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# One to rule them all: The γόης of (Plato's) Ancient Athens

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## INTRODUCTION

Best translated as "sorcerer" or "enchanter", the γόης (*goēs*) played a prominent role in Ancient Greece by means of the influence he was capable of exerting on others through his words.[1] This paper will analyse a pivotal stage in the development of this intriguing figure. By adopting a historical perspective, in what follows I will first illustrate the main features of this figure, with a focus on Euripides' *Bacchae* and *Hippolytus* and on Plato's *Laws*. The *goēs* will emerge as a liminal figure, an outsider and lawbreaker relegated to the edges of society because of his very psychagogic powers (i.e. powers that move the soul). The bulk of this work will be devoted to Plato's Athens as depicted in three dialogues (*Euthydemus*, *Gorgias*, and *Republic*).[2] A careful reading suggests a crucial shift: the *goēs* is now refashioned as a Sophist, and as such, far from being an outcast, he can exert his power on the City overtly and gain a central role in its dynamics of power. Ultimately, and paradoxically, Athens itself will turn out to be a *goēs*, exerting the strongest influence on Athenians, non-Athenians, and Sophists alike.[3]

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[1] Cf. LSJ s.v. For the literary evidence cf. e.g. A. *Ch*. 823; Hdt. 2.32.6-33.4; E. *Ba*. 234; *Hipp*. 1038. For an analysis of the non-fragmentary, literary occurrences of the term up to Plato cf. Antola 2016.
The figure of the *goēs* remains object of interest in later periods, however it becomes harder to distinguish from other figures such as the μάγοι (*magoi*). The terms *goēs* and μάγος (*magos*) are in fact used as synonyms already in the fifth-century BC (cf. Bernard 1991, p. 46). On the different figures cf. e.g. Graf 2009, pp. 21-34.

[2] For an exhaustive study of *goēs*, γοητεύω (*goēteuō*), and γοητεία (*goēteia*) in Platonic dialogues cf. Antola 2016, pp. 54-128. For editions and translations see bibliography. All translations are modified by me. The translation of Plato's *Euthydemus* is my own. I refer mainly to A.T. Murray 1919 for the *Odyssey*; Kovacs 1995 and 2002 for Euripides' plays; Bury 1967 & 1968 for the *Laws*; Rowe 2012 for the *Republic*; Lamb 1967 for the *Gorgias*.

[3] Cf. Antola 2016, esp. pp. 113-128, for a different reading. In this paper, I refrain from treating the figure of the *goēs* as an analogy or a metaphor in reason of the historical approach I endorse. Looking at literary evidence up to Plato, it would seem that the original "magical connotation" of the activity of the *goēs* never fades as the figure evolves and is associated with different fields of expertise (i.e. rhetoric; for one, we note that in Pl. *Lg.* 1.649a1-6 the "magical aspect" remains noteworthy) – cf. Rinella 2010, esp. pp. 177, 186-187, 205. Therefore, in this study I will not differentiate the passages analysed according to different fields, and I will take the term *goēs* at face value. With regards to Plato, I will be focusing on the figures of the γόητες (*goētes*)-Sophists and on the City of Athens. Cf. n. 16 for other *goētes* in Plato, and n. 2 for Platonic passages grouped under different fields of expertise.

## THE *GOĒS*

Notwithstanding a renewed interest in recent scholarship,[4] the figure of the *goēs* remains in many respects still surrounded by mystery, because of the sparse literary evidence and the ambiguity that characterises its depiction. Still, it is possible to point out quite safely a few elements.

Scholars generally agree that, since the Greek term *goēs* derives from the verb γοάω (*goaō*), "lament",[5] at least at the beginning the *goēs* was connected to the world of the dead, and engaged in a number of activities related to the chthonian sphere, using γόοι (*gooi*), "laments", to appease restless shadows, or to instigate them against the living.[6] Through what can be described as psychagogic skills, he would communicate with the souls of the dead, and he would lead them to do his bidding.[7] Far from being limited to the Underworld, however, the psychagogic power of the *goētes* proves to be just as capable of moving the souls of the living. As is clear from literary evidence,[8] in the day-to-day world they could bend the will of those who listened to them through their most effective words. This paper will focus on this latter aspect of the activity of the *goēs*, a figure that can at last be defined as a "sorcerer", and "enchanter" gifted with the power of influencing other people's souls.

