



# Epistles<sup>1</sup>

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## —— FIRST EPISTLE —— *Plato to Dionysius: may you do well*

Although I spent so much time with you, administering your rule and being trusted more than any- 309 a  
one, you received the benefits while I endured the vexatious slanders. For I knew that people would  
not think I co-operated in enacting any of your more cruel deeds since I have, as my witnesses, all 309 b  
those who are involved in government along with you, many of whom I have assisted and saved  
from no small harm. And although I have often protected your city on my own authority, I was  
sent away with less respect than befits a beggar, banished by you, ordered to sail away having  
spent so much time with you. Hereafter, I shall consider my own interest, adopting a less human  
approach, while you, being the tyrant that you are, will dwell alone.

As for the glistening gold you gave me on my departure, Baccheius, the bearer of this letter, 309 c  
is returning it. For it was neither adequate to provide for my journey, nor beneficial for my life in  
general, and its provision reflects very badly on your reputation as the donor, and not much less  
upon mine as the recipient. That's why I have not accepted it. Of course, to receive or give such a  
sum makes no difference to you, so now that you have it back, use it to serve another one of your  
associates just as you did in my case, for I have had enough of your services. And it is timely for 309 d  
me to quote Euripides, that should other misfortunes ever befall you, "You'll pray that such a man  
be by your side."<sup>2</sup> And I wish to remind you that most of the other tragedians, when they present  
a tyrant on stage being slain by someone, they have him cry out, "Bereft of friends, wretched, I 310 a  
perish." But none of them portrays him as perishing for want of gold. The following lines too seem  
sensible to sensible people:

*It is not gold, though a shining rarity in mortals' hopeless life,  
Nor gems nor silver couches, that brighten the eyes of men,  
Nor broad and self-sufficient fields laden with the harvest,  
But the approving thought of upright men.*

Farewell, and please recognise how much advantage you have failed to obtain from us, so that 310 b  
you may behave better towards others.

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<sup>1</sup> Plato's authorship of the Epistles or Letters is doubted in varying degrees and there is a lack of scholarly unanimity as to whether or not any of them are by Plato. The *Seventh Epistle* is the one that has traditionally been least suspected, though even the authorship of this Epistle is a matter of dispute among scholars.

<sup>2</sup> Euripides, Fragment 956.

—— SECOND EPISTLE ——  
*Plato to Dionysius: may you do well*

I have heard from Archedemus<sup>3</sup> that you think not only that I myself should say nothing about you, but that my friends too should neither do nor say anything bad concerning you. You made an  
 310 c exception in the case of Dion only, but your argument that Dion is an exception implies that I do not have control over my own friends. Indeed, if I had been in control of the others in this way, and of yourself and Dion too, it would, I maintain, have been for the greater good of you all and for the rest of the Greeks. But at the moment my strength consists in being prepared to follow my own argument. I am saying this without maintaining that there is anything true in what Cratistolus  
 310 d and Polyxenus told you, one of whom is reported as saying that he heard a considerable number of my associates speaking ill of you at Olympia. Perhaps his hearing is sharper than mine, for I did not hear this. But what you should do in future, I think, if anyone reports anything of this sort about any of us, is to write to me and ask me about it. For I shall be neither reluctant nor ashamed to speak the truth.

As for yourself and myself and our dealings with one another, the situation is as follows.  
 310 e Both of us are, in a sense, known to every Greek. And our relationship is no secret, and rest assured it will be no secret hereafter since so many people are aware of it because it did not begin recently, nor has it been kept quiet. Why am I saying this now? I'll explain from historical examples. It is natural that wisdom and great power combine somehow, and they constantly pursue and seek one another and associate with one another. What's more, people enjoy talking  
 311 a about them in private gatherings, and hearing about them in poems. For instance, whenever people talk about Hiero, or Pausanias of Sparta, they love to bring in their association with Simonides and what he did and said to them.<sup>4</sup> And they are in the habit of celebrating Periander of Corinth and Thales of Miletus together, Pericles and Anaxagoras too, and indeed Croesus and Solon, both wise, with the powerful Cyrus.<sup>5</sup> Then, the poets too, imitating these relationships,  
 311 b bring together Creon with Tiresias, Polyeidus with Minos, Agamemnon with Nestor, and Odysseus with Palamedes. And I believe the men of old, in like manner, brought Prometheus and Zeus together, and they sang of how these various characters were enemies or friends to one another, or friends at one moment but enemies the next, in agreement in some respects while disagreeing in others.

I am saying all this because I wish to demonstrate that when we both die, the stories told  
 311 c about us will not be silenced, and so we need to be careful about them. For it is necessary that we should care about the future, since although it seems natural for the most slavish folk to give this no thought, the reasonable people do all they can to ensure that they are well spoken of hereafter.  
 311 d I count this as evidence that the dead have some awareness of our realm, for the very best souls have an intuition that these things are so, while the most degenerate souls deny this. But the intuitions of the divine men are superior to the intuitions of the others. And I myself believe that if those men of old whom I am referring to were allowed to remedy their own past associations, they would strive to ensure that they be better spoken of than they are at present. Now, in our case, it is still possible, God willing, if anything improper has been done in the course of our relationship  
 311 e heretofore, to correct this in word and in deed. For I maintain that if we are reasonable, true philosophy will be better regarded and better spoken of, but if we are corrupt, that will have the opposite effect. And indeed, we could do nothing more respectful than to care about this matter, and nothing more irreverent than to neglect it.

Now, I shall explain how we should proceed and where justice lies. I arrived in Sicily with  
 312 a the reputation of being the most distinguished of those engaged in philosophy, and when I got to Syracuse I wanted to involve you in my cause so that I might see philosophy honoured even by

the general public. But the outcome was not propitious for me. The explanation I give is not the one that most people would give, but that you appeared not to trust me very much and wanted to get rid of me and send for others instead, and out of mistrust, I believe, to find out what my business was. With that there was a general clamour declaring that you despised me and had more important matters to attend to. These were the stories that circulated. 312 b

What, then, is the right thing to do next? Listen, so that I may answer the question you asked as to how you and I should behave towards one another. If you have total contempt for philosophy, then bid it farewell, and if you have heard better instruction than mine from elsewhere, or have discovered better yourself, then respect those discoveries. But if my teachings are pleasing to you, you should also have special respect for me. So now, as in the beginning, you should take the lead and I shall follow. For if I am respected by you I shall have respect for you, but if I am not respected, I shall keep quiet. And if you respect me and take the lead in this, you will be thought to be honouring philosophy, and the very fact that you have examined other systems besides mine will earn you a good reputation for being a philosopher yourself. But if I respect you without being respected in return, I shall be thought of as someone in the thrall of wealth and its pursuit, and we know that such behaviour has a bad name with everyone. To sum up then, if you show respect, it is a credit to us both, whereas if I show respect, it is a reproach to us both. Let that be enough about these matters. 312 c 312 d

The sphere is not correct, as Archedemus will explain when he arrives. And he really needs to explain the other matter, more venerable and divine than the sphere, which was perplexing you when you dispatched him. For according to his account, you maintain that the nature of the first has not been sufficiently demonstrated to you. Now, it must be related to you in riddles so that if anything happens to the writing tablet in the recesses of sea or land, whoever reads it will not understand it. It says that everything is around the King of All, and everything is for the sake of that king, the cause of all that is good. Around the second are the second things, while the third things are around the third. The human soul hungers to learn about what sort of things these are by looking to the things that are kindred to itself, none of which are adequate. In fact, the king and the others I spoke of are not like this, and the soul then exclaims, “What quality do they have?” This question, dear son of Dionysius and Doris, or rather, the travail about it engendered in the soul, is responsible for all difficulties. And unless a person frees himself from this he shall never really encounter the truth. 312 e 313 a

But you told me in the garden under the laurels that you had thought of this yourself and that it was your discovery, and I replied that if this proved to be the case, you would be sparing me from lengthy discussions. I said that I had never come across anyone else who had made this discovery but this is what preoccupies me most, while you have probably heard it from someone else having perhaps been impelled towards this by some divine portion. Since although you think you are in possession of unassailable proofs, you have not established them securely, and so for you it flits around about the appearance, now in one direction, now in another. But the reality is not like this. And you are not the only one to whom this has happened. Take note, rather, that no one so far, on first hearing my account, has found themselves initially in any other predicament than this. 313 b 313 c

<sup>3</sup> Archedemus was a prominent figure in Plato’s interactions with Dionysius, and, as such, is a recurring figure in the *Epistles*. *Third Epistle* 318e; *Seventh Epistle* 339a, 349d.

<sup>4</sup> Hiero I was a Syracusan tyrant; Pausanias was a Spartan general and ruler who defeated the Persian Empire at Plataea. Both were associated with the poet Simonides.

<sup>5</sup> These are groupings of famous rulers with influential thinkers. Periander was a tyrant in Corinth; Thales was a natural philosopher from Miletus; Pericles was an Athenian general and statesman; Anaxagoras was a philosopher from Clazomenae; Cyrus II was the founder of the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire; Croesus was a king of Lydia, and Solon was an Athenian statesman and legislator.

And although some have more trouble in escaping this, others less, hardly anyone has no trouble at all.

