

Gyges in Plato's *Republic*

“The story goes that he [Gyges] was a shepherd in the service of the ruler of Lydia. There was a violent thunderstorm, and an earthquake broke open the ground and created a chasm at the place where he was tending his sheep. Seeing this, he was filled with amazement and went down into it. And there, in addition to many other amazing things of which we are told stories, he saw a hollow, bronze horse. There were windowlike openings in it and, peeping in, he saw a corpse, which seemed to be of more than human size, wearing nothing but a gold ring on its finger. He took off the ring and came out of the chasm. He wore the ring at the usual monthly meeting of shepherds that reported to the king on the state of the flocks. And as he was sitting among the others, he happened to turn the setting of the ring toward himself, toward the inside of his hand. When he did this, he became invisible to those sitting near him, and they went on talking as if he had gone. He was amazed at this, and, fingering the ring, he turned the setting outward again and became visible. So, he experimented with the ring to test whether it indeed had this power—and it did. If he turned the setting inward, he became invisible; if he turned it outward, he became visible again. As soon as he realized this, he arranged to become one of the messengers sent to report to the king. On arriving there, he seduced the king's wife, attacked the king with her help, killed him, and in this way took over the kingdom.”

Book 2, lines 359d-360b. (C.D.C. Reeve translation)