Before delving into the main argument, it is important to highlight the most striking features that characterise these individuals; this will allow a more in-depth understanding of the figure of the *goēs*. In this section, we will look into Euripides' depiction of two *goētes* before moving to Plato's *Laws*. These examples, to be kept in mind during the analysis of the *goētes* portrayed in Plato's *Euthydemus*, *Gorgias*, and *Republic*, will also offer the opportunity to see the development of the figure of the *goēs* in different authors.[9]

At first, the *goētes* are described by literary sources as foreigners and outsiders.[10] Two instances fitting this description can be found in Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Bacchae*: the main characters

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[4] Cf. infra, n. 6.
[5] Cf. Chantraine 1968; Frisk 1972; Beekes 2010, lemma γοάω (*goaō*). On the formation of the word cf. Chantraine 1933, p. 267. *Contra* Buck and Petersen 1949, p. 451.
[6] Cf. Burkert 1962, p. 44; Vermeule 1979, p. 17; Dickie 2001, p. 30, n. 45; Collins 2008, p. 59; Graf 2009, pp. 24-26. On Greek lament see Reiner 1938 *cit. ap.* De Martino 2000, pp. 189-191; Alexiou 2002, esp. pp. 102-103.
[7] On the relation between *goēs* and ψυχαγωγία (*psychagōgia*) cf. Carastro 2006, pp. 55-56. For a detailed account of the "goals" of the *goēs* cf. Johnson 2009, pp. 14-15.
[8] Cf. infra. For the relationship between *goēteia* and λόγος (*logos*), and for the power of the latter to influence people's emotions and/or opinions cf. Gorg. *Hel*. 8-14. Cf. Antola 2016, pp. 23-30; Antola 2018, pp. 45-49.
[9] For a different reading cf. Antola 2018, pp. 49-58.
[10] Cf. Hdt. 2.32.6-33.4; 4.105.1-12 for the first (non-fragmentary) evidence on this regard. For an analysis of this feature in connection to the figure of the *goēs* cf. Antola 2016, pp. 15-22. On magic as a prerogative of foreigners cf. e.g. Luck 1997, pp. 8-9.

of the plays, Hippolytus and Dionysus, are in fact both called *goētes* by their counterparts in the plays (Theseus and Pentheus respectively). The former, son of Theseus and of the Amazon Hippolyta (thus only half-Greek), leads an ascetic and uncivilized life, refusing to take part in the activities of the City of Troezen to spend time hunting and honouring Artemis;[11] the latter, son of Zeus and Semele, is a foreigner just arrived in Thebes from Lydia, determined to revolutionise the City by introducing his own initiatory rites.[12] Refusing to abide by the rules and customs of the Cities in which the events take place, these *goētes* can also be called lawbreakers (Hippolytus is accused of raping his stepmother at 943-945, and Dionysus of spreading chaos in the City of Thebes at 216-232),[13] who, through their psychagogic power and charming ways, appear most capable of moving people's souls.

On the one hand, Hippolytus is described by his father Theseus as follows (*Hipp*. 1038-1040):

> ἆρ' οὐκ ἐπωιδὸς καὶ **γόης** πέφυχ' ὅδε,/ ὃς τὴν ἐμὴν πέποιθεν εὐοργησίαι/ ψυχὴν κρατήσειν […]
>
> "Is this man not a chanter of spells and a **sorcerer**?/ He is confident that by his gentleness of temper/ he will overmaster my soul [...]"

On the other hand, at *Ba*. 217-218, Dionysus' persuasive power is exemplified *in primis* by Pentheus, the ruler of Thebes. After having entered the city as an envoy of Bacchus, the god led the women away from Thebes:

> […] γυναῖκας ἡμῖν δώματ' ἐκλελοιπέναι/ πλασταῖσι βακχείαισιν [...]
>
> "Our women have left the houses, /under the influence of Bacchic rites […]"

And, at *Ba*. 233-238, the king of Thebes himself describes the newcomer as follows:

> λέγουσι δ' ὡς τις εἰσελήλυθε ξένος,/ **γόης** ἐπωιδὸς Λυδίας ἀπὸ χθονός,/ ξανθοῖσι βοστρύχοισιν εὔοσμος κόμην,/ οἰνωπός, ὄσσοις χάριτας Ἀφροδίτης ἔχων,/ ὃς ἡμέρας τε κεὐφρόνας συγγίγνεται/ τελετὰς προτείνων εὐίους νεάνισιν.