Now that all this has happened and such being the situation, we have more or less found the answer to the question in your letter as to how we should behave towards one another. For since you have tested my arguments by associating with others and comparing my arguments to theirs, and testing them too in their own right, if your test is a true one they shall begin to grow within you, and you shall be familiar with them and with us. How, then, may these arguments and all that we have spoken of be implemented? You were right in sending Archedemus, and once he comes back to you and conveys my messages, further difficulties may perhaps overtake you in future. Now, if you are well advised, you will dispatch Archedemus to me once more, and he, having conducted his business, will return to you. And if you do this two or three times, and sufficiently test the answers sent from me, I would be surprised if your present difficulties did not take on a very different aspect than now. So take heart and act in this way, for you will never export, nor will Archedemus ever import, any merchandise more valuable or more beloved of the gods than this.

However, you must be careful that these communications are never disclosed to uneducated folk, for to most people hardly any words sound more laughable than these, while on the other hand, to those with a natural affinity, none are more wonderfully inspiring. And being frequently repeated and constantly heard over many years, they are with much effort gradually rendered as pure as gold. But listen to an amazing aspect of this process. There are people, many of them, who have heard these words and are well able to learn and remember them and to come to a decision after testing them in every possible way. They are old at this stage and have been listening for over thirty years, and are now at a point where they say that what had once seemed utterly unbelievable to them now appears most credible and obvious, while what had once seemed most credible now seems the very opposite. So in the light of all this, take care that you do not have future regrets over inappropriately disclosing any of this now. The greatest safeguard is to avoid writing and to learn by heart, for it is inevitable that what is written down will be disclosed. That is why I have never yet written about these matters, nor is there a written work of Plato, nor will there ever be, and those writings that are now said to be mine belong to a Socrates become fair and young. Farewell and believe. And now, first read this letter many times, then commit it to the flames.

Enough of this. As for Polyxenus, you were surprised that I sent him to you, but I give the same report now as in the past about Lycrophron and the others who are with you. When it comes to dialogue you are far superior to them by nature and in your method of argument, and none of them is refuted of their own free will, as some presume; they are, rather, refuted against their will. Indeed, it seems to me that you treat them and reward them in a measured way. But that is a lot to say about such people. Enough about them. If you have use for Phylition,<sup>6</sup> employ him yourself by all means, but if possible please send him to Speusippus<sup>7</sup> and let him employ the man. Speusippus himself asks you to do this too, and Phylition himself promised me that he would gladly come to Athens if you would let him go. You did well to release that man from the quarries, and the request concerning his family members and concerning Hegesippus, the son of Ariston, was an easy one. Indeed, you wrote explaining that if anyone acted unjustly towards this person, or those people, and you were aware of it, you would prevent it. And the truth deserves to be spoken about Lysicleides, for he is the only Sicilian who, on arriving in Athens, did not misrepresent the relationship between the two of us. He continues, rather, to speak well and to find something good to say about what transpired.

— THIRD EPISTLE —  
*Plato to Dionysius: may you have joy*

Having written thus, may I, perhaps, have hit upon the best mode of address? Or might it be better 315 b  
 to follow my usual practice and write “may you do well”, which is the greeting I habitually use in  
 letters to friends? You yourself, of course, according to the reports of onlookers at the time,  
 addressed the god at Delphi with this fawning utterance, and wrote, according to reports, “I wish 315 c  
 you joy and that you may preserve a pleasant tyrant’s life,” whereas I would not greet any human,  
 or indeed a god, by calling upon them to do this. In the case of gods, my injunction would run  
 contrary to their nature, for the divine is situated at a far remove from pleasure and pain. And in  
 the case of humanity, pleasure and pain are for the most part harmful, engendering dullness, for-  
 getfulness, folly and arrogance in the soul. So, let this be my statement on the mode of address,  
 while you, when you read it, may take it in any way you wish.

I am informed, by no small number of people, that you told some of the ambassadors in 315 d  
 your circle that I once overheard you saying that you were going to colonise the Greek cities in  
 Sicily, and lighten the burden of the Syracusans by changing the rulership to kingship instead of  
 tyranny. But according to you, I prevented you from doing all this at the time, in spite of your  
 eagerness, whereas I am now instructing Dion to enact these very measures, thus using your own  
 ideas to take your rulership away from you. If you derive any benefits from these discussions, you 315 e  
 yourself are aware of them, but you do me an injustice when you speak contrary to the facts, for I  
 have been slandered enough by Philistides, and many others, before the mercenaries and the people  
 of Syracuse for remaining within the Acropolis, while those outside blamed everything on me if  
 anything went wrong, maintaining that in all matters you were being persuaded by me. But you  
 yourself know full well that I willingly co-operated with you on a few of your political measures 316 a  
 in the beginning when I thought this might do some good. I had reasonable involvement in some  
 minor matters and in the preludes to the laws, except for the additions written by yourself or by  
 someone else. For I hear that later on some of you revised these, although the differences will be  
 obvious to those who are able to recognise my character. Be that as it may, I have, as I said earlier,  
 no need of further slanders before the Syracusans or anyone else whom you may convince by say-  
 ing all this. What I really need is defence against the previous slander and against the present, 316 b  
 greater and more serious one now taking root alongside that one. So, faced with two slanders, I  
 need to make a twofold defence: first, arguing that I, quite reasonably, avoided co-operating with  
 you in dealing with the affairs of the city, and secondly, that when you were about to colonise the  
 Greek cities, the advice that prevented you was not mine, as you have alleged. I did not stand in  
 your way. First, hear the origin of the first slander I mentioned.

I came to Syracuse at the behest of yourself and Dion, who was a long-standing, tried and 316 c  
 trusted friend of mine. He was middle-aged and settled, two prerequisites for those of even a little  
 intelligence when they are about to give advice on affairs as important as yours at the time. You,  
 on the other hand, were very young and very inexperienced in those matters in which you needed 316 d  
 experience, and you were quite unknown to me. Afterwards, some person or some god or some  
 random event, with your involvement, expelled Dion and you alone remained. Do you think I  
 would associate with you politically when, having lost my wise associate, I beheld only the unwise  
 one left behind, surrounded by lots of degenerate men, not ruling but thinking he was ruling, while  
 he was being ruled by men of this sort? What was I to do under such circumstances? Did I not do  
 what needed to be done? I bade farewell to political affairs thereafter, being wary of the slanders 316 e

<sup>6</sup> Phylition was a physician and thinker from Locri in southern Italy.

<sup>7</sup> Speusippus was Plato’s nephew, who became head of the Academy after Plato’s death.

and jealousies, and I endeavoured by all means to make the two of you the best of friends, since you had been set apart and were at variance with one another. And indeed, you are witness to the fact that I have kept up my efforts to this end. And, although it was difficult, the two of us nevertheless agreed that I should sail home since you were involved in a war, and that when peace came, Dion and I were to return to Syracuse and you were to send for us. Such were the events of my visit to Syracuse for the first time, and my safe return home once more. When peace came you sent for me, but not in accordance with the agreement. You wrote, rather, that I was to come alone, and you said you would send for Dion later. Because of this I did not go, but I also fell out with Dion at the time, for he thought it better for me to go as you had requested. After this, a year later, a trireme arrived along with letters from you, and the chief purport of what was contained in the letters was that if I were to come to Syracuse, Dion's affairs would be organised in accord with my wishes, whereas if I did not, the outcome would be the very opposite.

Indeed, I am embarrassed to mention how many letters arrived from you and from others in Italy and Sicily at your request, and how many were sent to my relatives and acquaintances, all encouraging me to go and imploring me to trust you completely. So everyone, beginning with Dion, thought I should set sail and not be a coward. But I proffered my age as an excuse, and kept insisting that you, for your part, would not be able to hold out against those who slander us and wish to set us at odds. For I saw then, and I still see now, that when great and excessive wealth is in the hands of private citizens or sole rulers, in general the greater the wealth, the greater the number of slanderers it breeds, and companions in base pleasures too. Indeed, wealth and the general privileges of power produce no greater evil than this. Nevertheless, I set all these considerations aside and I came to Syracuse, reflecting that none of my friends should be able to blame me, because, through my indifference, all their possessions were lost, when it was possible to avoid this.

You know of course what happened after I arrived. In fact, I asked, in accord with the agreement in our letters, firstly, that Dion be restored and that you be reconciled with him on terms which I stated, which, if you had heeded me at the time, would probably have been better than what has now transpired, both for yourself and Syracuse, and for the Greeks in general. Secondly, I asked that Dion's relatives retain his property, and that the executors, whom you know of, should not distribute it. Furthermore, I thought that the annual revenue usually sent to him each year should continue to be sent, and that my presence was more reason rather than less reason for doing so. When none of these requests were granted, I asked if I could depart. You then started persuading me to stay for the year, saying that you were selling all Dion's property and were going to send half of the proceeds to Corinth, and retain the other half for his son. There is much to be said about the promises you made and did not keep, but there were so many of them that I shall be brief. In fact, when selling all of his property you did not get Dion's permission, despite saying that you would not sell without his permission. But, you surprising man, you then topped all of your promises most insolently. For you came up with a plan, neither fair nor refined, neither just nor advantageous, to frighten me away so that I would not request that the funds be sent to Dion, because I would be ignorant of what was going on. For when you expelled Heraclides, an action that neither the Syracusans nor I myself regarded as just, and I along with Theodotus and Eurybius implored you not to do this, you took this plea as sufficient excuse. You said that it had been obvious to you for a long time that I thought nothing of you, but only of Dion and his friends and acquaintances, and now that accusations were being made against Dion's acquaintances, Theodotus and Heraclides, I was using every means at my disposal to ensure that they evaded justice.

