

## History of Ideas: Mythology and Philosophy

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### INTRODUCTION

This unit is designed to be part of a two-semester course in the history of philosophy for upper-level students. Primary readings for the course are major works by some of the most important philosophers in the western tradition: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Berkeley, Hume, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Russell, Sartre, and others. I focus the course by starting with Leslie Stevenson's *Seven Theories of Human Nature* and add a study of mythology as an attempt to explain the world. Stevenson's study is of influential systems of thought usually identified with a particular philosopher or scientist (Christianity is the one exception to this). My students read this text, but it would be equally possible for the teacher to use it for his own preparation and planning and have the students read other works. The individuals and works Stevenson covers are:

Sigmund Freud, *Two Short Accounts of Psychoanalysis*;  
Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression*;  
Karl Marx, *Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*;  
Plato, *The Republic*;  
Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*;  
B.F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*.

When humans began to wonder why anything at all exists may never be known, but the antiquity of creation myths attests to a long-lasting interest. Just as important are questions about the role of humankind and its relationship with the divine power or powers. Mythology often includes goals that are the purview of religion—explanations of the origin of the world, for instance. Creation myths supply answers (correct or not) to one of the most fundamental questions. These questions often appear as an attempt to explain why the world, from our point of view, is imperfect, or why humans are imperfect. These questions are not limited to either religions or mythologies and play a part in certain philosophers' analyses of subjects ranging from political theory to anthropology. They are obviously relevant to my teaching. The views of theories in fields as far reaching as anthropology and political theory may reveal assumptions about the questions usually relegated to religions and myths.

I teach both Philosophy and English III (British Literature) in the high school Vanguard program at Jesse H. Jones High School. The Vanguard program is the school district's designated "gifted and talented" program, so a large amount of challenging reading and thinking is appropriate and required. This mythology-oriented unit is designed for my Philosophy class and supplements the yearlong reading of original works by Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Berkeley, Nietzsche, Russell, Sartre,

and other thinkers. One of the texts I use is by Leslie Stevenson, a text that is very open to incorporating a study of certain elements of mythology.

Leslie Stevenson, of the University of St. Andrews and *The Philosophical Quarterly*, in his book *Seven Theories of Human Nature*, and his expanded *Ten Theories of Human Nature*, analyzes different worldviews as divergent as Christianity and B.F. Skinner's behaviorism, Platonism and Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, and shows that these different world views can be compared in terms of four topics: They each present an idea of the nature, and sometimes origin, of the world and a theory of the nature of the human being. The third point of comparison is each system's analysis of why the human world is so apt to be in disarray. (For Christianity the key is sin, or disobedience to God's will; for Marxism, corrupt economics.) Stevenson also compares these systems in terms of a fourth subject, what must be done to correct the flaw in the human being and his world.

To what extent do ancient mythologies parallel these more modern theories in attempts to answer these four questions? Stevenson's work is one I use in my philosophy classes to show an analytical approach to the seven very influential theories he covers. I would like to add a selection of myths to that portion of my course. I would like to include them in my British Literature class also, probably in connection with *Paradise Lost*, but their content would not be limited to the period of Milton's work, portions of the King James Version of the Bible, and works by Thomas Hardy. In more current literature, initiation rituals are frequently a subject of fiction, and the myths would underline the universality of that aspect of mythology.

## I. THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE

Stevenson insists that an ideology is not just a theory, but is in fact based upon theory. Plato believes, for example, that the universe has four aspects--logical, metaphysical, epistemological, and moral (Stevenson 28). Plato mentions gods, and in some places speaks of "the god" in the singular, but they have little importance in his theory of the nature of the universe. Christianity, in contrast, argues that there is a god, that God is transcendent as well as immanent, and that God created the universe for a purpose. Such an argument carries far-reaching implications about the nature of the universe. Marx is an atheist, but he still believes that the universe is governed by laws. His interest was in analyzing the laws that he believed controlled human history, which he argued could be studied scientifically (Stevenson 58). In such a view values may exist, but are not *transcendent* values. Sartre, the French existentialist, is also an atheist. Neither transcendent nor objective values exist in Sartre's theory of the universe, and human life has no ultimate purpose or meaning (Stevenson 92).