[11] Cf. E. *Hipp*. 10-19; 952-954; 986-987. Cf. Segal 1978, p. 134; Kovacs 1987, pp. 30-31; Mitchell 1991, pp. 105-106. For a different interpretation cf. Antola 2016, pp. 37-38, n. 203.
[12] Cf. Foley 1985, pp. 205-258. On "Dionysian xenia" cf. Massenzio 1969.
[13] For a different interpretation cf. Mirto 2010, p. 4; Susanetti 2016, esp. p. 288.

*"*They say that a foreigner has arrived/ a **sorcerer**, an enchanter from Lydia,/ his blond locks reeking of scent,/ with a face wine-colored and the charm of Aphrodite in his eyes./ He consorts day and night with/ young women, offering them ecstatic rites*."*

Amongst the incredible feats he is capable of performing,[14] unlike Hippolytus, the *goēs* Dionysus is also characterized by another ability, a trait that we will find in the *goētes* portrayed in Plato's *Euthydemus* and *Republic*; he is capable of changing in shape, or shapeshifting,[15] as reported by the god himself at *Ba.* 4:

[…] μορφὴν δ' ἀμείψας ἐκ θεοῦ βροτησία […]

"Changed in shape from god to mortal."

And by the chorus of Lydian Bacchae at *Ba*. 1017-1019:

φάνηθι ταῦρος ἢ πολύκρανος ἰδεῖν/ δράκων ἢ πυριφλέγων/ ὁρᾶσθαι λέων.

"Appear as a bull, or a many-headed/ snake [for us] to see or a fire-blazing/ lion to behold."

Owing to all these skills, and in particular to their psychagogic ability, Euripides' *goētes*, already outsiders and lawbreakers, appear set to stand at the edges of society, as liminal figures in opposition to the extant rulers.

This notwithstanding, depictions highlighting the *goētes*' power and liminality are not a prerogative of Euripides. One last general representation worth mentioning in this regard is found in Plato's *Laws*,[16] where the Athenian Stranger, main character of the dialogue, is talking about φάρμακα (*pharmaka*), "drugs",[17] at *Lg*. 1.649a1-4:

εἶεν, ὦ νομοθέτα, τοῦ μὲν δὴ φόβου σχεδὸν οὔτε θεὸς ἔδωκεν ἀνθρώποις τοιοῦτον φάρμακον οὔτε αὐτοὶ μεμηχανήμεθα - τοὺς γὰρ **γόητας** οὐκ ἐν θοίνῃ λέγω […]

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[14] For a detailed account of Dionysus' powers and "miracles" cf. Antola 2016, pp. 45-50. For a different interpretation and a more detailed analysis of the two Euripidean instances cf. Antola 2016, pp. 31-50.

[15] The ability of shapeshifting in connection to the *goētes* is first attested in Hdt. 4.105.1-12, where the Neurians are said to be capable of turning into wolves. Cf. Buxton 1987, esp. p. 68; Colonna 1996, p. 737 *ad loc.* For "stories of wolves on the outskirts of the city" cf. Svenbro 1989, pp. 148-163. On Dionysus' transformative abilities cf. Bollack 2005, pp. 107-108; Buxton 2010, pp. 85-86. See also Marietti 2002, pp. 47-48.

[16] For other occurrences of the term *goēs* in Plato's dialogues cf. *Plt*. 303b8-c5; *R*. 2.383a3-5; *Sph*. 235a1; 241b6-7 for the plural form; *Hp.Mi*. 371a2-b1; *Men*. 79e7-80b7; *Plt*. 291c3-6; *R*. 2.380d1-6; 10.598c7-d5; *Smp*. 203d4-8; *Sph*. 235a8 for the singular form.