Such were the circumstances of our mutual cooperation in political affairs. And if you discerned in me any additional estrangement from yourself, you may reasonably presume that everything happened in this way. Don't be surprised. For I would quite rightly, in the eyes of any sensible

person, have looked like an evil-doer had I been persuaded by the might of your rule to betray an old friend and host who was faring badly at your hands, a friend who was, to put it bluntly, every bit as good as you. It would of course have looked as if I was doing this for the sake of money, for had I changed allegiance, no one would have attributed the change to anything other than money. These developments, unfolding in this way because of you, brought about the fraught friendship and animosity between you and me. 318 e

The argument, continuing on from what I have just said, comes more or less to the second statement against which I must defend myself. Watch then, and pay full attention in case you think I am being false and not speaking the truth. Indeed, I confirm that, with Archedemus present in the garden, along with Aristocritus, some twenty days before I left Syracuse for home, you said then what you are now saying in your criticism of me, that I favoured Heraclides and all the others more than yourself. And you asked me, in the presence of these men, if I remembered when I first arrived calling upon you to colonise the Greek cities. I agreed that I did remember and that I still thought this to be the best policy. But, Dionysius, I must also repeat what was said next on that occasion. For I then asked you whether this was the only piece of advice I gave you or whether there was something else besides this. And you answered me most angrily and contemptuously as you thought, for the object of your contempt at the time has now become a reality rather than a dream. You said, I recall, with much feigned laughter, “You bade me to do all of these things after I had been educated, or not do them at all.” I replied that your recollection was excellent, and you then asked, “After I had been educated in geometry, isn’t that what you meant, or what?” Following this, I did not say what occurred to me to say, fearing that all because of a little word my chances of departing might be reduced rather than increased. 319 a 319 b 319 c

Now, the reason I am saying all this is as follows. Do not slander me by saying that I did not allow you to colonise the Greek cities ruined by the non-Greeks, or to lighten the burden of the Syracusans by introducing kingly rule in place of the tyranny. For in my case, no lie you could ever tell about me is less appropriate than these slanders. And in addition to those arguments, I could give you, in refutation, even clearer evidence if some competent judge were somehow to make an appearance, proving that I asked you to do this but you were reluctant. And indeed, there is no difficulty in stating plainly that the implementation of these measures was the best course for you, the Syracusans, and for all Sicilians. But, my friend, if you deny saying these things, even though you said them, then justice lies with me. But if you agree that you said them, you should then regard Stesichorus as wise, imitate his recantation, and renounce your false account for the true one. 319 d 319 e

#### — FOURTH EPISTLE —

*Plato to Dion of Syracuse: may you do well*

I believe that my eager interest in the unfolding events has been evident all along, and also my serious concern that they be brought to a conclusion, mainly because of my high regard for noble deeds. For I think it is only right that those who are actually reasonable and who act accordingly should get the recognition they deserve. And although for the moment, thank God, things are going well, the greatest struggle is still to come. For although various others may seem to excel in courage, speed and strength, anyone would agree that those who claim to honour such qualities as truth, justice, and high-mindedness, and decorum in their display of all these, are naturally superior to others. Now, my meaning is obvious, but we should remind ourselves nevertheless that it belongs to certain people, whom you certainly know, to be so much better than the rest of their fellow men as to make them look like children. We need to make it obvious that we are the sort of people we 320 a 320 b 320 c

320 d say we are, especially since, God willing, it will be easy to do so. Indeed, for other people, it proves necessary to wander abroad if they are to be well known, but with you the position is that people everywhere, if I may speak somewhat impetuously, all look towards one place, and in that place they look most of all towards yourself. So, with the eyes of the world upon you, prepare to take on the role of a Lycurgus or a Cyrus of old, or of anyone else who was ever famed for their superior character and political system. This is especially important since many people, and almost everyone  
320 e here, are saying that with Dionysius out of the way, there is a strong possibility that your endeavours will come to naught because of the rivalry between yourself, Heraclides, Theodotus, and other notable ambitious characters. Let us hope above all that no one behaves like this, but if anyone does so, you must assume the role of a healer, and things may turn out for the best.

321 a Perhaps the fact that I am saying this appears comical to you since you yourself are not unaware of these details. But I observe that in the theatres, the actors are spurred on even by the children, not to mention their friends, provided the actor thinks the encouragement is serious and well-intentioned. So, you yourselves should now act out your parts, and if you need anything just write to us. Circumstances here are more or less as they were when you were present. Write, then,  
321 b about what you have done or happen to be doing now, since we hear a great deal but know nothing. And now, in spite of the fact that letters arrived in Sparta and Aegina from Theodorus and Heraclides, we still, as I said, hear much but know nothing. But also bear in mind that you seem to some people to lack the appropriate level of care. So, do not overlook the fact that pleasing other people is a means to acting successfully whereas self-will is the housemate of loneliness.  
321 c Good fortune.

—— FIFTH EPISTLE ——  
*Plato to Perdiccas:<sup>8</sup> may you do well*

I advised Euphraeus,<sup>9</sup> at your request, to spend time looking after your affairs. And it is only right  
321 d that I give you friendly and so-called sacred advice about the other issues you mentioned and as to how you should now employ Euphraeus. The man is useful in many respects, but the greatest is one that you stand in need of because of your youth and the shortage of advisers for young people in relation to this matter. For each political system has its own language, just like various  
321 e animals, one belonging to democracy, another to oligarchy, another to monarchy. And although everyone claims to know these, most people, with few exceptions, fall short of fully understanding them. Now, whatever political system utters its own language towards gods or men, and makes its actions conform to its utterance, thrives and is preserved. But if it imitates another, it is undone.

Euphraeus should prove useful to you for these purposes at least, and he is also a good man  
322 a in other respects too. Indeed, I hope he will help you to discover the arguments of monarchy just as well as anyone else in your administration. So, by using him for these purposes you will benefit yourself and also be of enormous benefit to him. But if someone, having heard this, were to say, “It seems that Plato pretends to know what is of benefit to the democracy, but despite being allowed to address the populace and advise them as to what is best, he has never yet stood up and uttered a word.” To this you should respond, “Plato was born at a late stage in the history of his fa-  
322 b therland, and he came upon a populace already advanced in years and habituated by their predecessors to many practices incompatible with Plato’s advice. Indeed, he would have been most delighted to give advice to the populace, as if to a father, had he not thought that he would be running risks in vain and accomplishing nothing worthwhile. I think he would do the same  
322 c thing in advising me. For if we seemed to be beyond cure, he would bid us a great farewell and desist from any advice concerning myself or my affairs.” Good fortune.

—— SIXTH EPISTLE ——

*Plato to Hermias, Erastus and Coriscus:*<sup>10</sup> *may you do well*

It is apparent to me that some god has graciously and adequately provided you with good fortune, if you can receive it well. For you live as neighbours and your needs are such that you are of great benefit to one another. As for Hermias, neither abundance of horses nor other military resources nor accumulated gold would contribute more to his overall power than firm friends of sound character. And to Erastus and Coriscus, in spite of my age, I am saying they should supplement the noble wisdom of the forms with a wisdom and protective power that defends them against the wicked and the unjust. For they are lacking in experience because they have lived out much of their lives with us moderate folk who are not evil. That is why I said they should also acquire these kinds of wisdom, so that they may not be compelled to neglect the true wisdom and attend more than they should to the wisdom of human necessity. It appears to me, without having met him, that Hermias possesses this power by nature, and by a skill acquired through experience. So what am I saying? To you Hermias, since I am more familiar with Erastus and Coriscus than you are, I assert, declare and bear witness that you will not easily find more trustworthy characters than these neighbours of yours, and I advise you to cleave to these two men by every just means as a matter of no secondary importance. And again, I am advising Coriscus and Erastus to cleave to Hermias and try to develop your mutual closeness into a united relationship of friendship. But if one of you somehow seems to be severing this relationship, for nothing human is entirely firm, send me and my associates here a letter declaring the nature of the complaint. For I believe that unless the breach happens to be grievous, any communications arriving from us here in justice and reverence would do more than any charm to unite you, and restore once again your previous ties of friendship and fellowship.

And if we all, yourselves and ourselves, apply philosophy to this fellowship as best we can, as the nature of each allows, the prophecies I am making will prevail. But I shall not say what might happen if we do not do these things for my prophetic utterances are only good ones and I am saying that, God willing, we shall make all these matters good. All three of you should read this letter, preferably together or in pairs, in fellowship to the best of your ability, as often as you can. Use it as a covenant and a supreme law, a just one, swearing earnestly, and at the same time poetically, with a playfulness akin to that earnestness. Swearing to the ruling god of everything that is now and is to come, supreme father of the ruling cause, whom we, if we genuinely engage in philosophy, shall all clearly know as far as possible for happy humans.

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<sup>8</sup> Perdiccas III was a ruler of Macedon.

<sup>9</sup> Euphraeus of Oreus was a student of Plato who rose to prominence in Macedon under the rule of Perdiccas III.

