard someone from the music business saying they are no longer looking for talent, they want people with a certain look and a willingness to cooperate . . . I thought, that's interesting, because I believe a total unwillingness to cooperate is what is necessary to be an artist – not for perverse reasons, but to protect your vision. The considerations of a corporation, especially now, have nothing to do with art or music. That's why I spend my time now painting.

—Joni Mitchell in Hilburn (2004)

Introduction

There are artists who prefer to be self-directing and produce work free of external influences and concerns. There are also artists who consider audience tastes and preferences as paramount in shaping the art they produce. This chapter will paint a portrait of these two types of artists, opposite in temperament and inclination, and discuss what is practically and ethically at stake for artist managers who work with one or the other.

It is not my claim that all artists can be placed in either one of these two categories. There are art makers who are an amalgam of the two types of artists I will describe, displaying features and propensities of both. And there are artists who, though they create work that follows the voice that speaks to them from within, are alert to the need to reassess their work in response to voices they hear from the outside. The reaction of audiences and critics may induce them to take a fresh look at their work. Visual artists may heed the advice of curators, and playwrights the counsel of dramaturges or directors. The two kinds of artists I will describe, moreover, need not remain forever riveted to their ways of producing art: artists can turn, for instance, from being self-absorbed initially to becoming more audience-sensitive later in their careers. Fixing the spotlight single-mindedly on the previously mentioned pair of starkly contrasting artists, however, better fulfils the purpose of this chapter, because it throws into sharper relief what might be missing in the received understanding of artist managers.

The literature on artist managers is often written, understandably, for the benefit of artists and describes the preferred traits, qualifications, skills and capacities of artist managers, the scope of their work and the set of functions they can be expected to perform (Simpson and Munro, 2012). Here artist managers are viewed from the standpoint of the artist: what can or should she demand from artist managers to advance her career and protect her interests? But even when

artist managers are addressed directly, they are described in broadly the same way (Allen, 2007). What we are told, I believe, is an incomplete story about artist managers. This chapter strives to fill the gaps in that narrative by looking at the manager–artist relationship more thoroughly from the artist manager’s perspective.

The artist manager and the desire of the artist

Imagine a manufacturing company that specializes in dental hygiene products such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, dental floss and mouthwash. Since profit for the promoters and shareholders is the only bottom line for a business enterprise, managers in this company and the people who design or make its products are not expected to take decisions based on any emotional, sentimental or other personal investment they might have in whatever the company manufactures. Their singular and overriding concern must be to ensure that the products attract enough buyers to turn a profit over time. If, for example, sales figures for its tongue scraper are declining, and there is little hope of arresting the trend, the company’s response will and must be either to modify the product or withdraw it from the market altogether. Any attempt to ‘save’ the product – because, say, the promoter is attached to it, or because it is an important part of the company’s legacy – would make little business sense. Similarly, a shopkeeper will stop selling Coca-Cola if it sits on the shelf for too long. Should he keep it in stock because he likes to drink it himself, instead of clearing space for faster-moving products, he would be acting in a manner contrary to his interests as a retailer. For a manufacturer, a service provider, a wholesaler or a retailer, the driving incentive, I repeat, is profit, and it trumps all other considerations.

For the artist manager, the producer is the artist (or the arts group or collective) and the product is the art she creates. Whereas a corporate manager focuses entirely on making profits for his company by helping to meet, create or anticipate the needs and preferences of actual or potential clients and customers, an artist manager must respect the *desire* of the artist, certainly if he is working with the kind of modern or contemporary artist who is primarily ‘absorbed in relating expression to self rather than to the market’ (Vellani, 2014, p. 32). The self of such an artist might be expressed in the ideological commitments of her art, or its aesthetic sensibility, or in how it is impelled by her inner disquiet or responds to her experience of her social and political milieu. The artist manager, aware of this profoundly intimate relationship between the artist and her art, cannot ask her to modify or jettison what she creates in order to satisfy market tastes and preferences. Instead he must rise to the challenge of finding acceptability for what the artist desires to create in the public imagination (Colbert, 2003, p. 31). This is exactly what Farooq Chaudhry, who manages the Akram Khan Company, has committed himself to doing. In his eyes, Akram Khan’s dream must come first, and his job is to ‘take risks and look for opportunities to translate this dream into an actual project’ (Chaudhry, 2019, Chapter 8, this volume). ‘Throughout my career,’ he further writes, ‘I have always let art have the first say in any action I have taken . . .’ (Ibid). And it is hard to imagine that Chaudhry would be driven to let Akram Khan’s dream have the ‘the first say’ and take on the immense challenges and risks associated with trying to monetise that dream, unless he felt strongly drawn to his art, the meaning it held for him.