[17] In this instance φάρμακον (*pharmakon*) has been translated as "drug" taking into account the mind-altering qualities that it shares with wine, as wine (and the intoxication it provokes) was discussed up to this point (cf. *Lg*. 1.635b-648e). For wine as a "mind-altering drug" cf. Rinella 2010, pp. 3-16, esp. pp. 3, 8-9, 12. See also Rinella 2010 for a study on *pharmakon* within the full Platonic corpus, esp. pp. 59-63, 186 on the *Laws*. On *Lg*. 1.649a1-4, cf. Schöpsdau 1994, p. 249.

> "Be it so, O lawgiver, that for producing fear no such drug apparently has been given to men by god, nor have we devised such ourselves (for **sorcerers** I count not of our company) […]"

From the passage one gathers that no man can devise a *pharmakon* to produce and instil fear,[18] only the *goētes* are capable of such an achievement. Owing to this powerful, dangerous ability and its harmful effect, they are not to be counted as a part of the company of civilized men who, with the Athenian Stranger, are reunited in Crete to discuss the Laws of Cities. Once more, the *goētes* appear as liminal (though incredibly powerful) figures, estranged from civilization.[19]

## *GOĒTES* IN (PLATO'S) FIFTH AND FOURTH CENTURY BC ATHENS

In this section we turn to Athens, the setting for the remainder of this paper. My argument will proceed as follows. First, I will introduce the *goētes*-Sophists, and illustrate their role and influence in Athens, using by way of exemplification the *Euthydemus*. Then, taking my cue from the *Gorgias*, I will focus on another *goēs*, namely the City of Athens. I will argue that Athens is the main competitor of the Sophists in the battle for influence and power that shapes the City par excellence. Finally, I will illustrate who appears to be the most powerful *goēs* in Plato's Athens.

So far, the *goētes* have emerged as individuals extraneous to/estranged from civilised Cities. In the fifth and fourth century BC, however, a new development occurs: Plato's Athens is inhabited by several Sophists labelled as *goētes*.

Foreigners and outsiders like Dionysus and Hippolytus, the Sophists come from different places: Abdera (Thrace), Leontinoi (Sicily), Chios, to quote a few.[20] What role are they to play in Athens? And why are they called *goētes* by Plato?[21]

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[18] In this passage, *pace* Burkert 1962, p. 42 and Belfiore 1986, p. 421, the *pharmakon* is employed to harm. Cf. *Lg*. 11.933a2-5. On the *pharmakon* and its "neutral power" cf. Gorg. *Hel*. 14. See Segal 1962, p. 116.

[19] Cf. *Lg*. 10.909a8-c4, where the θηριώδεις (*thēriōdeis*), "the wild", capable of bewitching (the verb *goēteuō* is used in this instance) people and gods, are given a similar depiction. Cf. Antola 2016, pp. 67-70, esp. p. 69, n. 365. See Carastro 2006, p. 189 for magic as a "public danger". Cf. Viano 1965, pp. 426-427; Luck 1997, p. XV. On the passage see also Leszl 1985, p. 67; Eidinow 2007, p. 344, n. 3; Eidinow 2016, p. 318, n. 30.

[20] Protagoras, Gorgias, and Euthydemus and Dionysodorus respectively.

[21] The very definition of "Sophist" in the homonymous Platonic dialogue is more than once characterized by the term *goēs*. Cf. *Sph*. 235a1; 235a8; 241b6-7.

The Sophists were professional teachers:[22] they would come to Athens when the power of the City was at its zenith to provide a specialised education as well as persuasion techniques, which were in high demand in Athenian democracy.[23] For this very reason it was not long before they gained a central position in the City, taking on the power to interact and "play" with the people who considered themselves to be the rulers of the City: the Athenians.[24]

On the basis of the literary evidence, it can be argued that the power of persuasion the Sophists teach and have mastered is in truth hardly different from the psychagogic ability of the *goētes* encountered in the tragedies (both move people to *do* things *via words*). It is this which in the end marks them as *goētes*, "enchanters", who despite not having the ability to raise the dead, certainly have the power of influencing the living through the "art of the word".[25] The mastery of this art is what would seem to give the Sophists an advantage over the Athenians, who, as it would appear from the *Euthydemus*, cannot resist the *goētes*-Sophists' influence.