<sup>10</sup> Hermias, Erastus and Coriscus were all members of Plato's Academy. Hermias became a tyrant in Atarneus and was the father-in-law of Aristotle. Erastus and Coriscus were brothers from Scepsis. Both Atarneus and Scepsis were in Ionia.

— SEVENTH EPISTLE<sup>11</sup> —*Plato to the relatives and associates of Dion: may ye fare well*

323 e You wrote to me that I should regard your thinking as being the same as that of Dion, and indeed  
 324 a you encouraged me to support you to the best of my ability in word and in deed. I reply that if you actually hold the same opinion and aspiration as that man, I promise to support you, but if you don't, this will require further consideration. And I can tell you from certain knowledge, without much need for conjecture, what his thinking and aspiration was. For when I arrived initially in  
 324 b Syracuse, aged about forty, Dion was the same age as Hipparinus is now, and he held the opinion then that he held to the very end. He thought that the Syracusans should be free people living under the very best laws. And so, it would be no surprise if some god has made Hipparinus hold the same opinion about political systems as Dion, and be of like mind. The manner in which this view originated is well worth hearing for anyone young or old, and I myself shall attempt to recount this to you from the beginning, for current events are opportune.

When I was young, my experience was the same as many others. I thought that as soon as  
 324 c I had become my own master I would immediately enter into the public life of the city, and I found myself faced with certain developments in the city's affairs. For the political system at the time, being criticised by many, was overthrown, and fifty-one men set themselves up as leaders of that overthrow – eleven in the city, ten in the Piraeus, each of these groups dealing with whatever affairs of the market or the city required management, while thirty of them were installed as overall,  
 324 d absolute rulers. Some of these happened to be relatives or acquaintances of mine, and indeed they encouraged me to join them as their undertakings were worthwhile. My feelings towards them were hardly surprising given my youth, for I thought they would administer the city by leading it out of an unjust manner of life to a just one. So, I paid close attention to see what they would do.

And of course, I saw that these men did not take long to make the previous political arrangement look like a golden age. Among their various exploits, they also sent for Socrates, an  
 324 e elderly man who was dear to me, whom I would almost say unashamedly was the most just man alive at that time. They dispatched him, along with some others, to fetch one of our fellow citizens by force so that they could execute him. Their objective was to involve Socrates in their affairs  
 325 a whether he wanted this or not. But he did not obey them, and he ran the risk of all sorts of consequences rather than getting involved in their unholy deeds. Seeing all this, and other actions that were just as bad, I was disgusted, and withdrew myself from the evils of that era. Shortly afterwards, the regime of the thirty was overthrown, and so too was the entire political system of  
 325 b that period. Once again, although with less urgency, I felt drawn by a desire to get involved in political and communal affairs. Now since, during those troubled times, there was a lot happening that was distressing, it was no surprise that because of the overthrow, there was in some cases excessive retribution against some enemies. Nevertheless, the recently returned exiles<sup>12</sup> did behave with great moderation.

But as it happened, again with this companion of ours, Socrates, influential people prosecuted him, bringing a most despicable accusation against him, one that was less applicable to  
 325 c Socrates than to anyone. They charged him with impiety, while others convicted him, and condemned to death the very man who had refused to get involved in the impious plot against one of their own exiled friends, when they themselves were unfortunate enough to be in exile. Watching these developments, and seeing the sort of people who were conducting our political affairs and the state of our laws and habits, the more I saw, as I advanced in years, just how difficult it appeared  
 325 d to be to manage civic affairs in the right way. For it is impossible to do this without friends and trustworthy associates, and to find such people readily available was not easy, since our city was no longer managed in our forefathers' habits and practices, and it was impossible to acquire new

ones easily. Our written laws and our habits were being corrupted, and this was increasing at such a shocking rate that I finally became dizzy from watching all this and seeing our affairs borne in all sorts of directions. And although I kept watching in case there might be some improvement in these areas, or indeed in the overall political system, and although I was always waiting for an opportune moment, I finally realised that all cities nowadays are, without exception, badly run. In fact, their legal systems are more or less incurable without some extraordinary intervention, and good fortune too.

And I was compelled to say, in praise of right philosophy, that from this it is possible to discern all that is just in the political realm and among individuals. So, the evils of the human race shall not cease until either the sort of people who engage in philosophy, rightly and truly, come to power in political affairs, or those who exercise power in cities, by some divine portion, actually engage in philosophy. This was my thinking when I arrived in Italy and Sicily for my first visit. When I got there, the so-called ‘happy life’, replete with Italian and Syracusan banquets, did not please me at all. They live their lives, gorging themselves on food twice a day, never sleeping alone at night, and following whatever other practices are associated with this lifestyle. For with such habits as these no human being under heaven, following such practices from their earliest years, could ever become wise. Such an extraordinary blend is impossible. Nor indeed could anyone ever become sound-minded. And the same argument would hold for excellence in general. Nor could any city enjoy peace under any laws whatsoever when its people believe that although they should spend to excess on everything, they also hold the view that they should be totally idle, apart from working seriously at feasting, drinking and gratifying their sexual desires. Such cities as these must necessarily keep on transforming unceasingly into tyrannies, oligarchies and democracies. And those who hold power in them must not even hear mention of a just political system with legal quality.

Holding these views as well as the earlier ones, I travelled to Syracuse, perhaps by chance, although it seems that some higher power then set in train the events which have now unfolded concerning Dion and Syracuse. And I fear even more developments unless you heed my advice, which I am going to give for the second time. Now, what do I mean when I say that my arrival in Sicily at that time marked the beginning of all of these developments? When I met Dion, who was young at the time, and I explained in discussion what I believed to be best for humanity, and advised him to act on these precepts, I seemed unaware that I was somehow or other bringing about the impending overthrow of the tyranny without appreciating what I was doing. Now, Dion learnt very easily in general, and he listened with more keen attention than any young person I have ever come across to the subjects that my discourses dealt with. And he was willing to live the rest of his life in a different way from most of the Italians and Sicilians, for he had come to cherish excellence more than pleasure and general luxury. Consequently, he lived his life as an affliction to those who lived by the ways of the tyranny, until such time as Dionysius finally died.

After this, Dion concluded that such thinking, which he himself had arrived at through proper discourse, would not always be confined to himself. He noticed its presence in others too, not in many but in some, and he thought that Dionysius<sup>13</sup> might perhaps, with the assistance of the gods, become one of them. What’s more, if such a development took place, the result would be a life of unbounded blessedness for himself and the rest of the Syracusans. Furthermore, Dion thought I should, by all means, get to Syracuse as soon as possible to join him in these endeavours,

<sup>11</sup> Although Plato’s authorship of the *Seventh Epistle* is often doubted, there are scholars who regard it as authentic.

<sup>12</sup> These were the supporters of the democracy. The incident is recounted in Plato’s *Apology*.

<sup>13</sup> This is Dionysius II, the son of Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse, whose death is described just above.

remembering the time he spent in my company and how readily it had produced in him a desire for the noblest and best life. He had great hopes that if he could bring about this outcome in the case of Dionysius, as intended, he could establish a truly happy life throughout the land, devoid of the slaughter, killings, and other evils that have now unfolded. With this worthy intention, Dion persuaded Dionysius to send for me, and he himself also wrote asking me to come as soon as possible, by all means, before anyone else got to Dionysius and diverted him to some life other than the best one. His request went as follows, although it was somewhat longer. “What greater opportunities are we waiting for,” said he, “than those that have now been presented by some divine good fortune?” He described in detail the Italian and Sicilian empire, and his own influence therein, how young Dionysius was, and the intense desire he had for philosophy and education. He also spoke of how his own nephews and relatives would be easily influenced towards the doctrine and the life I constantly spoke of, and would be a sufficient additional influence on Dionysius, so that now, if ever, our overall hope of seeing the same people become both philosophers and rulers of great cities would be realised.

These were his exhortations, and there were very many others like them, but in my own mind I had a concern about the young and how exactly they might turn out, for the desires of such people are fickle and are often borne in opposite directions. But I knew the character of Dion, who had a natural depth of soul and was by then at the right age. And so, as I considered the matter, I was in two minds as to whether I should heed his injunctions and go to Sicily, or do what I should do. In the end I decided on balance that it was necessary to go. If anyone was ever to attempt to implement those thoughts about laws and political systems, now was the time to make the attempt, for by sufficiently convincing just one person, I would have brought about all sorts of benefits.

Emboldened by this thinking, I sailed away from my homeland, not for the reason presumed by some, but most of all from a sense of shame on my own part in case I might seem to myself, well and truly, to be some mere word, unwilling to engage in any action whatsoever and to be running the risk of betraying, first and foremost, the hospitality and companionship of Dion, who was indeed in no small danger. Suppose he had suffered some misfortune, or having been banished by Dionysius and his other enemies, he had come to me in exile and asked me, “Plato, I have come to you in exile, not for want of soldiers, or because I lacked horses to defend myself against my enemies, but for want of discourse and persuasion by which, as I well know, you are able to turn young people to whatever is good and just, and consistently establish them in mutual friendship and companionship. It is because you, for your part, deprived me of these that I have left Syracuse and am here before you now. But my predicament is your least reproach. What about philosophy, which you are always praising, and which according to you is treated despicably by the rest of humanity? Hasn’t philosophy also been betrayed, along with myself, insofar as you are now responsible? Indeed, if I happened to be living in Megara, you would of course have come to my aid in accordance with my request, or else you would have counted yourself among the basest of all men. But by using as an excuse the length of the journey, the extent of the sea voyage, and the amount of trouble involved, do you think you can ever avoid a bad reputation? Far from it.” Faced with these words, what decent response could I make in reply? There is none. So, I departed for motives as reasonable and just as is humanly possible, leaving my own occupations which were not unworthy, and coming under a tyrannical rule which seemed unsuited to my discourses and to myself. By going, I freed myself in the eyes of Zeus, the god of strangers, and put myself beyond reproach on the part of philosophy, which would have been criticised had I disgraced myself through weakness of spirit and base cowardice. On arrival, to keep the story short, I found the circle around Dionysius full of all sorts of faction and slanders brought to the regime against Dion.

