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The Human Event

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Gilgamesh vs Genesis: Relationships of the Human and the Divine

The relationships between the gods and mankind has been said to be a unique relationship. In the epic “Gilgamesh” by Stephen Mitchell, and “Genesis” 1-11, multiple encounters between the divine and the human are shown. These two texts depict attributes of the relations between the gods and mankind. The relationship between the divine and the human in the ancient world is a complex relationship that is built upon the principal of mutual dependency and power imbalance, despite the close similarities between the two worlds.

The main aspect of the relationships between the gods and humans is the mutual dependency of the two populations. In the epic of Gilgamesh, the gods and the humans are similar in behavior, in fact, they rely on each other to make decisions. The author might have chosen to depict the gods in this way to show the mutual dependence between the two. In Genesis I, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27). Similar to Gilgamesh, the author wanted to show how the gods relate to the mortals and that the encounters between the divine and mankind is necessary to maintain a mutual relationship. Even though the relationship is built upon mutual dependency, there is still a power imbalance between gods and mortals. In the epic of Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh turned to Utnapishtim after his dear friend Enkidu died. Utnapishtim was trying to speak some wisdom into Gilgamesh’s life as to why death is a part of the world, he says “When the gods assemble, they decide your fate, they establish both life and death for you, but the time of death they do not reveal” (178-179). This shows the superiority of the gods when determining the lives of mortals. In Genesis 2-3, Adam and Eve are forbidden to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge. They obey God until Eve is tempted by the serpent. Once mankind disobeys God, they are cursed by God. He clearly states, “cursed are you a above all livestock and all wild animals” (Genesis 3:14). Even though the gods determine life and death and the fate of mankind, the individual characters we have met are not totally subordinate to the power of their god or gods. They have some ability to make independent decisions and the mutual dependence between the gods and mankind allow humans to have the ability of free will. The gods gave humans decision-making power because the gods make their decision based off what the humans do, and humans make decisions based on what the gods do.

The relationship between the humans and the gods is demonstrated by mutual dependence and power imbalance. Decisions each side makes, affects the actions of the other side. Humans have the ability to make their own decisions; This is because gods often make humans in their own image, so they give them the ability of choice. Through both texts you can see where this comes into play when the gods have encounters with humans. The relationship between the gods and the humans will always decide the fate of the future.

In the first paragraph, you should talk about the relationship between humans and the divine in the context of the two texts rather than ancient societies.

The conceptual comparison is well extracted (particularly mutual dependence and power imbalance), and your use of textual evidence remains grounded in concepts. However, it is missing any conceptual contrast. For example, both texts define a power imbalance between Gods and humans, but how do the polytheistic qualities of Gilgamesh diverge its power imbalances from those in the monotheistic Genesis? Besides Gods against humans, who else struggles for power?

When writing, ensure every sentence says something new and descriptive for developing your concepts; the entire first paragraph can be conceptually reduced to "In the ancient world, divinity and humanity interact on principles of mutual dependency and power imbalance." Avoid both repetition and filler.

Your discussion of human choice in the conclusion is interesting albeit brief. It would help to more directly explore this concept with the others developed. What is the relationship between human choice and the power relations between divine and mankind? Answering this might bring you closer to a relevant contrast.

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)