At the beginning of the *Euthydemus*, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus,[26] two elderly brothers from Chios who have recently turned into Sophists are represented whilst exerting their action on young Athenians and a vast audience. Under the guise of teaching virtue to a young aristocrat, they launch into a verbal skirmish, displaying an impressive mastery in endorsing a definition only to rapidly shift to its opposite. At 288b7-8, Socrates describes their ability as follows:

> […] οὐκ ἐθέλετον ἡμῖν ἐπιδείξασθαι σπουδάζοντε, ἀλλὰ τὸν Πρωτέα μιμεῖσθον τὸν Αἰγύπτιον σοφιστὴν **γοητεύοντε** ἡμᾶς.
>
> "The two have not wanted to show us [their knowledge], continuing to joke; rather, they imitate Proteus, the Egyptian Sophist, **bewitching** us."

In this passage, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are said to imitate the Greek divinity Proteus, who, like the already encountered Dionysus, has the ability of shapeshifting.[27] The parallel unfolds as follows: just as Proteus changed form in order to avoid capture by Menelaus in the

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[22] Cf. Marrou 1948, pp. 84-85. On the Sophists cf. also Guthrie 1971; Kerferd 1981; Untersteiner 2008; Corey 2016.
[23] Cf. Monoson 2004; Wallace 2004. In general, see Sluiter and Rosen 2004. For a useful sourcebook on education cf. Joyal 2009.
[24] This is true especially for Periclean Athens, cf. De Romilly 1992. On the "ideology of power" cf. Th. 2.61.2, 4; 64.3. Cf. Raaflaub 1994, esp. pp. 115-118; Henderson 2003.
[25] Cf. Antola 2018, pp. 49-52 for a different reading and an in-depth study on the *goēs* Hippolytus. On persuasion see Worthington 1994. Cf. also Buxton 1982; Rothwell 1990.
[26] On these individuals, cf. Nails 2002, pp. 136-137, 152.
[27] Cf. Hom. *Od.* 4.456-8: ἀλλ' ἦ τοι πρώτιστα λέων γένετ' ἠϋγένειος,/ αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα δράκων καὶ πάρδαλις ἠδὲ μέγας σῦς·/ [γίνετο δ' ὑγρὸν ὕδωρ καὶ δένδρεον ὑψιπέτηλον. "At first he turned into a well-maned lion,/ and then into a serpent, and a leopard, and a huge boar;/ then he turned into flowing water, and into a tree, high and leafy." This very ability of Proteus is contested by Plato in the *Republic*, cf. *R*. 2.381d1-5. See e.g. Bordoy 2013, p. 18-20.

*Odyssey*,[28] so the two *goētes* avoid direct confrontation; rather than giving one, straight definition, they keep on shifting from one to the other.[29] Their teachings are devoid of knowledge, and truly aim only at winning the verbal battle in progress.[30] However, their "logic and linguistic artifices"[31] bewitch (the verb *goēteuō* is used) their audience, and are described as a part of the "art of enchantments" which succeeds in moving the souls of its listeners. At 290a1-4:

> ἡ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἐπῳδῶν ἔχεών τε καὶ φαλαγγίων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θηρίων τε καὶ νόσων κήλησίς ἐστιν, ἡ δὲ δικαστῶν τε καὶ ἐκκλησιαστῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὄχλων κήλησίς τε καὶ παραμυθία τυγχάνει οὖσα·
>
> "That of the enchantments is the art of bewitching vipers, venomous spiders, scorpions and other beasts and diseases, that [of the Sophists] turns out to be the art of bewitching and gently persuading judges, assemblymen, and other crowds."