Where does mythology lie in this spectrum? Ancient myths, probably universally, posit a supernatural origin to the world. Hesiod and Ovid both relate the creation of the universe. In his *Theogony* the Greek poet Hesiod (sixth century B.C.) reports that Chaos came into existence first, then Gaia (Gaea or Ge, Earth), next Tartarus (a place deep in

the Earth), and then the gods (quoted in Morford 36). Gaia gives birth to the god Uranus, and together (Earth + Sky) they produce the Twelve Titans, the Cyclopes, and the (hundred-handed or hundred-armed) Hecatonchires. The Roman poet Ovid (43 B.C.- A.D. 17) draws upon the fifth century Greek philosopher Empedocles, who argues that four basic elements exist: earth, air, fire, and water. So for Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*, Chaos is not an emptiness; it is rather “a crude and unformed mass of elements in strife” (Morford 37). Ovid is undecided about certain aspects of the creation. It was either a god or Nature that separated the elements that brought order to the universe (*Metamorphoses* 1. 20-56).

## II. THE NATURE OF MANKIND

We know that our world is not complete without human beings! The nature of mankind is Stevenson’s second step in his analysis. Were we created? Did we evolve from less complicated species? Do we have an identifiable nature? Obviously such questions evoke responses from religions and psychology, but also from political theory, anthropology, and of course philosophy. Was man created to take the empty seats of the angels thrown out of heaven? Christianity may argue so, but other voices can be heard here. Harvard psychologist B.F. Skinner rejects any possible metaphysical dualism in human beings (Stevenson 107). Skinner, a behaviorist, focuses on man’s relationship with his environment. Two assumptions are at work here, Stevenson observes. First, that human beings are subject to scientific laws, and, second, that “these laws state causal connections between environmental factors and human behavior” (Stevenson 109). The determinism that Skinner theorizes gives a rather bleak view of the human being, one not accepted in other worldviews. The Christian view places man in relation to God and in fact sees him made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). He is superior to the rest of creation and has a *purpose*. The dualism of the human, body and soul, is essentially a Greek philosophical idea and, according to Stevenson, is not found in either the Old or New Testaments (46-7). Plato is one of the most important sources for the concept that man has a dual nature. The soul or mind is immaterial and can exist separate from man’s body, is immortal and existed before our material birth and will exist after “death” (*Republic* 608-11). For Plato the soul has three parts, Appetite, Reason, and Spirit (anger, emotion). Appetite is concerned with physical needs (thirst, hunger) and Spirit with emotional ones (passion, ambition). It is Reason that is linked to the higher realm, the world of Forms.

Freud also sees human nature as tripartite. His famous division of the human psyche into Superego, Ego, and Id is an interesting parallel to Plato’s view. The Id, like Plato’s Appetite, is made up of the instinctual drives that seek immediate satisfaction; the Ego is not exactly parallel to Plato’s Reason, but it does have the function of dealing with the real world and mediating in the relationship of the world and the Id; the Superego contains the conscience and the social models absorbed as a child (Stevenson 74). What may be more significant in relation to the other views studied here are two other aspects of Freud’s theory. One is an emphasis on determinism. The individual’s actions and

utterances are caused by pre-existing psychological states. The second is the existence of the *unconscious*. This is a hypothetical part of the mind that we cannot *recall* as we can a memory. It is a large portion of the mind that lies below the conscious level. Marx, however, has an interesting parallel to Freud here, since for Marx the human nature is essentially *social*: “the real nature of man is the totality of social relations” (Marx, quoted in Stevenson 61). Biological needs are obvious—eating, sleeping—but otherwise there is no *individual* human nature. Whatever we do is socially learned. In fact we are not products of our conscious choices, for our consciousness is a product of our social condition (Stevenson 61-62). Here Freud and Marx have a common ground. For Freud and Marx agree that the human consciousness is not “free” or “undetermined”—the causes of our thinking and behavior, however, are psychological, in Freud’s view, and social and economic in Marx’s.

Konrad Lorenz, similar to Freud in that “he is a product of the scientific and cultural traditions of Vienna” (Stevenson 122), sees man as only another species of animal. Not only do our bodies show our evolutionary relationship to other species, so does our behavior. “Our behavior is subject to the same causal laws of nature as all animal behavior” (Stevenson 125), and it is dominated by an aggressive drive that controls our relationship to the rest of our species. This is not pure determinism, because our knowledge of this condition can allow us to change our behavior. Nevertheless, Marx and Lorenz have placed mankind in positions fundamentally in opposition to those viewed by Plato and Christianity.