The kind of artist I have described does not, however, create art for its own sake. She hopes that her art will find an audience. If she is a novelist, she will want readers; if she is a performing artist, she will want spectators; and if she is a filmmaker, it is very unlikely that she makes films for the exclusive purpose of screening them in her home theatre. Indeed, it is quite natural for her to intend her art to have such an outcome. In its absence, her practice could, with justification, be called self-indulgent. If she is a novelist, she is not driven to write her books principally

because she wants to be read (or become famous or rich), but neither does she write fiction entirely for her own pleasure. This thought has been captured pithily by the poet Vijay Seshadri, who has been quoted to say, 'I don't write for the market. I don't even write for me. I write for the poem' (Ramdev, 2018, p. 2). Hirschman (2013, p. 253) has observed that

any sustained activity, with the possible exception of pure play, is undertaken with some idea about an intended outcome. A person who claims to be working exclusively for the sake of the rewards yielded by the exertion itself is usually suspect of hypocrisy: one feels he is really after the money, the advancement or – at the least – the glory, and thus is an instrumentalist after all.

Hirschman would characterise a self-expressing artist as someone who is not driven by narrowly instrumental reasoning but is nevertheless someone who endeavours 'with some idea about an intended outcome.' The realisation of the intended outcome of her activities, however, is far less predictable than the result of a whole range of routine activities (such as using boot polish to shine shoes):

(T)here are many kinds of activities, from that of a research scientist to that of a composer or an advocate of some public policy, whose intended outcome cannot be relied upon to materialize with certainty. . . . From their earliest origins, men and women appear to have allocated time to undertakings whose success is simply unpredictable: the pursuit of truth, beauty, justice, liberty, community, friendship, love, salvation, and so on. . . . (A)n important component of the activities thus undertaken is best described not as labor or work, but as *striving* – a term that precisely intimates the lack of a reliable relation between effort and result. A means-end or cost-benefit calculus is impossible under the circumstances.

(Hirschman, 2013, p. 254)

In fact, the self-driven artist strives with two outcomes in mind, neither of which can be realised with certainty. The first is to attain what she strives to create, although there is no assurance that she will not, in her own eyes, fall short of realising what she envisions or aspires to create. Some artists, forever dissatisfied with their art, may even believe more strongly that between the striving and the attainment falls an unbridgeable chasm, that the intended outcome is not just uncertain but beyond reach, an *impossibility*. Samuel Beckett, the playwright of despair, may have regarded this condition as essential to being an artist, as suggested by his haunting lines, 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better' (Beckett, 1989, p. 101). But even if those lines were intended to be no more than self-referential, it would nevertheless be true that he believed that this condition was essential to being Samuel Beckett.

The second intended outcome of the artist's striving is to attract an audience for her work. Whether she will succeed in doing so is unpredictable, unless there exists, fortuitously, a ready audience for her work. The artist manager would have a distinctive reason for existence when there is a gap between what the artist desires to create and what the market is prepared to consume, provided the artist feels or discovers that she herself is ill-equipped or disinclined to close that gap (henceforth referred to as the 'g-a-p'). His special responsibility would be to overcome that g-a-p, or at least reduce the uncertainty associated with the second intended outcome of the artist's striving, while accepting that what the artist desires to create is non-negotiable.

The artist manager, if he joins forces with the kind of artist I have described, faces the challenge of reconciling the artist's striving with its second intended outcome. If the artist's work

causes discomfort or offence, or produces cognitive dissonance, or demands that people re-examine their deep-seated prejudices, or calls for a radical shift in hitherto uncontested ways of seeing, there might be a greater incongruity between her practice and its intended outcome.¹ The artist manager must help to create the material conditions that enable the artist to live by her choices; at the same time, he must create and expand the audience for what her desire produces. His success in narrowing or closing the g-a-p could potentially support her practice because the net income generated in the marketplace can create the means to enable her to focus solely on her creative aspirations. He might try to conquer this problem by finding investors, donors or corporate sponsors to underwrite her artistic process and production, but this might be as challenging as finding an audience for her work, and for the same reason: her art might be seen as too edgy, too disturbing, too provocative, too avant-garde. Donors might not want to risk their reputation by associating with her art; investors might not want to risk their money on work whose 'market-friendliness' is untested; and corporate sponsors, being inherently risk-averse, will be forthcoming only after the artist has acquired a standing and an audience (Chaudhry, 2019, Chapter 8 in this volume).

