

HISTORY OF  
ANCIENT  
RELIGION

Meeting 3 **Assyrians and Babylonians**

- The nuances of polytheism
- Mesopotamian empires: Assyria and Babylon
- "Poem of the Righteous Sufferer"

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**Upcoming dates**

- Sunday 18 September **Quiz #1 due**  
(link on Schedule page)
- Monday 10 October **Images Essay due via BlackBoard**
- Tuesday 27 September **no meeting (no classes scheduled)**  
Tuesday 4 October **no meeting (no classes scheduled)**

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**King Gilgamesh**

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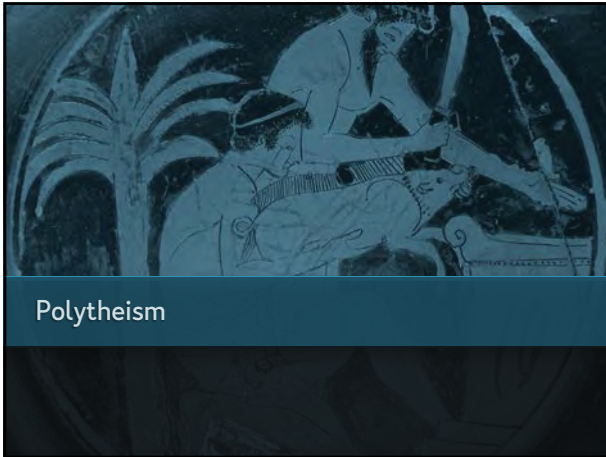
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Polytheism

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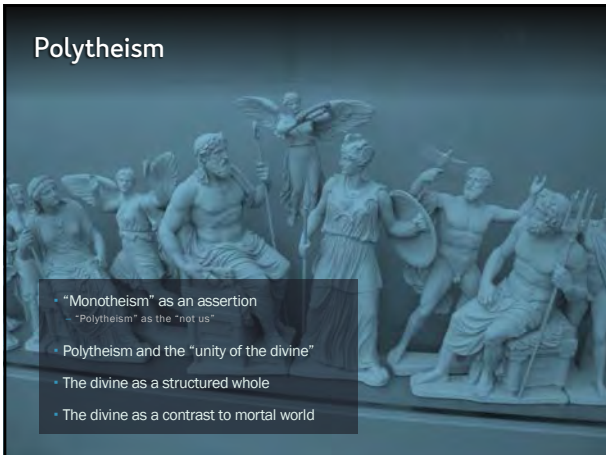
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Polytheism

- "Monotheism" as an assertion  
- "Polytheism" as the "not us"
- Polytheism and the "unity of the divine"
- The divine as a structured whole
- The divine as a contrast to mortal world

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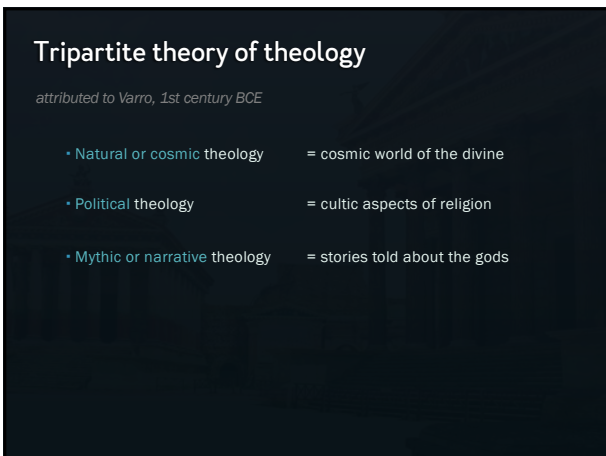
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Tripartite theory of theology

*attributed to Varro, 1st century BCE*

- Natural or cosmic theology = cosmic world of the divine
- Political theology = cultic aspects of religion
- Mythic or narrative theology = stories told about the gods

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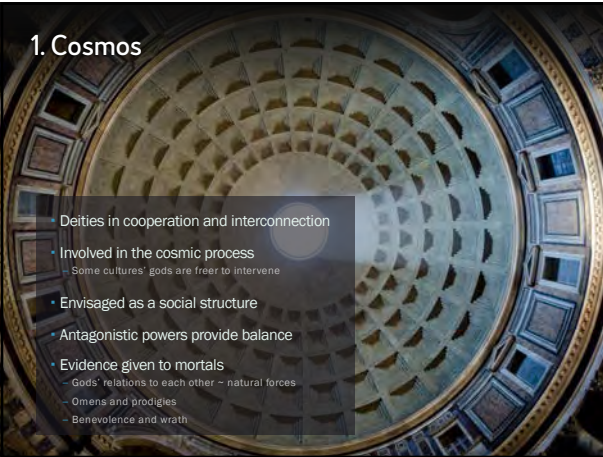
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### 1. Cosmos



- Deities in cooperation and interconnection
- Involved in the cosmic process
  - Some cultures' gods are freer to intervene
- Envisaged as a social structure
- Antagonistic powers provide balance
- Evidence given to mortals
  - Gods' relations to each other - natural forces
  - Omens and prodigies
  - Benevolence and wrath

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### 2. Political / Cultic



- Formal interface between mortals and divine
- "Town gods" (patron deities)
- Divine and human realms both reflect unity and diversity
- "Cult" = service / ceremonial owed to lords

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### 3. Mythic / Narrative



- Stories about gods always involve their interactions with other gods
- Constellations of related gods
- Models of existence