The effect of the Sophists' teaching is such that everyone is conquered by their words and persuaded of/by their ability, even those who at first refrained from approving of the Sophists' method. At 303b1-7:

> ἐνταῦθα μέντοι [...] οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ τῶν παρόντων ὑπερεπῄνεσε τὸν λόγον καὶ τὼ ἄνδρε, καὶ γελῶντες καὶ κροτοῦντες καὶ χαίροντες ὀλίγου παρετάθησαν. ἐπὶ μὲν γὰρ τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν ἐφ' ἑκάστοις πᾶσι παγκάλως ἐθορύβουν μόνοι οἱ τοῦ Εὐθυδήμου ἐρασταί, ἐνταῦθα δὲ ὀλίγου καὶ οἱ κίονες οἱ ἐν τῷ Λυκείῳ ἐθορύβησάν τ' ἐπὶ τοῖν ἀνδροῖν καὶ ἤσθησαν.
>
> "In this circumstance, there was no one amongst those present who refrained from praising the speech and the two men above all measure, and who did little but wore himself out by laughing, clapping his hands and rejoicing. For whilst before only Euthydemus' followers caused an uproar at each speech beautifully proclaimed, then the very columns of the Lyceum all but joined the men in the general confusion and delight."

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[28] For the whole episode cf. *Od*. 4.351-570.

[29] Quimby 1979, p. 23. It is noteworthy that at *Euthd*. 297c2 the λόγοι (*logoi*) of the Sophists are compared to a hydra, to whose aid a crab comes. Following Decleva Caizzi's suggestion (Decleva Caizzi 1999, p. 90, n. 80-82), it could be inferred that the crab is Dionysodorus himself, considering he is sitting on the left of Socrates (273b), side from which the crab is said to attack. If this reading is accepted, this is another case in which a *goēs* morphs, albeit only in Socrates' words, into an animal.

[30] On "eristic", the Sophists' method, cf. e.g. Giannantoni 2005, pp. 85-86. See also Skousgaard 1979, p. 379; Nehamas 1990, pp. 6-7; Denyer 1991, pp. 8-19.

[31] Erler 2008, p. 58.

Athens itself, as embodied by the crowd as well as by the very columns of the Lyceum, appears to be bewitched and to yield to the psychagogic enchanters.[32]

There is no need to pursue this matter any further; it seems quite clear that the ground-breaking power of the *goētes*-Sophists is fully capable of enchanting and dominating their audience. It would seem that it hardly matters that their teachings are nothing more than an illusion, in that they do not convey any knowledge;[33] the techniques that succeed in winning the verbal battle in the end also allow them to influence, persuade and conquer anyone who listens. The *goētes*(-Sophists) have truly entered the City of Athens, where they seem to have found the perfect place to stay.

With all their charming power, the *goētes*-Sophists would seem to be the most powerful individuals in (Plato's) Athens, and could be considered (in a way) the "rulers" of the City. Another dialogue, the *Gorgias*, however, shows that the picture is much more nuanced.

A pupil of the Sophist Gorgias, Callicles,[34] Socrates' third interlocutor in the dialogue, speaks of himself and of his fellow Athenians in these terms (483e4-484b1):

> […] πλάττοντες τοὺς βελτίστους καὶ ἐρρωμενεστάτους ἡμῶν αὐτῶν, ἐκ νέων λαμβάνοντες, ὥσπερ λέοντας, κατεπᾴδοντές τε καὶ **γοητεύοντες** καταδουλούμεθα λέγοντες ὡς τὸ ἴσον χρὴ ἔχειν καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ δίκαιον. ἐὰν δέ γε οἶμαι φύσιν ἱκανὴν γένηται ἔχων ἀνήρ, πάντα ταῦτα ἀποσεισάμενος καὶ διαρρήξας καὶ διαφυγών, καταπατήσας τὰ ἡμέτερα γράμματα καὶ μαγγανεύματα καὶ ἐπῳδὰς καὶ νόμους τοὺς παρὰ φύσιν ἅπαντας, ἐπαναστὰς ἀνεφάνη δεσπότης ἡμέτερος ὁ δοῦλος, καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἐξέλαμψεν τὸ τῆς φύσεως δίκαιον.
>
> "We mould the most excellent and powerful of us, catching them young, like lions, and subduing them by enchantments and **bewitching** them, we enslave them, telling them that they must have but their equal share, and that this is what is fair and just. However, I believe that if a man gifted with a nature of sufficient force were to be born, then he, having shaken off all that we have taught him, would burst his bonds and would break free; having trampled down our writings, our enchantments, our spells, and our laws, which are all against nature, our slave would rise in revolt and would show himself our master, and then the just according to nature would shine."