My argument will be that the artist manager stands out from the rest of the crowd of managers when he partners with self-expressing artists for whom their own dreams and visions brook no compromise. For it is then that he confronts forces that pull in different directions, such as those I have described here. When he volunteers to face the pressure to manage and overcome these contrary forces, he can be said, as I shall argue, to have a mission and an ethic that is exceptional and dissimilar from managers in other fields.

I will say a lot more about the relationship between the artist manager and the self-driven artist in the ensuing sections. But even the brief account I have provided thus far might be thought to be inapplicable to modern and contemporary art that does not bloom entirely from the creative urge of an individual. For example, theatre and dance work is often configured through processes of give-and-take and collaboration. The self of the creative individual cannot possibly have license to rein freely in these contexts of artistic production if collaboration is to have any meaning. Here the artist manager, it might be urged, does not confront the autonomous desire of an individual artist and the particular challenges associated with it. My response to this demurrer would be that the kind of desire that the artist manager encounters might be no different in the case of a performing arts company which adopts a collaborative mode for developing productions, except that the desire would now pertain to the *company* and not to this or that individual in the company. In other words, the company too may desire, like the individual artist I have described, to pursue an independent practice and create work free of the influence of external non-artistic considerations.

I can anticipate another objection to what I have said earlier – that I am wedded to a romantic idea of the artist. I am not perturbed by that complaint as long as no one makes the silly claim that such artists are an extinct species. Furthermore, it is not my view that they are the only breed of artists in the world. The next section will be concerned with drawing a contrast between two types of artists – the self-driven artist and the entertainer – and I will propose that it is only in relation to the former that an artist manager shoulders a distinctive mantle of responsibility.

Artists and entertainers

The domain of the entertainment industries is vast, spanning popular film and music, television sitcoms and reality shows, musical and comedic theatre, gaming and much else besides. In what follows, I will talk only about one category of artists in the entertainment industry – namely

magicians, ventriloquists, stage hypnotists, stand-up comics, circus clowns and the like – who perform for the amusement of others and are called entertainers.

There are many tendencies and traits that distinguish an entertainer from a self-directed artist. The entertainer's primary preoccupation is with gratifying revealed or anticipated public tastes and preferences. If an act fails to grab the audience, she will modify or drop it from her repertoire. For the self-directed artist, this is inconceivable because she measures her worth as an artist from within, not on the basis of its public acceptability. She does not regard the public as the final authority on the value of her art; rather she decides for herself whether her work lives up to or falls short of what she had set out to do as an artist and what she imagines to be the purpose of her art. The self-driven artist and the entertainer think of failure differently. The former does not aspire to fail in the eyes of the public, but her primary anxiety is related to the *uncertainty* of the result of her striving (will I create work that is true to what I want to express?). For the latter, how the public receives her art is the key measure of its value and, therefore, of failure and success. Her chief anxiety is related to the *desirability* of the result of her striving (will the public accept my work?).

I may be faulted for advancing a view that unduly polarises these two categories of artists. Entertainers do not invariably behave as if they were slaves to audience tastes and expectations. Stand-up comics, for instance, might have moral qualms about telling racially charged jokes or stories that demean women, despite being told that such material is lapped up by audiences. My view, however, is that audience acceptability is the *paramount*, though not always the *overruling* consideration, for entertainers. Another objection could be that artists driven by the need for self-expression are not disinclined to participate in events and activities to promote their art (book launches, media interviews, sneak-peeks, etc.). This is true, of course, and for an obvious reason: they desire, as I have indicated, to have their work read, seen or heard, but reaching audiences is the *secondary*, not the *primary* aspiration for such artists.

Instrumental reasoning decides which acts the entertainer will present to her audience. She reasons, in other words, in this way: if audiences are thirsty, I will give them water, unless they prefer beer. The only limit to the dictates of instrumental reasoning (which relies on facts) might be urged, as I have suggested, by her moral conscience (which would be informed by her values). If, however, she is a neoliberal market fundamentalist, who recognises only economic value and rejoices in the victory of means-ends reasoning, she will anaesthetise her conscience, assuming she has one, to enlarge her market appeal and maximise the inflows from her performances. For then, attracting the greatest possible number of spectators to her performances would matter above all else, including the means by which she gets to her goal. Neoliberal thinking, far from being able to take a stand against pornography, for example, demands that pornography be encouraged if it has the potential to capture a larger market (Vellani, 2015, p. 18).