Although I defended him to the best of my ability, there was little I could do. And within

four months or so, Dionysius accused Dion of plotting against his tyranny, put him on a small boat, and expelled him ignominiously. After this, we, the friends of Dion, were afraid that one of us might be accused and punished for being an accomplice in Dion's plot. As for myself, a story actually circulated in Syracuse that I had been put to death by Dionysius, as being responsible for everything that had happened at the time. Being aware of how we felt, and being afraid that something more might come of our fears, Dionysius received us all in a kindly spirit, and he reassured myself in particular, encouraging me to take heart and asking me in all sorts of ways to remain. For my departure from him would not have been to his credit, but my remaining with him would have been, and that is why he made a great pretence of imploring me to stay. 329 d

But we know that the requests of tyrants are always mixed with compulsion, and so he made arrangements to prevent my departure, bringing me to the acropolis and housing me where no ship's captain would take me away, unless Dionysius himself sent them a written instruction to do so, and not because of his mere prohibition. Nor would any trader, or any of the people in charge of the roads out of the region, have let me travel out on my own. Any one of them would have apprehended me and brought me straight back to Dionysius again, especially because a report had once more gone out, contradicting the previous one, saying that Dionysius was remarkably fond of Plato. So what was the situation? Well, the truth should be spoken. As time went on, Dionysius became steadily more affectionate as he grew familiar with my manner and character, and he wanted me to praise him more than Dion and to regard him as a more special friend than Dion, and he was remarkably ambitious to bring this about. Now, the best way of bringing this about, if he had brought it about, was by learning and hearing discourses concerning philosophy in close company with myself. But he was reluctant to do this, fearing the words of the slanderers lest he might somehow be hindered and Dion might achieve all his objectives. I endured all this, preserving my initial thinking with which I had arrived in Sicily, hoping that he would somehow come to desire the life of philosophy, but he succeeded in resisting this. 329 e 330 a 330 b

These were all the circumstances involved in my visit to Sicily and my activities there on the first occasion.<sup>14</sup> After this I departed, only to return once more at the most urgent request of Dionysius. Later on, for those who want to know the purpose of my second visit, I shall explain that my motives and actions were reasonable and just. But first I am to advise you about what you should do under the present circumstances. Here is what I have to say. When advising a sick man whose lifestyle is injurious to his health, isn't it necessary in the first place to effect a change in his way of life, and give the rest of the advice only when he is willing to comply? But if he proves unwilling, I would regard someone who stops advising such a person as a manly physician, while someone who, on the contrary, persists, I regard as an unmanly, unskilled physician. And the same holds for a city, whether it has one ruler or more than one. If it seeks some advice as to what is appropriate, when its political system is somehow proceeding along the right course, then it is sensible to advise such people. But there are people who go completely away from the correct political system and have no desire whatsoever to follow in its path. They warn any adviser to leave the system as it is and not to disturb it, or they will put him to death if he does so. They direct him to advise them on pandering to their own wishes and desires, and on how these may be fulfilled most easily, quickly and permanently. Anyone who persists in advising such people I regard as unmanly, and those who do not persist I regard as manly. 330 c 330 d 330 e

This is the way of thinking I follow whenever someone seeks my advice about any important issues in his own life, such as the acquisition of wealth or the care of his body or soul. Provided I think he is living his life in some orderly way, or that, having been advised, he is willing to heed whatever has been communicated, then I give my advice eagerly and I don't stop simply because 331 a 331 b

<sup>14</sup> This actually describes Plato's second time in Sicily, but is his first interaction with Dionysius II.

my duty has been done. But if he does not seek my advice at all, or shows no inclination whatsoever to heed it, I would not go unbidden as an adviser to such a person, and would not use compulsion either, even if he were my own son. But I might give advice to a slave, and if he proved reluctant  
 331 c to obey, I might use compulsion. The use of compulsion towards a father or mother I regard as an unholy deed unless their mind has been disordered by disease. But if they are adhering to some established lifestyle that pleases them, but does not please me, I don't think I should either trouble them by rebuking them in vain, or ply them with flatteries, enabling them to satisfy desires which I myself would rather die than embrace. Now, the sensible man should live by the same principle  
 331 d in relation to his own city. He should speak out if it appears to him to be badly governed, provided he is neither going to speak in vain nor be put to death for saying so. But he should not bring force to bear against his fatherland to overthrow the political system when it proves impossible to achieve the best system without banishing and slaughtering people. He should, rather, keep quiet and pray for whatever is good for himself and the city.

This, indeed, is the manner in which I would advise you, just as I, along with Dion, advised  
 331 e Dionysius, telling him firstly to live each day of his life in such a way as to be, most of all, master of himself, possessed of trustworthy friends and companions. This would ensure that he did not suffer the same fate as his own father, who annexed many great Sicilian cities that had been plundered by the non-Greeks, but was unable when he had colonised them to establish reliable political systems in any of them composed of men who were comrades. He had no such associates, either  
 332 a among foreigners or among his younger brothers whom he himself had reared, taking them from a private station to positions of authority, and from poverty to unsurpassed wealth. But he was unable, either by persuasion or instruction, either by benevolence or kinship, to secure the involvement of any of these men in government. And he ended up seven times worse off than Darius, who had trusted in men who were neither his own brothers nor reared by himself, but were merely  
 332 b his partners in the overthrow of the Mede and the eunuch. He divided his territory among the seven of them into seven parts, each larger than all of Sicily, and he found these associates to be loyal and devoid of hostility either to himself or to one another. Darius afforded a model of how a good lawgiver and king should behave, for by providing them with laws he preserved the Persian empire to this very day. Furthermore, the Athenians, having taken over many cities that had fallen to the non-Greeks, although they did not colonise them themselves, they nevertheless held sway over  
 332 c them for seventy years by having loyal men in each of the cities. But Dionysius, having merged all of Sicily into a single city-state because he thought it wise to trust nobody, was barely safe, for he was badly off for friendly, trustworthy men. And there is no greater indicator of one's excellence or lack of excellence than being bereft of such people or not.

Since this was what had happened to his father, myself and Dion gave this advice to  
 332 d Dionysius, who had had no exposure to education or to appropriate company in the first place. Then, having started in this way, he was advised to acquire other friends for himself from among his kindred, friends of a similar age with an affinity for excellence. But he was advised above all to acquire such affinity for himself, for he was remarkably deficient in this. Without speaking in such plain terms, for it was unsafe to do so, we hinted at this, and we maintained in argument that this is how any man is to save himself and those for whom he is responsible, while the opposite  
 332 e course brings about an entirely opposite result. Proceeding as we suggested, having made himself wise and sound-minded, if he were then to colonise the abandoned Sicilian cities, and unite them by means of laws and political systems, thus binding them to himself and to one another against  
 333 a the leagues of non-Greeks, we told him that he would not merely double the size of his father's empire, but actually make it many times larger. For having done all this, it would be easy to enslave the Carthaginians to a much greater extent than Gelon had done, in contrast to the present arrangement whereby his father had agreed to pay tribute to the non-Greeks.

These were the words of exhortation to Dionysius from ourselves, who, according to reports pouring in from all quarters, were conspiring against him. Such reports eventually led to Dionysius' expulsion of Dion, and put us in a state of fear. Now, to deal briefly with a number of events, when Dion returned from the Peloponnese and Athens he taught Dionysius a practical lesson. When Dion had liberated the Syracusans and given them back their city on two occasions, they had the same attitude towards him as Dionysius had when Dion tried to educate him and train him to be a king worthy of authority. Dion wanted to be involved in every aspect of Dionysius' life, but he listened to the slanderers who said that Dion was doing everything at the time as a plot against the tyranny so that having been beguiled by education, Dionysius would lose interest in authority and entrust this to Dion, who would usurp him and expel him from the empire through cunning. These allegations prevailed for the second time among the Syracusans, and their prevalence was a bizarre and shameful victory for those who were responsible for this. You who are calling upon me to get involved in what is happening at the moment should hear what happened then. I, a citizen of Athens, a companion of Dion, his ally, went to the tyrant with the aim of converting hostility into friendship, but I lost my struggle against the slanderers. Yet, when Dionysius tried to use money and honours to persuade me to testify, as a friend, to the appropriateness of his expulsion of Dion, he failed utterly in his endeavours. Later, as Dion was returning home, he attached himself to two brothers from Athens who had become his friends, not from a love of wisdom but from ordinary companionship, which is the origin of most friendships, a companionship which people form from hospitality and from initiation into the lower and higher mysteries. And, indeed, these two friends, having joined him for his return, became his companions for those very reasons, and also because of their assistance on the journey. But when they arrived in Sicily, once they saw that Dion was being slandered for plotting to become a tyrant by the very Sicilians he had liberated, not only did they betray their comrade and host, but they became more or less directly involved in his murder, for they stood by the murderers as allies, with weapons in their hands. Now, I neither disregard this shameful and unholy deed, nor have I much to say about it, although many others make it their business to dwell upon these events, and will continue to do so in future. But I do take exception to the claim that, as Athenians, these people brought shame upon the city, for I declare that he too was an Athenian who, when he could have had money and various other honours for doing so, refused to betray this same person, Dion. For he had become Dion's friend not through a base form of friendship, but through sharing an education of freedom in which alone the sensible person should trust, rather than trusting in a fellowship of souls and bodies. And so these two murderers of Dion are not a worthy basis for a reproach to our city, for they never were men of high reputation.

