



Transhumanism: The New Pharaohs And Their New Pagan Gods

The quest for immortality is as old as human existence, but has taken on a modern form in Transhumanism that is just as superstitious and silly as the Pharaohs in ancient Egypt. It will just as certainly fail in the end. □
TN Editor

Jews around the world tomorrow hear Parsha Bo (Exodus 10:1 to 13:16) declaimed in the synagogue, recounting the last of the biblical plagues, the killing of Egypt's first-born, and our midnight departure from Egypt. It is a solemn moment in our religious calendar. Our rabbis emphasize that God did not simply rescue us from Egyptian bondage, but brought a terrible judgment against their gods. Lord, hear our cry, and bring judgment against the pagan gods who are worshipped today!

God told Moses: "I will pass through Egypt on that night, and I will kill every first-born in Egypt, man and animal. I will perform acts of

judgment against all the gods of Egypt: I (alone) am God.” (Exodus 12:12). Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks comments, “The plagues were not only intended to punish Pharaoh and his people for their mistreatment of the Israelites, but also to show them the powerlessness of the gods in which they believed. What is at stake in this confrontation is the difference between myth - in which the gods are mere powers, to be tamed, propitiated or manipulated - and biblical monotheism, in which ethics (justice, compassion, human dignity) constitute the meeting point of God and mankind.”

What was the upshot of Egyptian idolatry? The ruling elite wanted to live forever, and enslaved my ancestors to build grand tombs in which their mummified bodies would migrate to another life, surrounded by their wealth and some conveniently dead servants. A remarkably large part of Egypt’s economic output fed the fantasies of the Pharaohs, at which we laugh today. The desire for eternal life is not new, and hardly unique to Jews or Christians. Neanderthals buried their dead with grave gifts. Gilgamesh the Babylonian hero set out to find eternal life. The pharaohs built pyramids with our sweat and blood.

Today our progressive opinion-makers ridicule the concept of an eternal God and a world to come, but they believe that we soon will upload our minds to the Internet where our consciousness will continue intact. We laugh at the idea that the blessed would spend eternity strumming harps while seated on clouds, but enlightened opinion now believes that we shall maintain our conscious minds in Google’s cloud. Add to this a robotic body, and supposedly we can live forever. A lot of Silicon Valley billionaires take this seriously.

According to Wikipedia:

Mind uploading may potentially be accomplished by either of two methods: Copy-and-transfer or gradual replacement of neurons. In the case of the former method, mind uploading would be achieved by scanning and mapping the salient features of a biological brain, and then by copying, transferring, and storing that information state into a computer system or another computational device. The biological brain may not survive the copying process. The simulated mind could

be within a virtual reality or simulated world, supported by an anatomic 3D body simulation model. Alternatively the simulated mind could reside in a computer that is inside (or connected to) a (not necessarily humanoid) robot or a biological body.

That is not science, but science fiction. The urge to escape death, though, remains as powerful today as it was when Moses confronted Ramses. A tech startup now offers a method to preserve the chemical arrangement of your brain until such time as it can be uploaded, with the minor side-effect that you will have to die in the process.

It sounds goofy, but the mainstream of enlightened opinion now believes that artificial intelligence, gene manipulation, and other techie fads will transform the human race into something utterly different. The popular writer Yuval Harari, a favorite of Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and Barack Obama, prophesies that we will make ourselves into science-fiction caricatures of ourselves. In a recent interview, the best-selling author declared:

Given the current pace of technological development, it is possible we destroy ourselves in some ecological or nuclear calamity. The more likely possibility is that we will use bioengineering and machine learning and artificial intelligence either to upgrade ourselves into a totally different kind of being or to create a totally different kind of being that will take over. In any case, in 200 or 300 years, the beings that will dominate the Earth will be far more different from us than we are different from Neanderthals or from chimpanzees.

Harari isn't ready to have his brain preserved for a future upload, but his vision of human self-transformation is the next worst thing. All the metaphysical and existential investigation of the philosophers, all the inspiration of the artists, all the revelation of the prophets is tossed into the recycling bin at the brain lab. It is madness, but it now offers serious competition to the biblical foundations of Western society.

Our new pharaohs believe in methods to achieve immortality as silly as the old ones. And they entertain such fantasies for the same reason:

They want to make themselves into immortal gods who have no more constraint on the satisfaction of their appetites than the rapacious, concupiscent and murderous gods of ancient paganism.

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