In contrast, instrumental thinking does not exert sovereignty over the artist for whom 'the audience is not the starting point but the end point' of the work she creates. The entertainer's fundamental interest is in generating economic value, specifically financial rewards for herself, by creating work that is relished by the audience. It is, therefore, perfectly possible and of little consequence that she might in fact have a low opinion of the work she performs. Such distancing from her art is impossible for the self-expressing artist. For her, there is no profit, as the Bible instructs, in gaining the whole world and losing her soul, because she is principally spurred to create art that she sees as being of value and meaning for *herself* as much as for others. That value may reside, in her view, in the aesthetics of her work, or its perspective on the human predicament, or its attempt to give voice to the voiceless or provoke people to reappraise the world in which they live, and so on.

What is uncertain is whether the value that she is striving to create will delight, move, inspire or transform her intended audiences or be received with indifference or incomprehension. If the g-a-p exists, will *they* find or discover value in her work? And if that g-a-p is to be narrowed or closed, the prevailing public taste for art must either *enlarge* or *change*. In other words, success in overcoming the g-a-p would be achieved if public taste either begins to accommodate or is supplanted by a preference for the kind of work that the artist in question creates.

One source among the many that can lead to changes in public preferences is particularly interesting, and to explain its nature, I will begin by narrating a true story. A school friend of mine was a fan of Elvis Presley and I would quarrel with him about his taste in music. Some years later, after he had discovered Bob Dylan, he said to me, 'You were right. I can't think what on earth I saw in Elvis Presley.' He was obviously not telling me that his taste in music had enlarged, that now he liked both Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan. And while he was indicating that his taste in music had changed, he was telling me not only that he had lost interest in Elvis Presley, but that he now disliked his music. What he said next, however, is especially notable: 'If I hadn't been so obsessed with Elvis, I might have discovered Dylan earlier.' This claim is not so much about the aversion he had developed to Elvis Presley as it is about regretting that he had been fond of his music in the first place. It is not about his dislike for Elvis; it is about disliking his liking for Elvis.

My friend's last remark introduces us to the idea of second-order desires, first proposed by the philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt (1971, p. 7):

Besides wanting and choosing and being moved to *do* this or that, men may also want to have (or not to have) certain desires and motives. They are capable of wanting to be different, in their preferences and purposes, from what they are. . . . No animal other than man . . . appears to have the capacity for reflective self-evaluation that is manifested in the formation of second-order desires.

Hirschman's elegant articulation of Frankfurt's position is worth recounting:

'men and women have the ability to step back from their "revealed" wants, volition, and preferences, to ask themselves whether they really want these wants and prefer these preferences and, consequently, to form metapreferences that may differ from their preferences.

(Hirschman, 2013, p. 250)

My friend's second-order desire took the form of deploring his earlier liking for Elvis Presley and was, therefore, an act of 'reflective self-evaluation'. The formation of a second-order desire does not necessarily indicate a change in taste (because I could dislike my fondness for aerated beverages and yet find myself unable to resist the temptation to drink them) but it certainly signifies a change in values.

A taste is almost defined as a preference about which you do not argue. . . . A taste about which you argue, with others or *yourself*, ceases ipso facto being a taste – it turns into a *value*. When a change in preferences has been preceded by the formation of a metapreference, much argument has obviously gone on within the divided self; it typically represents a change in values rather than a change in tastes.

(Hirschman, 2013, p. 251)

To explore the further implications of second-order desires, consider an example from outside the arts – the dumping of lighters manufactured in China into the markets of South and South-east Asia. Imagine an Indian who buys these lighters because they are cheaper than lighters made in his country. One day, however, he begins to have misgivings about his preference for Chinese-made lighters because he has come to believe, one, that it is important to encourage local industries and, two, that Chinese dumping constitutes an unfair trade practice. Having developed this meta-preference, he lets go of his first-order desire for ‘Made in China’ lighters and commits himself to buying only lighters made in India. The sacrifice he would make because of this commitment might be insignificant in the case of lighters, but the hole it would burn in his pocket would certainly get bigger, and cause him more distress, if the cost-differential between dumped Chinese products and their Indian equivalents becomes larger.² Should, moreover, most of his compatriots take a similarly principled stand, it will no longer profit the Chinese to dump lighters and other products on the Indian market.

