

Origins of People, Origins of Stories: Hesiod's Pandora Myth, Enkidu, and Adam & Eve

This paper seeks to further nuance our understanding of Hesiod's Pandora myth (primarily *Works & Days*) against the context of Near Eastern anthropogonies with which it has been compared. In particular, I will argue that it belongs to a tradition stemming from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Most work has noted generic similarities between Pandora and Near Eastern anthropogonies, with some focus on the Adam and Eve story (e.g., Burkert 1992, 2004; West 1997). However, little has been done to better understand how various anthropogonic texts may interrelate with one another. This is particularly surprising since the Adam and Eve story is a fairly anomalous Near Eastern anthropogony. Consequently, similarities between Hesiod and the Adam and Eve story cry out for further investigation. This paper will therefore be a first step in that direction.

More conventional Near Eastern anthropogonic myths are exemplified in such texts as the Akkadian poem *Epic of Atrahasis* (ca. 1800-1700 BCE). The gods create humankind to free themselves from the necessity of work. Gender and sex are not important beyond mechanistic concerns for reproduction (an equal number of men and women are created); however, they are important concepts in Adam and Eve. Eve causes the downfall of humankind after she eats of the Tree of Knowledge, thereby resulting in humankind's expulsion from paradise, loss of immortality, and Adam and Eve becoming conscious that they are sexual beings.

These themes are known to derive from the story of the creation of Enkidu in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, (e.g., Heidel 1942, 1946) although this too has been understudied. The Enkidu story itself, although not a true anthropogony, alludes to anthropogonic conventions (e.g., George 2003). However, gender and sex are important in this story. Enkidu initially leads a life as a beast

and can fight lions and run with the gazelles, but, after the prostitute Shamhat comes to have sex with him, he loses his superhuman strength, puts on clothes, and enters human society.

These themes are also reflected in Hesiod's Pandora myth. The creation of Pandora, like Eve, leads to the sexual awakening of humans, just as Eve and Shamhat do. Moreover, Hesiod tells us that before Pandora, humans lived like the gods – immortal and free from work. However, after she opens the jar, humans become subject to death and disease and the need to work, paralleling the changes to humans suffered in the Adam and Eve story and the Enkidu passage.

This paper therefore proposes that the Pandora myth, in addition to the Adam and Eve story, derives either ultimately from the story of Enkidu's birth in *Gilgamesh* or from an anthropogonic tradition of which *Gilgamesh* is the earliest representative. This tells us that the Pandora myth is not merely a variant of a general Near Eastern-Mediterranean anthropogony, but rather has a specific pedigree. Since Hesiod and Genesis are roughly contemporaneous, this realization may permit future research on the historical context that would explain why both of these stories responded to the same anthropogonic tradition.

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