

# Ovid: *The Metamorphoses*

[Wheelock, Chapter 18]



A statue of Apollo & Daphne inspired by Ovid's story in Book 1.

## Quick Facts about *The Metamorphoses*

- ★ written in 15 books
- ★ contains the stories of 247 different transformations
- ★ begins with Chaos and the creation of the world
- ★ ends with the deification of Julius Caesar
- ★ contains its own "Little Aeneid", an abbreviated version of Vergil's tale
- ★ completed in 8 AD
- ★ written in hexameter
- ★ modeled on Hesiod's *Theogony*
- ★ other than transformation, love is a main theme
- ★ Ovid's *Metamorphoses* inspired numerous later authors and artists

## Ancient Thought on Life, Death & the Soul

Contemplation of the soul began with the Greek philosophers, specifically Plato and Aristotle. The Greeks used the word,  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ , similar to the English word, psyche, to represent the soul. Plato believed that the soul was a mark of all living things responsible for thought and sensory perception. The soul was where virtues such as courage and justice resided and was what separated the living from the dead. In death, Plato believed that the soul departed from the body and traveled to the Underworld where it existed as a shade or ghost. He purported that the soul was immortal and therefore could never be destroyed. He reasoned that only things made of visible parts could be dissolved and since the soul cannot be seen, it cannot be dissolved, even in death. In contrast, Aristotle and many later Hellenistic thinkers believed that Plato was wrong and that the soul was corporeal and thus was lost at death.

created by Jessica Fisher, 2007