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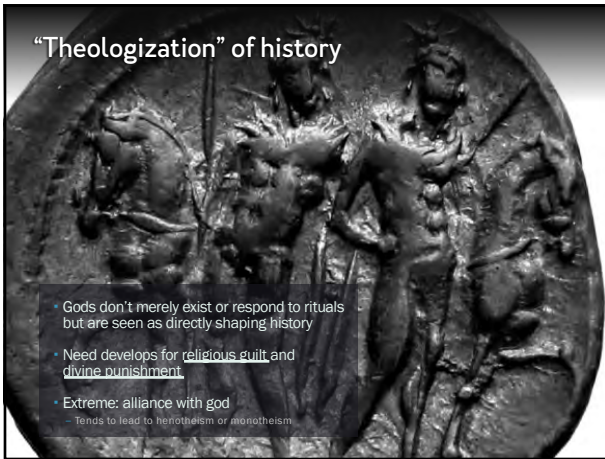
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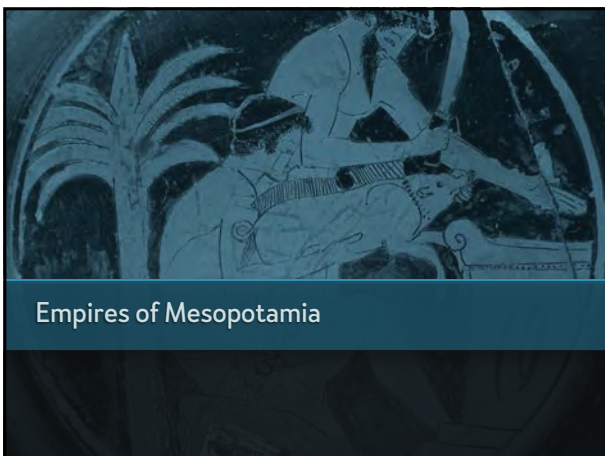
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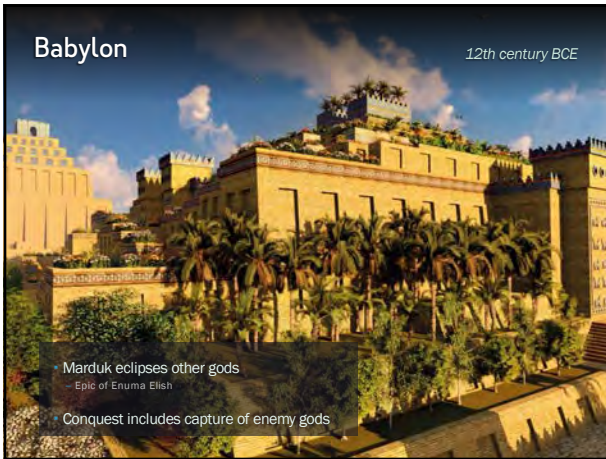
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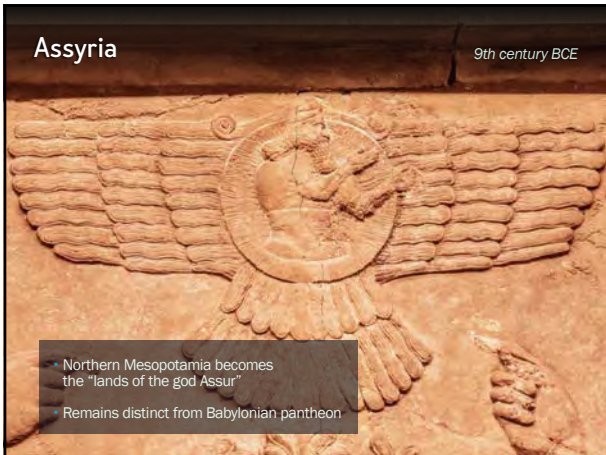
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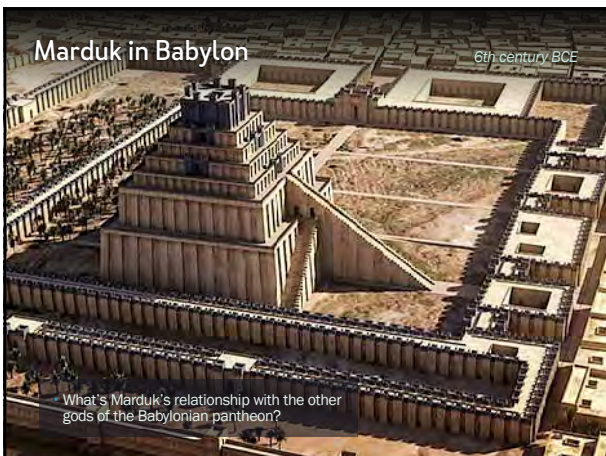
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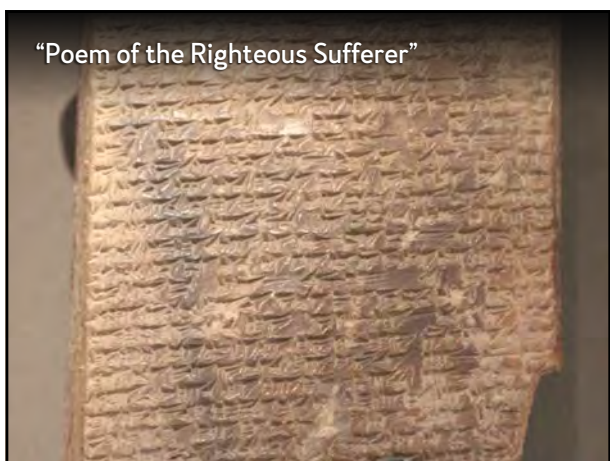
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