Ancient mythmakers were not always kind to humans either. Homer gave credit in one passage to Oceanus and Tethys, two Titans, for the origin of the gods, but Hesiod, echoing arcane traditions common to other ancient cultures, gives in the *Theogony* a full account of the generations of the primeval powers and the gods that descended from them. Interestingly, in the other traditional poem by Hesiod that has come to us, the *Works and Days*, the poet represents the decline of mankind in the Myth of the Ages. While the origin of woman is described twice (once in each of Hesiod's great poems), the origin or creation of man is left very much in the dark in the *Theogony*. A few passing references do not clarify who brought humans into existence. The Myth of the Ages tells a tale of human deterioration in the guise of five ages, each worse than the preceding one, with the exception of the Age of Heroes.

In the Golden Age, when Cronus was the supreme god, people lived as gods, in harmony, and died as though going to sleep. By the time of the Age of Silver, Zeus had overthrown his father Cronus, but the people created by the gods were inferior to earlier humans. They had century-long childhoods and short-lived maturity. Because they did not show enough respect for the gods, Zeus hid them in the earth where they still exist. The Age of Bronze followed. The warlike bronze mortals destroyed one another and left way for the Age of Heroes. The Greek mythological heroes had honor, though some were destroyed by war. The fifth age is that of Iron. In the Age of Iron men learned to toil and to bewail their fate.

The Age of Heroes gives us many of most famous legends and many of the characters of the greatest ancient Greek plays.

But when this race [the Age of Bronze] was covered by the earth,  
The son of Kronos made another, fourth,  
Upon the fruitful land, more just and good,  
A godlike race of heroes, who are called  
The demi-gods—the race before our own.  
Foul wars and dreadful battles ruined some;  
Some sought the flocks of Oedipus, and died  
In Cadmus' land, at seven-gated Thebes;  
And some, who crossed the open sea in ships,  
For fair-haired Helen's sake, were killed at Troy.  
These men were covered up in death, but Zeus  
The son of Kronos gave the others life  
And homes apart from the mortals, at Earth's edge.  
And there they live a carefree life, beside  
The whirling Ocean, on the Blessed Isles.  
Three times a year the blooming, fertile earth  
Bears honeyed fruits for them, the happy ones.

(Hesiod, *Works and Days* 156-720)

But of course such bliss is not a part of the fifth era, the Age of Iron.

The Greek story of the decline of mankind does not involve the concept of sin that marks Christianity. Humankind's fate is instead the result of a clash of wills among the gods. Prometheus tricked Zeus and stole from him fire, which he presented to mankind as a gift. As a revenge, Zeus sentenced Prometheus to torture: he was chained to a cliff, and daily an eagle ate his immortal liver, which grew back at night, and prepared a special curse for mankind—woman (Hesiod, *Theogony* 507-616, *Works and Days* 45-104).

Although all “other animals look downward,” and “Man, / Alone, erect, can raise his face toward Heaven,” the poet Ovid writes (86-87), mankind's path has not followed his upward gaze. Man, according to Ovid, had lived through four ages—Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Iron—by the time he wrote and the journey would be misnamed if called a “progression.” In the Golden Age, all was justice and right. No law existed, no punishment was needed. Fear was unknown, and men were happy, not needing to work even to produce food. But a change of power on the realm of the divine was accompanied by the introduction of the Age of Silver. Spring was shorter, winter appeared. Men had to build houses and work for food. In the Age of Bronze, men had to arm themselves for the first time, but not all was evil. It is with the Iron Age that all evils came (86-162).

### III. WHAT IS WRONG?

That the world and man are imperfect is a commonly accepted view, but the explanations for that fact differ from theory to theory. Plato believes that the flaws in man reflect the flaws in society, and—like Marx—he wants to restructure society. Christianity’s view places the responsibility in man’s choice not to live according to the will of God. Sartre rejects religious belief and focuses on the *anguish* that comes from the knowledge of our freedom. Too often the reaction is denial of freedom—what he calls *bad faith*; we choose not to take responsibility for our moral choices and place the authority elsewhere. The results can range from the Inquisition (from letting someone else decide what is right and wrong) to racism (“They are just *naturally* inferior”). Mythologies may also involve the gods in an explanation of our plight, but without the concept of sin. Hesiod is very clear about this. Zeus’s wrath when Prometheus gave fire to man resulted in the punishment of man as well as Prometheus: “Immediately / He [Zeus] found a price for men to pay for fire” (Hesiod, *Theogony* 69-70). The Limping God Hephaestus

Moulded, from earth, the image of a girl  
A modest virgin through the plans of Zeus.  
Grey-eyes Athene made her belt and dressed  
The girl in robes of silver; over her face  
She pulled a veil, embroidered cleverly,  
Marvellous to behold. . . . (Hesiod, *Theogony* 572-77).

