

A further look at the 'I-am-art' and 'I-am-god' ideas

by Zandy Alexander

Hitler and Churchill - the clash of the imperial, artistic titans.

It would be unpatriotic and subversive to suggest that Churchill, in WW2 was either an I-am-art or I-am-god icon, but Hitler was certainly both. However it is obviously true to say that there is an eerie parallel between these titanic figures, both the greatest orators of their nation, Churchill the highest paid journalist of the British empire, Hitler an author also, and both oil painters too. In other words both were tri-dimensional artistic, imperial polymaths of the highest order. Was WW2 then merely a clash for who was the greatest artist of the two? It is unsettling to imagine that as Churchill orchestrated the war, sculpting out great swathes of history with his bare hands, it was with his full knowledge that within a few years he would be writing up these precise scenarios which he himself had created, the better to sell them on to the highest bidder. As PM and commander of the British armed forces, he was thus

operating a giant sausage machine, where the sausages were raw, journalistic copy for later consumption throughout the empire and beyond. Of course this was nothing compared to how Hitler manipulated his media, then using it to create military victories, land grabs and monetary spoils. Of course WW2 was a giant clash of empires each with their own forest of corporations anyway, the entire project being essentially a trading fracas over the right to market territory, especially the colonies of the empires.

I-am-art, language, consciousness and AI

Today with the advent of the AI society, God and Art are in a peculiar state of re-definition due to the hi-jacking of language by the machines and and by those who program them. We cannot recognise our own English language any more. A great tide of atheism, inhumanism and behaviorism is washing over us, forcing us to rethink what we mean by the word consciousness, and also if we, the humans, own the monopoly on this idea, and if so why, but also if not, then are guilty to be racially prejudiced against these newly intelligent machines, and guilty to be depriving them of their social rights just as black people and women were deprived for thousands of years? There is much confusion and disinformation amidst a

media and an internet which appears to be clouding the concept of universal truth and setting up a myriad of mini-realities around the web and around the world.

Before analysing what all this is doing to the I-am art and I-am god ideas, it is better to understand that we humans are on the run from the AI for the reason that we greatly value all our beloved, home-grown affectations and notions such as consciousness, soul, mind, spirit, humanity, psyche and so on. We do not want to share or spawn out these precious ideas with the AI and we are not keen on any such AI analysing and/or reconstructing them in similar form for themselves and their own betterment.

As a result we are racing the eagles of our consciousnesses toward the various private safe havens such as the holistic world, the spiritual sphere, the emotional plane and in particular the supernatural domain. In these spaces we feel that our humanity will continue to thrive in its purest form, unaltered and unblemished by whatever toxins pour into the disacred and dangerous maw of AI consciousness.

Within these safe haven retreats the I-am art idea may well embrace the primitive, and the tribal, whereas the I-am-god idea could easily morph itself into witchcraft.

The journey of art - from God to the individual

I am art and I am god are all about ego, individuality and character, plus self-affirmation. Remember that many of these things are relatively new aspects of being an artist, from a historical viewpoint. Go back a few hundred years and we find that art was almost totally concerned with God and religion. Beethoven was one of the first to create music that was individualistic. As for literature, for a long period after Christ, all you could read, if you could read, which was rare, were mainly religious tracts. Then finally in the middle ages, the novel makes its appearance, with works like Pilgrims Progress, Gulliver's Travels, Dante's inferno etc. Something was waking up - the idea that there might be something other than religion to think and write about. This might be described as the gradual deification of the human being. Remember that any book at this time was considered sacred. Figures like Gulliver or King Arthur, or Orlando are replacing figures of saints and Christ himself. The individual has entered a path illuminated by religion - plus something extra, something new.

At this point we have placed one first cautious foot on the road that will lead eventually to the world of modern art including conceptual art, and finally to the orgy of mass media fame of certain exclusive artists and also non artists, and then the iconisation of personality, plus the notion that certain icons

have escaped the passage of time and are frozen in immortality, all the better to be worshipped and idolised for the next few thousand years.

Pop music chart hits and the God-complex

The Beatles played with many interesting themes connected with philosophy and deification. The Ballad of John and Yoko is specially interesting since with the line 'They're gonna crucify me' Lennon is predicting his own assassination in Biblical terms. What more powerful proof of I-am-god (in Lennon's mind) could possibly exist?

Is the I-am-god idea a force for good or bad?

The I-am-god idea does not always have to be self-serving, or selfish. Holistic theory has always maintained that there is one universal being and therefore we are all equally part of the creative force ie we are all I-am-god people. Not only this but in the Quaker religion no priest is allowed. Whereas in traditional religion human beings were not deemed spiritual enough to maintain an immediate link with God, with the Quakers, God is

deemed to be inside us - a perfect example of the I-am-god idea in action - and working very well in the communal sense.

Interestingly, on the other hand, when James the Sixth of Scotland unfortunately proclaimed that God existed within him, and even created the law, the divine right of kings, an entire civil war had needst be fought, with the result that the reigning monarch Charles the first was executed, all of this showing how very high the stakes were regarding the I-am-god concept at that time.

Many Quakers lost their lives for a similar reason.

Fame, connection and alienation

In today's world, the industrial revolution and modern digital technology has raised man's functionality to a god-like status. Tech corporations almost rule the planet right now, with their awesome wealth, high-speed electronic reach, and political influence on the various governments.

I-am-god is very much linked with fame and the pursuit of fame. There are some who will kill to achieve it. Mall shooters and school killers are usually searching for some kind of immortality, a pigeon hole in the vaults of eternity, albeit an evil

one.

In this way the I-am-god idea has never guaranteed any idea of good, or of morality.

As a moral experiment the internet is now largely judged as a failure. This idea is linked with the question of connection and disconnection.

Originally the internet was lauded as the ultimate tool for connecting the human race together. Today it appears to have also done the reverse, but in a slightly different way. There is an eerie parallel here with capitalism, which has sought to profit not only from the production and sale of products, but also from the alienation and the disconnection of man from fellow man.

And if it is true that computerisation has mainly been a source of alienation, disconnection and immorality, then perhaps we can dig deeper and suggest that the industrial revolution is the source of all these things, and that the very notion of a machine invariably contains the seeds of something anti-spiritual.

Regarding the historic journey or road of the art world, the industrial revolution created an extra branch, which represented mass media ie art objects, namely books, records and so on. The first branch now contained unique art works

such as an oil painting, with the second containing thousands of copies of original works.

For a musician, the live show would represent the unique art work, and then his records would represent the 2nd branch. For a conceptual artist it would be roughly the same thing, the exhibition would be fork 1 and the coverage in the brochure or art book would be the 2nd fork.

And so the great process of iconisation continues. We all need to look up at somebody or something. Religion no longer satisfies us in this regard.

We have only just begun

Within the tremendous passage of the years Conceptual art has only just begun and it will surely continue to thrive, even though it forces us into something of a philosophical maze or even quagmire, every time it appears. Nevertheless it awakens our aesthetic and intellectual awareness, and since it tests our critical facilities to the limit, it then possibly fits into the sophisticated and elite category of being art for artists. It could possibly be something akin to the Glass Bead Game of the art world.

Conceptual art and avant-garde jazz (music for musicians) are linked in this respect - they are both examples of a unique master game