Likewise, products of the entertainment industry will have to be withdrawn from the market if they, like the dumped Chinese products in our fabricated story, come up against widely shared second-order desires. Consider the following scenario: a stand-up comic has captured a devoted audience, which is especially attracted to her routine of homophobic jokes and stories. At some point, though, appreciable numbers of her loyal following develop a distaste for their taste in the politically incorrect content of her performances. Not only do they stop attending her shows, they begin staging protests outside the venues where she performs. Television channels, ever mindful of public opinion, are no longer willing to offer her a platform. Confronted with sharply declining audiences and revenues, her manager advises her to excise those portions of her performance which have begun to cause widespread offence. She may choose to spurn his advice because she genuinely believes that homosexuality is unnatural and wrong. But if she takes this decision, despite facing the imminent threat of being kicked out of the market altogether, she would be behaving in a manner expected of a self-absorbed artist, not an entertainer. The alternative would be to heed his advice, a decision which might sadden her in view of her moral stance but would be consistent with the fundamental dharma of the entertainer. In the given circumstances, this is the right choice for an entertainer to make: it profits her to lose her soul to gain the world, which simplifies the job of her manager.

The self-driven artist might also be homophobic or misandrous, her views writ large in her art. What if in time she confronts a conscientious objection to her art from audiences that previously loved her work? Her manager might say that her (primary) desire to produce art with content that a growing public is finding objectionable has begun to undermine his efforts to fulfil her (secondary) desire to acquire an audience for her work. His task is complicated by the structure of her motivation: unlike the entertainer, she sees no profit in losing her soul to gain the world.

The influence of second-order desires on the public taste for an artist’s work need not be negative, causing an extensive turning away from her art, as my examples seem to suggest. The influence may also be positive, attracting growing audiences for her art. This is because second-order desires can take two forms that have the potential to modify behaviour: one, people can dislike their liking for X; two, people can dislike their dislike for, or failure to like, X.³ Consider an example that elucidates what can happen if you develop a meta-preference which takes the form of disliking what you dislike. Your girlfriend loves Picasso. You, on the other hand, dislike him. You can tell, however, that it upsets your girlfriend that you do not share her passion for the artist. As a result, you develop a distaste for your aversion to Picasso, a second-order preference which pushes you to strive hard to overcome your antipathy to his work. You read books and attend talks on his life, his work and his influence on twentieth-century art. In time you

begin to appreciate Picasso and you are finally able to relate to what your girlfriend sees in him. The outcome of your efforts is not only a newly acquired preference in art but an altered way of viewing and assessing art. Since your preference change has been preceded by the formation of a meta-preference, this implies, as Hirschman suggests, that your values with respect to art have changed.

It should be noted, however, that a reversal in your preference for, say, Hindi film music over Indian classical music may indicate, but does not require, the prior formation of a meta-preference. There could be many reasons why you might have turned from disliking to liking Indian classical music. For example, the reason why *my* resistance to this genre of music broke down, in fact, was this: I was subjected to unavoidable and prolonged exposure to classical music during my growing years, since my mother learnt and practised it at home.

What, however, has changing disliking into liking have to do with the artist manager? Very little for a manager who 'takes care of business' for an entertainer. His job is to advise the entertainer to *avoid* being disliked and focus solely on serving up what the public is known or can be expected to like and keep working on her material to widen its appeal and attract new audiences. For an artist manager associated with a self-driven artist, though, the presence of the g-a-p might require active engagement with what the public dislikes. Indeed if the g-a-p is severe, and the artist's work is widely misunderstood or detested, the need to convert disliking into liking might be a matter of life-and-death, obliging him to create multiple opportunities (both face-to-face and on various online and offline media platforms) for educational, value-shaping interfaces *between* the artist and the public or engagements *about* the artist *for* the public. He must consistently strive to push against ingrained perceptions and preferences in order to generate greater interest in what the artist has to offer. This is an indispensable endeavour if resistance to the artist's work is to be broken down, though the gains from it may take a long time coming if they come at all. Peter Bendixen (2000, p. 8) believes that

one of the managers core functions is that of establishing a secure and effective position for his client within the relevant environment. He must firmly plant reputation and distinction in the minds of customers, audiences and consumers, as well as in the media . . . and among the experts, critics and whomever else may be of importance. Seen from this perspective, a manager creates public reputation and distinction as a kind of cultural capital.

My point is that serving this function becomes far more vital and urgent for a manager who has to counter pervasive disregard for or hostility to the work of a self-driven artist.

Although I have spilled much ink on distinguishing between the self-regarding artist and the audience-led entertainer, ground realities, as I said at the start, do not support the idea that all artists can be parked in either one or the other of these two categories.⁴ For instance, a playwright who sees her writing for the stage as motivated from within may also work for the entertainment industries – writing skits for commercial radio stations, scripts for television serials, and screenplays for profit-oriented films. Without any feeling of discomfort or conflict, she may be able to compartmentalise her artistic life, creating work that she regards as self-expressive on the one hand, and churning out stuff primarily with an audience in mind on the other. For her, writing plays is a very personal undertaking, unlike the rest of her artistic output, which she accepts will be guided by market considerations.