When this “curse” was created, “the price / for the blessing of fire” (87-8), even the gods were amazed to see “the hopeless trap, deadly to men. / From her comes all the race of womankind/ The deadly female race and tribe of wives” (93-5). In *Works and Days* Hesiod names her, Pandora (“all gifts”). He tells how the gods presented her with gifts that would torment mankind and sent her forth to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. Epimetheus’s brother warned him not to accept gifts from Zeus, but Epimetheus forgot. When the cask of “gifts” was opened, all the evils spread among men, but hope remained under the lid (95).

Pandora is an interesting case of the complexity of a myth’s implications. She brings to us all the ills that plague our species. The conflict of Zeus and Prometheus explains the origin of fire, and Pandora’s creation, the existence of evils. But why is hope among the gifts that are supposed to inflict harm? Morford is tempted to agree with Aeschylus that hope is both “blind and a blessing.” In the play *Prometheus Unbound*, Aeschylus has Prometheus say that he gave mankind hope to stop “mortals from seeing their fate.”

The Navajo religion presents a very different picture. Shortly after the first generation, the Holy People, appeared from the underworld at Emergence Rim, they were being exterminated by monsters who had been created by masturbating women: “a woman who masturbated with an elk’s horn produced a horned monster, one who used a

feather gave birth to a monstrous eagle” (Lincoln 26). The Navajo god Changing Woman was born in order to give birth to hero twins who would defeat the monsters. Changing Woman was conceived by a sexual union of two opposite entities, mother earth and father sky (comparable to the Greek deities Gaea and Uranus). Changing Woman, the product of a sacred marriage, becomes the religion’s fertility goddess (27-28), and her ritual performed for the Navajo girl becoming a woman represents both the fertility of the woman and of the vegetation.

#### **IV. THE ANSWER**

Plato identifies the cure for mankind’s problems in social reorganization, but even more in education, and in that last he is the first to do so (Stevenson 34). “The philosophers must become kings in our cities,” Plato has Socrates say, “or those who are now called kings and potentates must learn to seek wisdom like true and genuine philosophers, and so political power and intellectual wisdom will be joined in one” (273). Only the philosophically trained will pursue and recognize the Good rather than the expeditious. Marx, too, sees salvation in social and, more to the point, economic reformation. Freud provides another echo of Plato in that he “says that individual well-being or mental health depends on a harmonious relation between the various parts of the mind, and between the person and the real world in which he has to live” (Stevenson 76-77)

Mythology and Christianity offer both rituals and ways of living as answers. The Christian view depends upon God, Stevenson points out. If the person has turned away from God, “only God can forgive man and restore the relationship” (48). An act, repentance or confession, may be required. One particular Christian claim is central, that “God was uniquely present in the particular human being Jesus, and that God uses his life, death, and rising again to restore men to a right relationship with Himself” (49). Mythology usually makes smaller claims. The Changing Woman ritual brings blessings and fertility, for example, but does not suggest “salvation.” The ancient Greek mythology offers several kinds of answers. One is the display of role models in the lives of the mythical heroes; another is in the mystery religions. The mystery religions survived in Greece and Rome for several centuries into the Christian era for they, too, offered a doctrine of immortality (Morford Ch. 14). The mythological Orpheus is best known for his descent into Hades to retrieve his wife Eurydice; his failure to keep from looking back at her before they had left the underworld doomed her. But Orpheus was also important, to certain cults, as a prophet of the god Bacchus or Dionysus. The Orphic theogony relates also the origin of the world:

The first principle was Chronus (Time), sometimes described as a monstrous serpent having the heads of a bull and a lion with a god’s face between; Chronus was accompanied by brooding Adrasteia (Necessity), and from Chronus came Aether, Chaos, and Erebus. In Aether, Chronus fashioned an egg that split in two; and from this appeared the firstborn of all the gods, Phanes, the creator of everything, called by many names, among them Eros. He was a bisexual deity,

with gleaming golden wings and four eyes, described as possessing the appearance of many animals. (Morford 280)