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[32] Spatharas 2001, p. 165 speaks of "incantatory speech." Cf. *Prt*. 334c7; 339d10 for a similar reaction to another Sophist's (Protagoras) words.
[33] For a depiction of other similar "Sophists" cf. Antola 2016, pp. 88-95.
[34] On this individual, cf. Nails 2002, pp. 75-77.

The City itself, and not the Sophists, is depicted as using every means it has to mould and subdue its most excellent youths. Laws/writings and enchantments/spells are adopted as "instruments of persuasion"[35] to allow the state to rule undisturbed, and Athens itself, by implementing these methods, turns at last into a *goēs*. No more liminal, no more extraneous to/estranged from civilisation, or embodied by strangers who make their way into the City; the *goētes*, the "enchanters", are the Athenians themselves. Through their magical-persuasive-normative speeches, *they* move young men's souls (and in truth the souls of anyone who lives in Athens).[36]

According to this reading, Plato's Athens features *two* contestants, *two goētes* who fight for power, namely the Sophists and the City itself. With that in mind, we now move on to the *Republic*.

A passage in book 6 allows to shed light on the relationship between the Sophists and the City; at 493a9-c3:

> οἷόνπερ ἂν εἰ θρέμματος μεγάλου καὶ ἰσχυροῦ τρεφομένου τὰς ὀργάς τις καὶ ἐπιθυμίας κατεμάνθανεν, ὅπῃ τε προσελθεῖν χρὴ καὶ ὅπῃ ἅψασθαι αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὁπότε χαλεπώτατον ἢ πρᾳότατον καὶ ἐκ τίνων γίγνεται, καὶ φωνὰς δὴ ἐφ' οἷς ἑκάστας εἴωθεν φθέγγεσθαι, καὶ οἵας αὖ ἄλλου φθεγγομένου ἡμεροῦταί τε καὶ ἀγριαίνει, καταμαθὼν δὲ ταῦτα πάντα συνουσίᾳ τε καὶ χρόνου τριβῇ σοφίαν τε καλέσειεν καὶ ὡς τέχνην συστησάμενος ἐπὶ διδασκαλίαν τρέποιτο, μηδὲν εἰδὼς τῇ ἀληθείᾳ τούτων τῶν δογμάτων τε καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν ὅτι καλὸν ἢ αἰσχρὸν ἢ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν ἢ δίκαιον ἢ ἄδικον, ὀνομάζοι δὲ πάντα ταῦτα ἐπὶ ταῖς τοῦ μεγάλου ζῴου δόξαις, οἷς μὲν χαίροι ἐκεῖνο ἀγαθὰ καλῶν, οἷς δὲ ἄχθοιτο κακά […]
>
> "It's just as if someone observed well the mood and appetites of a mighty and powerful beast he was rearing up, how one must approach and handle it, when it was at its most difficult or most docile and for what reasons, in which circumstances it was used to utter each sound, and moreover what sort of sounds uttered by another would placate it or send it wild, and when he had learnt all this by spending time in its company, he decided to call it wisdom, and turned to teaching, claiming to have established a body of expertise, when in truth he would be no expert of any of the opinions and appetites [he was dealing with], and of what in them was beautiful or ugly, good or bad, just or unjust, but would simply name all these

[35] Cf. Carastro 2006, p. 204. On the polysyndeton/chiasmus, *pace* Dodds 1959, p. 269 *ad loc.*, see Antola 2016, p. 66, n. 349.
[36] For the polemics in Callicles' argument in respect to the corrupting action of the City cf. Antola 2016, pp. 65-67. On Callicles' speech cf. e.g. Motte 1981, pp. 563-565. Also, for the deceptive, disrupting activities associated with *goēs* and its cognates which fall beyond the scope of this paper, cf. *Lg*. 10.908d1-909c4; 11.933a2-5; *Mx*. 234c6-235c5; *R*. 10.597e1-602d4; *Plt*. 291a8-c6; 303b8-c5; *Sph*. 234c2-241b7. See Antola 2016, pp. 58-61, 67-72, 85-96.

things after the beliefs of the mighty beast, calling what gave it pleasure good and what upset it bad."