Just as an artist with a 'divided' identity compartmentalises her working life, an artist manager who teams up with her can be expected to compartmentalise his efforts on her behalf, setting one set of goals for the self-directed side of her artistic personality and another set of objectives

for the audience-directed side of her creative identity. This is a natural conclusion to draw if there is any truth in my submission that an artist manager's challenges and concerns are different when he assists an entertainer as against a self-expressive artist. But a manager who works exclusively in this compartmentalised fashion for an artist who traverses both entertainment and self-expression may serve her interests only up to a point. He might fail to pick up on opportunities that exist for leveraging one aspect of her artistic practice for the benefit of the other. If she is a reputed playwright who has undersold her skills in the entertainment industry, her manager could and should flaunt her achievements in one area to win her greater access to the other. Or he might have to work in the opposite direction because her playwriting has attracted less recognition than the work she has done for commercial radio, television and cinema.

One obvious point that these examples drive home is that a management professional would be ill-advised to enter the arts field with a fixed or preconceived understanding of the artist manager's functions and responsibilities, since the *kind* of artist or arts group with whom he joins hands will be a key determinant of the challenges he will face, the aims he will need to pursue, and the tasks he will need to perform. One can also safely conclude that managers who take care of the needs and interests of pure entertainers discharge more or less the same responsibilities as corporate managers in fields outside the arts, because both rely solely on cost-benefit computation to achieve the same ultimate goal – to maximise the buy-in and profit margin for whatever they put out on the market.

The artist manager's mission and ethic

Are an entertainer's manager (M1) and a self-directed artist's manager (M2) any different in how they might respectively relate to the arts in general and to the art of the creative person that they take responsibility for espousing and monetising?

M1 is not required to have any interest in the arts at all. He will need at best some familiarity with the world of the arts, enough to be effective in utilising his skills to advance the entertainer's career. And if he does have an interest in the arts, and personal responses to the entertainer's artwork – be it joy, indifference, disapproval or repugnance – he must have the objectivity to put these feelings aside and let instrumental reasoning decide which parts of the entertainer's repertoire will find less or more purchase with the audience. Profit is the only bottom line for him, as it is for the corporate manager described earlier, and if he allows his personal views about the entertainer's work to interfere with his decision-making, he would be failing in his responsibility to further the interests of the entertainer. Indeed, both the entertainer and her manager must share the same relationship of *distance* to her art, recognising that their respective feelings or opinions about it count for nothing if their profit-directed goals are to be advanced. Of course, as I have indicated earlier, there may be instances where scruples about certain parts of the entertainer's repertoire overrule profit-maximising considerations.

By contrast, except when no g-a-p exists, it is scarcely credible that M2 could have no interest in the arts, and no penchant for the art produced by the self-driven artist he manages. The higher the mountain he is ready to climb to gain audience traction for the artist, the more difficult it is to doubt that he derives his motivation and job satisfaction from something that goes beyond achieving success in closing the g-a-p. If he has taken a path of greater resistance in his choice of assignment – one that, moreover, carries an enormous risk of failure – it is natural to suspect that this is because the assignment holds a larger meaning for him personally, a feeling, perhaps, of connection or empathy with the artist's striving and the kind of work she dreams of producing. When M2 volunteers to support a self-driven artist, it must be because he cherishes the art she strives to bring *into* the world, and he signs, in effect, an unwritten contract to uphold

her art and bring it to the world. The self-driven artist and her manager, therefore, must share the same relationship of *closeness* to her art. One or the other might have reservations about this or that piece of work that she produces, but both would be equally and firmly convinced about the larger significance and purpose of her art. Indeed, if M2 does not share the artist's belief in her work, one might wonder if he would be capable of the necessary resolve and perseverance to beat the odds that may be stacked against him and effectively protect and advance the interests of the artist.