All this has been said by way of advice to Dion's friends and associates. But I now give you some additional advice, delivering the same advice and the same argument for the third time to yourselves as the third recipients. This is what I say. Do not subjugate Sicily or any other city to human despots, but to laws. For subjugation is good neither for the subjugated nor for those who subjugate them, neither for themselves, their children nor their children's children. The very attempt, rather, is utterly destructive, and the character of the souls that love to seize upon such gains is petty and devoid of freedom, knowing nothing of what is good and just, now or hereafter, divine or human. The first person I tried to convince of this was Dion, the second was Dionysius, and you yourselves are now third. Be persuaded then by me, for the sake of Zeus, the third, the saviour, looking either to the case of Dionysius or of Dion, one of whom was unpersuaded and is now living an ignoble life while the other was persuaded and died a noble death. Indeed, whatever a person suffers whilst striving for the very best for himself or for his city is right and noble in every respect. For none of us is immortal by nature, nor would we become happy if we were to attain this state, contrary to what most people think. For nothing good or bad worth mentioning

335 a belongs to anything devoid of soul. These, rather, belong to each soul, either when it is united with  
body or separated from body. And we should always be truly persuaded by the ancient, sacred pro-  
nouncements which tell us that soul is immortal, that it has judges and pays great retribution when  
335 b someone quits the body. That is why we should regard it as a lesser evil to suffer great wrongs and  
injustices rather than perform them. But the money-loving man, poor of soul, hears not these pro-  
nouncements. And even if he hears them he laughs them down, or so he imagines, as he shame-  
lessly grabs from anywhere, like some beast, whatever he thinks will provide him with his fill of  
food and drink, and the pleasure that lowly and boorish folk incorrectly refer to by the name of  
the goddess Aphrodite. The man is blind, and does not see the wickedness that accompanies what  
he has seized, or the extent of the evil belonging to each injustice, which the unjust man necessarily  
335 c carries with him as he moves about upon the earth, and as he makes his utterly dishonourable and  
entirely wretched journey beneath the earth.

With these arguments, and others like them, I set about persuading Dion, and I would have  
very good grounds for being angry with those who murdered the man, and similarly with  
Dionysius, for both parties did enormous damage to me, and in a sense to all of humanity in general.  
The murderers did this by destroying a man who was intent upon practising justice, while  
335 d Dionysius, despite his great power throughout his entire empire, refused to practise justice. For if,  
in his empire, philosophy and power really had combined in the same person, this union would  
have shone forth throughout the entire world of Greeks and non-Greeks, and inspired them with  
the true conviction that no city, or indeed any man, could be happy who does not live his life guided  
335 e by justice combined with wisdom, whether he acquires these himself or by being rightly trained  
and educated under the rule of devout men. This was the harm done by Dionysius, and any other  
damage he did was to me minor in comparison. And the person who murdered Dion is not aware  
that he has brought about the same result. Indeed, regarding Dion, I know full well, or as well as  
anyone can be certain about other people, that had he come to power in the empire, nothing would  
have diverted him from the following model of rulership. Beginning with Syracuse, his own native  
336 a city, once he had cleansed it by undoing its bondage and establishing it in the dress of freedom, he  
would then, by all possible means, have brought order to the citizens by suitably excellent laws.  
After this, he would eagerly have set about colonising all of Sicily, setting it free from the non-  
Greeks by expelling some and subjugating others, with greater ease than Hiero ever did. Now, if  
336 b all this had been brought about through the agency of a just man who was also courageous, sound-  
minded and a lover of wisdom, the same opinion about excellence would have arisen in most peo-  
ple, an opinion which, had Dionysius been persuaded, would, so to speak, have prevailed safely  
and universally. But now somehow, either some daimon or some curse has assailed us with law-  
lessness and godlessness and a most audacious ignorance from which all evils take root in every-  
one, and develop, and eventually produce most bitter fruit for those who planted it – an ignorance  
that has overthrown and undone everything for the second time.

336 c But now, for the sake of the omen, let us for a third time speak good words. Yet I advise  
you, his friends, to imitate Dion's intentions to his fatherland and his sound-minded manner of  
living, and endeavour to fulfil the man's intentions under more auspicious circumstances, intentions  
which you have heard unambiguously from me. Anyone among you who is unable to live after  
336 d the ancient Dorian fashion, who pursues the Sicilian lifestyle favoured by Dion's murderers, is not  
to be called upon, nor should you ever think him capable of a single trustworthy or sound action.  
But call upon others from Sicily itself, the whole of the Peloponnese too. And don't be afraid even  
to include Athens in colonising all Sicily and equalising its laws, for there are people there who  
surpass all others in excellence, and abhor the recklessness of those who murder strangers.

Now, perhaps these considerations ought to be deferred until later, while various forms of  
336 e conflict press hard upon you, springing up every day between factions of all sorts. In that case,

anyone at all on whom divine fortune has bestowed the least portion of right opinion must know that factions have no rest from their evils until those who have won power stop revisiting past evils through open warfare, expulsion and slaughter, and give up the search for revenge upon their enemies, and exercise some control over themselves by passing laws that are common to all, involving no more advantage to themselves than to the defeated parties. They should compel these people to have recourse to the laws by employing two necessary forces, reverence and fear, instilling fear by showing that they are superior to them in power, and reverence by their obvious mastery over pleasures and their greater capacity for willing subjection to the laws. Otherwise there is no way that a city with internal factions will ever abate its evils. Rather, for cities constituted in this way, factions, enmity, hatred and suspicion, internal to themselves, tend to arise unrelentingly. 337 a

So those who have won power should always, once they are truly desirous of security, select from among themselves the very best Greeks they can find, men who firstly are advanced in years, who have households of wives and children, and preferably ancestors aplenty, who are good, reputable and all sufficiently well off. Fifty such people should suffice for a city of ten thousand citizens, who should summon them from their households by pleading with them and honouring them, and once they have answered the call and sworn an oath, they should be asked and implored to make laws that are equal and common to the entire city, favouring neither the victors nor the vanquished. Once the laws have been enacted, it is all-important that the victors render themselves more subservient to the laws than the vanquished. Then everyone will be safe, happiness will abound, and all the evils will be avoided. Otherwise, you should not ask either myself or someone else to get involved with anyone who does not accept what is now being proposed. For this is akin to what Dion and myself, with the best of intentions, attempted to implement for Syracuse, albeit as a second best option. Best of all was what we first attempted to implement for the common good of all, in conjunction with Dionysius himself, although some fate greater than human power brought it to nothing. But it is now up to you to try to implement these present proposals under more benign auspices, with good fortune and some divine fate. 337 b

So, that's enough advice and direction, and that's enough about my first visit to Dionysius. To continue, anyone who wishes may now hear of my subsequent sailing and the course I took, and how reasonable and sensible it was. Indeed, as I said, I have already recounted the first period of my business in Sicily, before I gave advice to Dion's associates and companions. After this I set about persuading Dionysius as best I could to let me depart until peace was restored, for there was war raging in Sicily at the time. We reached an agreement that he would send for Dion and myself again once he had established all aspects of his own power on a more secure footing. So he asked Dion to regard this departure not as exile, but as a change of abode on his part, and I agreed to return once more on these conditions. 338 a

Once peace had been restored he began sending for me, and although he asked Dion to wait a further year, he made all sorts of requests for me to come. Dion kept asking and imploring me to travel, and indeed there was much report from Sicily that Dionysius had now become marvelously enthusiastic about philosophy once again, and consequently Dion was strenuously imploring me to heed the summons. Now, I was of course aware that this sort of thing happens frequently to young people in relation to philosophy. Nevertheless, it seemed safer at the time to stay well away from Dion and Dionysius, and I annoyed them both by replying that I was advanced in years, and, what's more, none of the current developments was in accordance with our agreement. After this it seems that Archytas<sup>15</sup> visited the court of Dionysius. In fact, before my departure I had 338 b

<sup>15</sup> Archytas of Tarentum was a Pythagorean philosopher and mathematician. He was also a prominent statesman in his native city in southern Italy. He was an important associate of Plato and is mentioned in several of Plato's epistles, some of which are addressed to him. *Ninth* and *Twelfth Epistles*, and *Thirteenth Epistle*.