The subject in this scenario is a Sophist,[37] depicted as the tamer of a mighty and powerful beast. After having observed closely its behaviour, and having learnt which sounds one has to utter to placate or send it wild, he appoints himself as the beast's worthy teacher. The Sophist's (educative) action is effective: as we have seen their words can and *do* influence those who listen to them; however, they clearly lack an independent agency.[38] The Sophist is doing nothing more than idolising the powerful beast, whose opinions, whims, and emotional state define his notion of the good and the bad, his "wisdom" consisting in nothing more than an ability to slavishly reproduce the beast's beliefs/opinions.[39] The Sophist, in sum, depends from the beast. But who is this beast? Animal metaphors aside, it is the City itself that subdues everybody, including the Sophists who are ultimately its slaves rather than its masters.[40]

In conclusion, the Sophists are not the most powerful *goētes*, the tamers of the City; while capable of enchanting the Athenians, their powerful skills still depend on the City itself. The City turns out to be the real tamer and most powerful *goēs* who, consciously or unconsciously, leads their actions. Therefore, the Sophists assume a central position in Athens' dynamics of power because the City appoints and keeps them in check by forcing them to teach what it wants and needs, namely a number of persuasion techniques that leave the City's corruptive action unscathed. Far from being lawbreakers, that is the likes of Hippolytus and Dionysus, the *goētes*-Sophists have to abide by the laws of the Athenians in order to live and prosper in the City par excellence. (Plato's) Athens then morphs at last itself into an animal, into a mighty and powerful beast, and proves to be in the end the most powerful, the most influential *goēs*, and the Athenians the most influential people who rule over outsiders, individual teachers/Sophists, and fellow citizens alike. At *Republic* 6.492b, Plato's Socrates goes as far as to call the Athenians the "most influential"

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[37] Cf. *R*. 6.493a6-9.

[38] Cf. Corey 2015, p. 208. Cf. also Grote *ap.* Adam 1902 *ad loc.*; Levi 1966, pp. 12-19; Capizzi 1982, p. 431.

[39] Cf. Poulakos 1995, pp. 92-93; Gastaldi 2003, p. 215.

[40] As shown in the pages that lead to this passage (cf. *R*. 6.492b-c; 5.475d), the (only) focus of the City is on pleasures, beautiful words, and sounds, and thus, behaving non-rationally, no differently from an animal, the City is at last equated to one. Gastaldi 2003, p. 212 points out that the beast is the Athenian "demos". Considering that Athens is a democracy, and that what is depicted in this passage and in the Stephanus pages quoted above is in fact a representation of the people who assembled together form the City, seeing in the animal the corrupted City itself seems a logical follow up. For other Platonic passages in which the Athenians are depicted as animals cf. *R*. 6.496d; *Grg*. 516a-b.

We recall that at *R*. 1.336b1-d7 the rhetor-Sophist of the dialogue, Thrasymachus, is portrayed as a magical creature, most likely a werewolf (cf. e.g. Pisano 2011, pp. 94-96). Following my reading, one could say that in this case, far from appearing as the City's tamer, the rhetor-Sophist himself has turned into a beast. We note that neither *goēs* nor its cognates are employed referring to him.

Sophists,[41] and one of the reasons for this astonishing statement lies in the power they exert over the Sophists.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, at the beginning the *goētes* were liminal figures, outsiders and lawbreakers. This paper has shown that, from Euripides to Plato, the *goētes* turn from liminal figures into functional cogs in the social machine. In Plato's depiction of Athens, the *goētes* morph into Sophists who are integral to the City; they are foreigners who are granted a central position in the dynamics of power in Athens. The psychagogic power of these newfound *goētes* is noteworthy. But, as it has been revealed, it is limited by an even greater power: that of those who make the rules in Athens, the "Sophist-in-chief",[42] the Athenians themselves. In the end, it would seem that the one to rule them all, the true *goēs* of (Plato's) ancient Athens, is Athens itself.

[41] Cf. *R*. 6.492a8-b1: […] μεγίστους […] σοφιστάς […]. I translate with Waterfield 1998 μέγιστος (*megistos*) as "most influential" considering that these figures' main power is the influence they exert on others.
[42] Rowe 2012, p. 213 *ad loc.*

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