It is helpful to translate this dissimilarity between M1 and M2 into the language of values: M1 need not believe that the entertainer he manages is producing something of (non-financial) value, let alone value with which he identifies, whereas M2 must believe that the work of the artist he manages is producing (non-economic) value to which he relates. This unlikeness matches the divergence in how they see their fundamental role: M1's is to generate profit as an end in itself, while M2's is to secure capital and assets (whether through angel investors, grant makers, individual donors, sponsorship or/and the market) as a means to promoting and sustaining the creation of value. Filipe M. Santos (2012, pp. 337–340) would say that M1 is capturing (or appropriating) value and M2 is creating value, and this contrast between M1 and M2 parallels the seminal distinction that J. Gregory Dees (2001) has made between business entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs:

Social entrepreneurs . . . are entrepreneurs with a social mission. . . . Mission-related impact becomes the central criterion, not wealth creation. Wealth is just a means to an end for social entrepreneurs. With business entrepreneurs, wealth creation is a way of measuring value creation. This is because business entrepreneurs are subject to market discipline, which determines in large part whether they are creating value. If they do not shift resources to more economically productive uses, they tend to be driven out of business.

M2 is like a social entrepreneur (SE) in being mission-driven, except that his mission is to create and sustain *artistic* rather than *social* value. This formulation, however, does not capture the full scope of M2's mission, as it fails to take into account his role in *enhancing* value creation. His mission, in other words, should be understood as extending to creating opportunities for the artist to *enrich* her practice and creativity, should she express a desire to gain broader exposure to the artistic environment or genre in which she works; or feel the need to collaborate with other artists; or simply want to share knowledge, ideas and processes with her counterparts and draw inspiration from them.

For M2, moreover, the commitment to sustaining value creation implies taking actions of a kind that also do not form part of SE's mission. What is the nature of this special commitment? The answer lies in understanding that M2 and SE create value in contrasting ways. SE leverages the market as a means for supporting the creation of social value. The first undertaking is not directly related to the second. This lack of interdependence between SE's two endeavours means that the fate of the former can have no more than an instrumental effect on the latter, either enabling, restraining or defeating the mission to create social value. M2, however, must create value by directly linking art to the market because artistic value is created only when art is validated by public acceptance and appreciation.⁵ For this reason, failure or success can have a non-instrumental effect on value creation in the arts. Whereas a coalition of forces (such as NGOs, municipalities and advocacy groups) more usually creates social value, an artist alone gives birth to art and, in consequence, to artistic value. It is thus only natural, especially as the self is folded into her practice, that she should be deeply and personally affected by how her

work is received – whether it attracts public and critical acclaim, whether it is widely disseminated and consumed, and whether it brings in financial rewards or other honours. An artist's practice, therefore, can be derailed by the cause-effect relationship between the creation and reception of art. The response to her art can be self-affirming or produce self-doubt. If her work is received badly, she may begin to question the value of her art and even decide to abandon her practice. But even when the artist's work is received well, it can have a negative impact on her practice.

Consider how differently M1, M2 and SE might view success. Success for M1, as for entertainers, is measured solely in terms of revenue generation and is never seen as a problem: the more of it the better. For SE as well, success in the market is always welcome because it generates the financial resources for mission-directed activities. For M2, however, market success for the artist, which is often accompanied by fame and adulation, can pose problems and he must be alert to its potentially corrupting influence. The trappings of success once made Indian theatre directors cautious, formulaic and repetitive, unwilling to take risks for fear of losing hold of the audiences they had established and the state support they had attracted (Vellani, 2008, pp. 138–39). To abide by the instruction to 'meet with Triumph and Disaster/And treat those two impostors just the same' (Kipling, 2000, pp. 134–135) is daunting for anyone, and an artist is no different in being affected equally by success and failure, often reacting to both in the same way – by losing her edge, leaving the dream behind. And when the artist's will to live by her desire weakens, M2 is called upon to be the jealous protector of her dream – urging her to resist erosion of purpose; reigniting the flickering flame of self-belief; and rousing her to recommit to her artistic vision. He must exhort her to 'rage, rage against the dying of the light' (Thomas, 2000, p. 148), become the fire that once burnt brightly in her, the torch she once held to illuminate her path.

To sustain value creation, therefore, M2 must not only secure the material conditions that enable the artist to pursue her practice but also safeguard and fortify her original desire to create work on her own terms, should triumph or disaster threaten to weaken it. Could it be said, in protest, that the latter should not be seen as a commitment that forms an essential part of M2's mission, but as a practical step he is required to take to remove an obstruction on the road to his mission? This objection, however, does not withstand scrutiny. There is a fundamental difference between surmounting a hurdle to a quest and preventing the foundation of a quest from crumbling. A social entrepreneur generates capital to change the world for the better in one way or another. Whether his mission is to reduce income inequality, improve sanitation or gain recognition for the rights of marginalised groups, his striving to create social value is likely to encounter various social, cultural, economic or political obstacles, but these are clearly barriers standing in the way of his mission. M2 might also confront such extrinsic challenges, but he also comes across, as I have suggested, a different kind of threat to sustaining the creation of artistic value: the failure or success in securing market/public support for what the artist desires to create can itself diminish the artist's will to live by her desire. The artist's withering desire is not an external hindrance to value creation because her desire is the *source* of value creation. If M2's mission includes a commitment to sustain the artist's practice, he also has an obligation to secure the footing on which that practice rests. Recall also that M2's mission is to seek public validation for the artist's work without compromising its integrity – a commitment which enjoins him to try to arrest the artist's own temptation to imperil the integrity of her practice.