Phanes's daughter gave birth to Gaea (Earth) and Uranus (Heaven), and they produced the Titans. Cronus seized power next, and then Zeus succeeded him and swallowed Phanes and everything that Phanes had created. Zeus, with the aid of Night, creates everything anew and eventually mates with Kore (Persephone) to produce Dionysus. Dionysus is killed and eaten, all but his heart, by the Titans, whom Zeus destroys. From their ashes come the mortal humans. Zeus saved Dionysus's heart and he was born again. M.L. West says the dismemberment and rebirth are related to ritual initiation into the "adult community or secret society" (143). This mystery religion, and others like that of Demeter, offered promise of immortality and were often linked with Christianity in the first centuries of the modern era (Morford 281).

Stevenson's approach in *Seven Theories* provides a useful tool to analyze and compare different theories and worldviews. Not all the theories place the same emphasis on each of the four aspects distinguished here; nevertheless, certain assumptions about related aspects can be inferred to help us better understand the arguments. The addition of myths to the consideration of philosophical worldviews gives the students a broader scope of understanding of the ways that humans conceive themselves and their world.

### **Lesson One: Plato, *The Republic***

Students begin this unit by trying to define Justice. They must, in class, create their own definitions, record them in their (required) notebooks, and possibly share them with the class. A dictionary definition will then be added to their own. The class then begins reading *The Republic* and observes how some of Plato's characters give apparently inadequate definitions of Justice.

In reading the book the students will focus primarily on understanding Plato's arguments about the city-state. Students must understand that Plato *assumes* that justice in the state is essentially the same as justice in the individual.

Each step in Plato's description of the perfect state must be understood, but the student should remain aware that the basic argument is using the state primarily as an illustration: the parts of Plato's republic are analogous to parts of the human being. Students should discuss whether or not such an analogy is valid and if it is ever valid to use analogy to understand something.



It is important that students be aware of the four topics used to compare Plato's ideas with those of other writers studied. According to Plato,

1. What is the nature of the world?
2. What is the nature of man?
3. What is wrong with man?
4. What is the solution?

Students should try to answer these questions in class discussions and record the information in their notebooks. (It will be necessary for later discussions of other writers.)

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Major Concept</u>
Order	
Balance	
Structure	
Discipline	
Harmony	Justice
Removing conflict	
Social justice	
Personal justice	
Knowledge	
Virtue	
Wisdom	

### ***Projects***

1. A notebook is required. Students must take notes on what they read and record their own reactions to the subjects Plato raises (justice, education, social harmony, etc.).

2. Students should write a poem about justice (or injustice) or prepare a poster about either justice or Plato's city-state. A poster or painting of Plato's famous cave would be one possible idea.
3. Students could write and perform a dialogue (semi-debate) on any of the topics Plato discusses.

***Possible essay topics:***

1. How much do you agree or disagree with Plato's plan for a city-state and why?
2. Why should the leader (the Philosopher-King) be the most educated person in the state? How important is knowledge?
3. How is Plato reducing conflict between classes when he insists that the upper (Guardian) class not possess private property or have individual families?
4. Is Thrasymachus's definition of justice (i.e., might is right) better than Plato's? Why or why not?

**Lesson Two: Creation of Man**

Texts: Hesiod, *Theogony* and *Works and Days*  
 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*  
 Lincoln, Bruce; "Kinaalda: Becoming the Goddess"  
 Genesis 1-3

The story of the origin of mankind is of course a captivating subject. Students can be introduced to a variety of such stories that can lead to worthwhile discussions in the classroom. Obviously, these accounts from older sources can be enhanced by modern scientific theories.

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Major Concept</u>
Creation of the universe	
Creation of mankind	Creation
Creation of woman	
Imperfect world	
Mythology	

Hesiod, Ovid, and Genesis relate the creation of the world. What is interesting is the question of why it came into being. Ovid implies the importance of order because the universe rises out of Chaos. For Ovid it was either a god or Nature that separated the elements and gave rise to order. In Hesiod's *Theogony* "Chaos" does not mean disorder,

yet the rule of the supreme god, Zeus, can be established only after he defeats and utterly destroys his greatest enemy, Typhon, who is the embodiment of disorder. Genesis, of course, attributes the cause to God and implies a purpose—the creation of mankind (mankind truly, woman was an afterthought: see Genesis 2: 18-22). Ovid presents man as the highest of the mortals, the only one who raises his face to the stars. But the current race of man, for Ovid, is not the “golden race” of humans that lived when Cronus was still king of heaven; Ovid is of the fifth race of man, living in the age of iron.