338 d forged a bond of hospitality and friendship between Archytas and his people in Tarentum and  
 Dionysius, and I then sailed away. But there were some people in Sicily who had heard things  
 from Dion, and some others who had heard from them, all of whom were crammed full of misun-  
 derstood doctrines of a philosophic nature. I think they attempted to discuss such matters with  
 Dionysius on the assumption that he was fully conversant with my thinking. Now, Dionysius has,  
 in general, a natural capacity for learning, and is also remarkably vain. So he was probably pleased  
 338 e at what was being said, and ashamed as it became obvious that he had learned nothing whilst I  
 was living there. Consequently, he was keen to learn more fully, and at the same time his vanity  
 pressed hard upon him. I have already explained in my earlier account why he did not listen to me  
 during my previous stay. But since I was now safely back home and had refused his second sum-  
 mons, as I said just now, Dionysius was, I believe, overcome with vanity, lest any might think that  
 339 a based on my experience there I was contemptuous of his nature, character and lifestyle, and was  
 so disapproving that I was not prepared to visit him again. So, it is only right that I speak the truth  
 and accept the fact that someone, on hearing what happened, may despise my philosophy and con-  
 clude that the tyrant was indeed being reasonable.

In fact, Dionysius, on the third occasion, sent a trireme to make the journey easier for me,  
 339 b and he sent Archidamus, an associate of Archytas, believing that he was a Sicilian whom I held in  
 high regard, and there were also other Sicilians whom I knew. All these people gave us the same  
 report of Dionysius' remarkable progress in philosophy. He himself sent a very long letter, knowing  
 full well of my relationship with Dion and Dion's eagerness that I make the journey and visit  
 Syracuse. In fact, the letter dealt with all these considerations, beginning with the opening sentence  
 339 c which read, "Dionysius to Plato", followed by the usual civilities. And then, without further ado,  
 it said, "If you are persuaded by us and come forthwith to Sicily, then first and foremost Dion's  
 affairs will be arranged for you in whatever way you wish, for I know that your wishes will be  
 reasonable and I shall agree to them. But if you don't travel, none of Dion's affairs, either generally  
 or in relation to himself, will unfold to your satisfaction." That's how he dealt with these issues,  
 339 d while the rest of the letter would be tedious and inappropriate to recount. Other letters kept arriving  
 from Archytas and his people in Tarentum, praising the philosophy of Dionysius and saying that  
 if I did not arrive immediately I would completely undo the friendship between themselves and  
 Dionysius, which was so important politically. This was the situation at the time, with the summons  
 I had received. I was being dragged by the people of Sicily and Italy, while the Athenians were lit-  
 339 e erally pushing me out, so to speak, with their entreaties. And I came back to the same argument,  
 that I should not betray Dion or my allies and associates in Tarentum, and I myself felt that it  
 would be nothing surprising if a young man, who learns easily, were to come to love the very best  
 way of living on hearing an account of exalted subjects. So, I felt that I should unequivocally test  
 how matters actually stood and not be false to this possibility, nor be responsible myself for such  
 340 a a truly shameful act if the situation really was as reported.

So, clothed in this reasoning, I went on my way with many fears and, as you might expect,  
 a considerable foreboding. It really was a case of 'the third to the saviour'.<sup>16</sup> Yet fortunately I came  
 through safely once again, and for this, after God, I must be grateful to Dionysius, for although  
 many people were intent upon my destruction, he prevented this and afforded some measure of  
 340 b reverence for the work I was engaged in. Once I had arrived there, I decided first of all to test  
 whether Dionysius really was inflamed by the fire of philosophy or whether this persistent report  
 reaching Athens amounted to nothing. Now, there is a way of putting such matters to the test which  
 is not crude and really well suited to tyrants, especially when they are crammed full of misunder-  
 stood doctrines, and I realised as soon as I arrived that this was very much the predicament of  
 Dionysius. It is necessary to point out to such people what the subject is in its entirety, the sort of  
 340 c subject it is, and how much complexity and effort it involves. Indeed, someone who hears this, if

he be really philosophic, having an affinity with the subject and worthy of it because he is divine, will believe that he has heard something wonderful and that he should now bestir himself, and that life is not worth living if he does otherwise. After this, he bestirs himself and the person leading him on the way, and he does not relent until the end of all his endeavours is attained or he acquires the ability to proceed on his own without any guidance. Such a person resolves to live in this way and according to these precepts, engaging in whatever activities there may be, always holding fast, above all, to philosophy and to a daily regimen that will best help him to learn and be retentive and able to reason soberly within himself. He will consistently hate the opposite lifestyle. But those who are not really philosophic, having a mere coating of opinions, like people whose bodies are sunburnt, once they see how many subjects are involved and the extent of the exertion, and the orderly, regular lifestyle that is appropriate to this undertaking, they decide that philosophy is difficult and beyond their abilities, and they become incapable of pursuing it, while some of them convince themselves that they have, for the most part, heard enough and have no further need for any such matters. 340 d 340 e 341 a

This is, indeed, the clearest and safest test for people who are soft and incapable of sustained effort, so that they can never blame their instructor rather than their own inability to engage in everything that the subject requires. This is what I said to Dionysius at the time, although I did not go through every detail, nor did Dionysius ask me to do so. Indeed, he himself claimed to know most of this, and to have sufficient understanding because of what he had learned from others. Later I discovered that he himself had written about what he had heard, composed as a treatise of his own, but not the same as what he had heard. Yet I myself know nothing about these matters, and although I am aware that some other people have written on the same subjects, who they are not even they themselves know. 341 b

Now, I can say this much about those who have written or shall write, claiming to have knowledge of the subjects I take seriously, having learned from myself or from others, or having made the discoveries themselves. They could not, in my opinion, understand anything about the matter, for there is no writing of mine dealing with these subjects, nor will there ever be. Indeed, this cannot be expressed in words like other subjects, but from much engagement with the matter itself, and from living with it a light is kindled as though from a leaping spark, and once it has arisen in the soul it sustains itself thereafter. And yet I do know this much, that what has been written or spoken by myself would be the best formulation, and indeed whatever has been badly written would cause me most pain. But if it had appeared to me that this was sufficiently capable of being written down and formulated in words for people in general, what task could I have undertaken in my life more exalted than this one: to write something enormously beneficial for mankind, and bring the nature of reality to light for all to behold? But even if I were to make an attempt at dealing with these topics, I don't think it could be regarded as good for people, except for some few who would be capable of making the discovery for themselves with little guidance. As for the rest, it would fill some of them with an ill-founded and mistaken contempt, and others with a vain and empty hope as though they had learned some solemn truths. 341 c 341 d 341 e 342 a

But it occurs to me to speak at greater length about these issues, for the point I am making may well be clarified once I have spoken about them. There is indeed a true argument that stands against anyone who ventures to write anything at all about this sort of thing. It has been expounded by me on many occasions previously, and it seems that it should also be stated now. For any of the things that exist, there are in each case three things through which the knowledge of anything is necessarily acquired. The knowledge itself is fourth, and as a fifth we must propose the thing itself, which is cognisable and which truly is. First is a name, second is an account, third is an image, 342 b

<sup>16</sup> A proverbial expression.

and fourth is knowledge. Take one example if you wish to learn what I am speaking of, and understand everything else in this way. There is something called a circle, which has the very name we have just uttered. Second is the account of this, composed of names and verbs – that which has its extremities everywhere equidistant from the centre – and this account would be the account of  
 342 c that which bears the name round, spherical or circle. Third is that which is drawn and erased, turned on a lathe and destroyed, none of which happens to circle itself, which is associated with all of these as it is different from them. Fourth is knowledge, true reason and opinion about these, which we must furthermore propose in every case as one thing which is not contained in utterances or in physical shapes, but in souls, and so it is obviously different from the nature of circle itself  
 342 d and from the three things mentioned previously. Of these, reason comes closest in kinship and similarity to the fifth, while the other four are at a further remove. The same applies, in like manner, also to shape, be it straight or round, to colour, to good, beautiful and just, and to anything physical, whether manufactured or naturally occurring, such as fire, water and everything of that sort, to any living creature, to the qualities of souls, and to all actions and responses. For unless a person  
 342 e somehow or other apprehends the four of these, he will never fully acquire knowledge of the fifth.  
 343 a What's more, these four attempt to show what each thing is like, rather than what it is, owing to the weakness of words. That is why no reasonable person then will ever venture to entrust his reasoned concepts to this medium, where they will be unalterable, which is just what happens to whatever is committed to writing.

Once again, what is now being said needs to be understood. Each of the circles that are drawn in diagrams or turned on a lathe is full of that which is opposite to the fifth, for it are everywhere in contact with that which is straight, while circle itself, according to us, does not have in itself any part, great or small, of the opposite nature. And we maintain that nothing has any definite  
 343 b name, and nothing prevents whatever is now called round from being called straight, and whatever is called straight from being called round, and names will be no less definite when applied to the transposed objects that are described in the opposite way. And, indeed, the same argument holds for the account. Since it is composed of names and verbs, nothing is certain and definite.