To speak about commitments and obligations is to enter the field of ethics, and I will end by looking explicitly, if briefly, into the question of the artist manager's ethics. On the one hand, an artist manager's personal ethics and politics (apart from his tastes, interests and leanings in the arts) may underpin the professional choices he makes. Both M1 and M2 may be inclined to

represent and assist an artist or arts company whose ambitions and preoccupations are aligned with their own political and ethical views. M2's politics, for example, may explain his preference for allying with an anti-capitalist and pro-poor group of artists rather than one exclusively concerned to push a feminist agenda. He might have scruples about accepting assignments with artists obsessed with portraying gratuitous violence against women or encouraging young people to take up addictive drugs. Then again, he might have a zeal for performance art but refuse to work for those artists who cause injury to themselves or traumatise spectators, because he finds such acts to be morally indefensible or personally offensive. M1, who favours working with entertainers, may be wholly concerned with extracting economic value from the arts, yet he may be keener to accept an assignment with an entertainer whose politics, which finds expression in her art, resonates with his own. He could also have moral compunctions about associating with an artist whose performances, in his view, are unacceptably transgressive or too littered with mindless sexual innuendos. As in all personal matters, artist managers will differ about what they will stand for or stand up for in the arts.

On the other hand, it is possible to speak about the ethics of artist management and not just about the ethics of an artist manager. Different professions adopt a code of ethics, listing obligations and responsibilities (to employers, clients, consumers, co-workers, society and so on) to which their members are expected to adhere. Ethical standards might likewise be articulated for the profession of artist management. 'Do not misrepresent the work of an artist to the public' might be a precept that the profession could befittingly embrace, for it is general enough to be applicable not only to M1 and M2 but across the field.

There is room, however, to ask a final question about ethics – which is neither as relative as the personal ethics of the artist manager, nor as general as the professional ethics of artist management: does an artist manager have an ethic which springs from the nature of the artist he is managing and is inscribed in the role he plays for her? I believe that M2 does have such an ethic and M1 does not, and the specific nature of that ethic is strewn across the earlier pages of this chapter. To repeat in a nutshell what I have already said: M2 must uphold the artist's desire and the integrity of her art; he must never, therefore, allow her art to be compromised, degraded or disrespected while pursuing support for her practice or opportunities to present or disseminate her work; he must champion and help to enrich the (non-financial) value of her art; and he must also strain to lift the artist from any gathering darkness in her soul, any weakening of will to live by her desire. He would then and only then be true to his own desire and larger purpose to share with unnamable others the meaning and value that he sees in her art. That is his challenge. That is his dharma.

Notes

- 1 Not always, though: the marketability of shockingly transgressive art is illustrated by the careers of many artists, among them singer-songwriter G.G. Allin and performance artist Marina Abramović.
- 2 Sacrifices are often exacted by a commitment to a larger cause. As Ann E. Cudd (2014: p. 37), citing Amartya Sen (1985: p. 187), writes: 'To be an agent is to form a conception of the good, which may . . . also at times involve sacrificing one's well-being for something else that one values.'
- 3 The two other possibilities – the liking of one's dislike for X and the liking of one's liking for X – are not of interest because they do not motivate a change in taste or preference. If one is satisfied with one's likes and dislikes, one is not spurred to alter one's preferences; it is only when one is dissatisfied with one's likes and dislikes that one might try to change them.
- 4 This distinction does not hold true also for some entertainment industries of recent origin. The Video-on-Demand (VoD) services (Netflix, Amazon Prime Video) produce and buy content with an eye to popular demand while carrying material of niche interest as well – material which might have been created by self-directed artists. Because VoD strives to maximise revenues by catering to the widest possible

range of audience preferences, it operates with the same impulse as the entertainer but not with the same business model.

- 5 This does not apply to pre-modern art, which creates emotional, social, ritualistic, symbolic and sacred meanings in a community setting.

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