Genesis is not the only account to present woman as a later creation. Hesiod, in both *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, says that Zeus had the gods prepare her as a special curse for man. Navajo mythology is kinder to the female of the species. The ritual performed by the Navajo girl becoming a woman makes her Changing Woman, the deity who gave birth to the twin heroes who saved humans from early monsters.

Classes can read these accounts in any order, for they are short and easily compared. One benefit is a glimpse of the complexity of mankind’s attempts to explain our existence. Other concepts that can be discussed in relation to these works are responsibility and sin, including the difference between the ancient concept of crime in the accounts of Hesiod and Ovid and the concept of sin in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Projects springing from these readings can range from one-act plays to formal papers contrasting parallel aspects of the myths.

### **Lesson Three: Bringing Things Together**

I require students to keep a notebook with notes covering each work read for the course, accounts of their reactions to the readings, and arguments and counterarguments related to the readings. This is a good substitute for objective tests in such a course (a true-or-false test for philosophy seems self-contradictory). The notebook is a good resource for end-of-unit assignments designed to encourage students to bring together their readings and strive for the three highest categories of Bloom’s Taxonomy: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This can be accomplished through a formal paper or a research paper dealing with two or more conflicting accounts of human nature. A more creative product would be a one-act play, perhaps one with the different theorists engaged in a polite conversation about their views. Either can be supplemented with an oral presentation: I require my students to present a lecture to an audience at lunch. The lecture must be advertised by at least two posters mounted in the hall inviting interested students to attend. The lectures are usually well attended and afford my students the opportunity of receiving approval from someone other than the teacher.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books for teachers

Freud, Sigmund. "The Question of Lay-Analysis." Rpt. in *The Study of Human Nature*. Ed. Leslie Stevenson. New York: Oxford UP, 1981. A good place to begin to explore Freud's own writings, this, with "Five Lectures on Psycho-Analyses," was published in England as *Two Short Accounts of Psycho-Analysis* by Penguin in 1962.

Hesiod. *Theogony*. Trans. Martin L. West. *Hesiod: Theogony. Works and Days*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988. Partial translation in Morford, Mark P.O., and Robert J. Lenardon. *Classical Mythology*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Longman, 1999. The ancient poet traces the history of the world from Chaos to Zeus's becoming the king of gods and further.

-----, *Works and Days* Trans. Martin L. West. *Hesiod: Theogony. Works and Days*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988. This poem also discusses the myths, but it also contains agricultural advice and ethical maxims!

Lincoln, Bruce. "Kinaalda: Becoming the Goddess." *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1981. This is a very good discussion of initiation rituals in Navajo culture. It deals with the origin of mankind.

Lorenz, Konrad. *On Aggression*. Trans. Marjorie K. Wilson. New York: Bantam, 1974. This influential study of the possibility of innate patterns of human behavior serves as a balance to the behaviorist arguments of B.F. Skinner.

Marx, Karl. *Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*. Trans. T.B. Bottomore and M. Rubel. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964. Marx is a thinker whose influence in this century is obvious. This text offers selections from all periods of Marx's work.

Morford, Mark P.O., and Robert J. Lenardon. *Classical Mythology*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. An excellent study of Greek and Roman mythology in the literature of those cultures, this book also offers new translations of extensive portions of those sources.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1983. The Roman poet collected the myths of his time in this poem. The work offers the modern reader an introduction into the Roman mind of 2,000 years ago. Rolfe Humphries's translation is a delightful read.

Plato. *The Republic. Great Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. W.H.D. Rouse. Eds. Eric H. W. Warminster and Philip G. Rouse. New York: Mentor, 1984. This a very good translation; others will do, but this comes with six other dialogues, any of which the teacher would find useful.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel Barnes. London: Methuen, 1957. This difficult work by the French Existentialist philosopher is best approached with a guide, such as A.C. Danto's *Sartre* (London: Fontana, 1975). Students would get an easier introduction to existentialism through Sartre's novel *Nausea* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1964).

Skinner, B.F. *Science and Human Behavior*. New York: Macmillan, 1953. The important work by the major experimental psychologist Skinner shows the arguments of a behaviorist and is an interesting viewpoint countering Konrad Lorenz's belief in an innate aggression.

Stevenson, Leslie. *Seven Theories of Human Nature*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1987. This very useful, easy-to-read introduction to philosophy and analysis is by the Lecturer in Logic at the University of St. Andrews and Editorial Chairman of *The Philosophical Quarterly*. Stevenson has a newer edition, *Ten Theories of Human Nature*.

West, M.L. *The Orphic Poems*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1983. Look at this to examine the evidence for the ancient Greek mystery religions associated with the mythic Orpheus.

### **Books for students**

*American Indian Myths and Legends*. Ed. Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz. New York: Pantheon, 1984. This collection of 160 tales from 80 American Indian tribes offers a tour of the myths of Native Americans.

Bulfinch, Thomas. *Bulfinch's Mythology*. London: Avenel, 1978. This is a classic source for young students of mythology.

Campbell, Joseph and Bill Moyers. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Doubleday, 1988. A scholar and a journalist offer a provocative discussion of the role of mythology.

Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Ed. Robert Fraser. London: Oxford UP, 1994. Every library should have a copy of this classic 1890 study of primitive religion and mythology. Its influence on the literature of D.H. Lawrence and T.S. Eliot alone makes it worth studying.

Gayley, Charles Miles. *The Classical Myths in English Literature and in Art*. Waltham, Mass.: Ginn-Blaisdell, 1939. This was based originally on Bulfinch's 1853 *Age of*

*Fable*, which is now included in Bulfinch's *Mythology*, but it is a good student text and includes helpful illustrations and discussions of the origins and types of myths.

Genesis, 1-3. Students should read this objectively to understand what Stevenson means when he says that Christianity contains a theory of the universe.

Kenney, Edward John. "Ovid." *Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*. 1979 ed. This will help the student place Ovid in a historical context.

*Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*. New York: Prometheus Press, 1960. This is a very good source for students.

Lincoln, Bruce. "Kinaalda: Becoming the Goddess." *Emerging from the Chrysalis*. Lincoln's fascinating look at Navajo mythology is a good introduction to initiation rituals and will help students appreciate the wealth of mythology to be found in early American cultures.

Morford, Mark P.O., and Robert J. Lenardon. *Classical Mythology*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. These scholars will help the students compare and interpret classic myths of Greece and Rome. The text also offers new translations from the relevant literature.

*Myths and Motifs in Literature*. Ed. David J. Burrows, Frederick R. Lapedes, and John T. Shawcross. New York: Free Press (Macmillan), 1973. The editors present excerpts from literature that reflect archetypal mythological themes and characters. They have chosen an excellent way to show students the relevance of mythology to the modern mind.

*Myths and Tales of the American Indians*. Ed. John Bierhorst. New York: Indian Head Books, 1976. This study arranges American Indian myths into 15 different types. More than 40 cultural groups are represented.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Rolfe Humphries. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1983. This is a good, easy-to-read translation. The work is a wonderful collection of the myths of Ovid's world and gives the reader insight into the ancient cultures and religions both of Greece and Rome.

Plato. *The Republic*. *Great Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. W.H.D. Rouse. Eds. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse. New York: Mentor, 1984. Rouse's is a good translation of one of the most important works in the history of philosophy. The book also offers another six of Plato's influential dialogues.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Nausea*. Trans. Lloyd Alexander. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1964. Students will get an easier introduction to the sense of existentialism through this novel.

Solmsen, Friedrich. "Hesiod." *Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia*. 1979 ed. This will help the student place Hesiod's work in a historical context.

Stevenson, Leslie. *Seven Theories of Human Nature*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1987. This is a clear, provocative analysis of seven systems of ideas from philosophy, psychology, sociology, politics, biology, and theology.

### **Web pages**

Ancient World Web Site, <http://www.julen.net/ancient/>. This web site offers links to other sites concerned with ancient civilization.

Bulfinch's *Mythology*, <http://www.bulfinch.org/fables/> This is a useful site with good illustrations.

Perseus Project, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>. This very good source enables students (and teachers) to explore Greek and Roman mythology. It contains a good history of Greece and vast databases of ancient texts, art, archeology, architecture, geography, with multiple links that allow searches.