Now, although the unsoundness of each of the four is an endless topic of discussion, what's most important, as I said a little earlier, is that there are two things: what something is and what it is like. And although soul does not seek to know what something is like but what it is, each of the  
 343 c four offers the soul, either verbally or practically, that which it seeks not, and always provides something in each case that is spoken or exhibited, but is easily refuted by the senses, thus filling almost everybody with perplexity and insecurity of all sorts. Now, in cases where we are not in the habit of seeking the truth, due to our deficient upbringing, we are satisfied with what the images  
 343 d provide, and we do not make one another look ridiculous when questioned by a questioner who is capable of scattering and refuting the four. But in cases where we are compelled to answer and reveal the fifth, anyone with the ability to do so will prevail if he wishes to overthrow the person who is presenting an exposition – in speech or in writing or in response to questions – and make him seem as if he knows nothing about what he is trying to write or speak of. But these people are often unaware of the fact that the soul of the speaker or writer is not being refuted. Rather, the nature of each of the four is being refuted as inherently deficient.

But instruction through all these, going upwards and downwards in each case, with effort brings knowledge to birth of that which is good by nature in one who is good by nature. However,  
 343 e if the person's nature is bad – and that is indeed the disposition of the soul of most people when  
 344 a it comes to learning and to the characteristics I referred to, either naturally or because they have been corrupted – then not even keen-sighted Lynceus<sup>17</sup> could make such people see. And in a word, neither ease of learning nor a good memory would ever make this happen to someone devoid of an affinity with the subject, since the process will never get underway amidst alien dis-

positions. And so, neither those who find it easy to learn and also to remember lots of other things, without any natural inclination or affinity towards what's just and everything else that is noble, nor those who have that affinity but don't learn or remember easily, neither of these types would ever understand the truth about excellence to the fullest possible extent, nor about badness either. 344 b For it is necessary to learn these as well as what is false and what is true about being as a whole through total commitment over a prolonged period of time, as I said at the outset. But with effort, by the interaction of these with one another – names and accounts, observations and perceptions – subjecting them to well-intentioned tests and resorting to uncontentious questioning and answering, wisdom comes to light in relation to each, and reason too, extending to the utmost limit of 344 c human power.

That is why anyone who is serious about really serious matters should never commit them to writing and thus expose them to the rivalry and confusion of humanity in general. From these considerations, then, we should recognise, in a word, that whenever we see a person's written compositions, whether they be the laws of a lawgiver or writings on some other subjects, then if the man himself is indeed a serious person, such writings are not his most serious considerations. These abide somehow in the fairest region he possesses. But if these really are his most serious considerations and he has committed them to writing, then not the gods but mortal men 'have 344 d verily destroyed his wits'.<sup>18</sup>

Anyone who has followed this story and digression of mine will appreciate full well that whether Dionysius has written about the primary principles of nature, or some lesser or greater person has done so, then, according to my account, he has not learned or understood anything sound about the matters on which he has written, or else he would have respected these just as much as I do, and would not have dared to cast them before an unfitting and ill-suited readership. Nor did he write this down as an aid to memory, for once someone has grasped this with his soul there is no danger that he might forget it, for it is in the most concise form of all. If he did actually 344 e write, he did so out of base ambition, as if he was presenting his own ideas or as if he had received an education of which he was not worthy, all from a love of the fame associated with its possession. 345 a Now, if this happened to Dionysius from our single meeting, it may perhaps be so, but how it happened, 'God knoweth', as the Thebans say. For as I said, I went over things with him on one occasion only and never again thereafter. So anyone who intends to discover how matters unfolded as they did should understand next the reason why we did not go over this a second or third time, or indeed many times. Was it the case that Dionysius, having heard me on one occasion only, thinks 345 b that he knows all this and does, indeed, have sufficient knowledge, either from his own discoveries or because he learned this afterwards from others? Or does he think that what was said is of no value? Or thirdly, does he think it is not for him, that it is beyond him, and that he would not really be capable of living his life in the practice of wisdom and excellence? Now, if he thinks this is of no value, he will be in conflict with many witnesses who say the opposite, witnesses who are vastly superior to Dionysius as judges of such matters. If he thought he had discovered or learned them, and that they are of real value for the education of a soul that is free, how could he, unless he is an 345 c extraordinary person, show such ready disrespect for an authoritative guide on these matters? I should now tell you about the manner of his disrespect.

Not long afterwards, although Dionysius had previously allowed Dion to retain his possessions and to derive income from them, he then no longer allowed Dion's trustees to send anything to the Peloponnese, as if he had completely forgotten about his own letter. He now maintained that the property belonged not to Dion but to his son, who was his own nephew and under his legal 345 d

<sup>17</sup> Lynceus journeyed with the Argonauts and served as the lookout for them.

<sup>18</sup> *Iliad* vii.360.

guardianship. These were the developments during my stay up to this point. But when matters unfolded in this way, I saw exactly the extent of Dionysius' desire for philosophy, and I had good reason to be annoyed, whether I chose such a course or not, for it was already summer by then and the ships were sailing out again. So I thought there was no point in being angry with Dionysius, any more than with myself and those who had compelled me to come for the third time to the strait of Scylla, 'that I must measure the whole way back to Charybdis'.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, I thought I should tell Dionysius that because Dion had been treated so badly, it would be impossible for me to stay. But he reassured me and asked me to stay, thinking that it would not be good for himself if I were to depart so suddenly, bringing news of such developments in person. Having failed to persuade me, he said he would personally arrange an escort for me. But my spirits were up, and so I thought of boarding one of the departing vessels and sailing away, thinking that I should suffer the consequences of being caught, whatever they might be, since I had obviously done no wrong but had suffered wrong. But Dionysius, seeing that nothing would prevail upon me to stay, came up with a plan to detain me for that sailing season. He arrived the following day and presented this persuasive argument. "You and I," said he, "must get Dion and his affairs out of the way and get rid of our constant disputes over these issues. For your sake I will do the following for Dion. I think it best that he takes his property and lives on the Peloponnese, not as an exile, but with permission to return home here whenever this is agreed jointly by himself, by me, and by yourselves, his friends. All this is on the condition that he does not plot against me, and you, your associates, and Dion's associates here, are to act as guarantors of the arrangements, and the man himself is to provide security. Whatever money he takes is to reside in the Peloponnese or in Athens with whomsoever you people deem fit, and Dion may enjoy the fruits thereof, but he is to have no authority to withdraw the funds without your permission. For I don't much trust that man to use the money in a way that is just towards me, and the sum is not inconsiderable, but I have come to have more trust in you and your people. So consider whether these proposals are acceptable to you, and stay for this year on these conditions, and next season you may take the money and depart. And I am sure that Dion will be very grateful to you for making these arrangements on his behalf."

When I heard this proposal I was annoyed. Nevertheless, I told him that I would give him my views on the matter the next day when I had thought about it. Considering the matter afterwards when I was on my own, I was most troubled. The first argument that occurred to me on reflection was as follows. "Come on then, what if Dionysius has no intention of doing what he promises, and as soon as I have departed he sends a convincing letter to Dion, and orders many others in his circle to write as well concerning the proposals he has just made to me? What if he says that although he himself was willing, Plato was unwilling to do what Dionysius invited him to do, and that he set Dion's affairs at naught, entirely so? Besides, what if he is not even prepared to let me go, issues no orders personally to any ship's captains, but indicates to everyone, as he easily could, that he does not want me to sail away? Will anyone be prepared to take me as a passenger who originates from Dionysius' own palace?" For in addition to my other difficulties, I was residing in the garden adjacent to the palace, and even the doorkeeper was not prepared to let me out of there unless he was granted authorisation from Dionysius. "On the other hand, if I stay for the year, I shall be able to write to Dion about the issues I am facing and what I am doing. And if Dionysius actually does anything that he promises to do, what I have done will not be utterly laughable. For Dion's property is not insignificant, being worth perhaps one hundred talents at least, if it is valued correctly. But should current developments unfold as they are likely to unfold, I am at a loss as to how I am to proceed. Nevertheless, I probably need to suffer on for one more year and try to test the plans of Dionysius in practice." Having made these decisions, I told Dionysius the following day, "I have decided to stay, but I ask you not to presume that I have authority over Dion, but send a letter to him, jointly with myself, explaining what has now been agreed, and asking whether this

is acceptable to him. And if not, and he wants other arrangements that he deems fairer, he is to send these requirements to us as soon as possible. Meanwhile, you should implement no new measures affecting Dion.” This is what was said, and this, more or less, as I have recounted it just now, was what we agreed upon.

After this, the ships sailed away. It was no longer possible for me to depart. Dionysius then remembered to say that half of the property should belong to Dion himself and the other half should belong to his son. He said he would sell the property, and when sold he would give half to me to convey to Dion, while the other half was to be left behind for the man’s son, as this was the fairest arrangement. I was shocked at his proposal, and although I thought it ridiculous to contradict him further, I said nevertheless that we should wait for the letter of reply from Dion, and write to him again with these new proposals. But Dionysius followed up on his proposals in a most high-handed manner by selling Dion’s property, in its entirety, as he pleased, to whomsoever he pleased, without saying anything to me about these plans. And indeed, I, in like manner, had no further discussions with him about Dion’s affairs for I thought there was nothing more to be gained from doing so. 347 d 347 e

Until these developments took place, I had been acting in support of philosophy and my friends, but afterwards, Dionysius and I lived differently. I was looking outwards like a bird yearning to fly away from the place, while he was working out how he might intimidate me without giving away any of Dion’s property. And yet, before all of Sicily we professed to be companions. Then, contrary to the practice of his father, Dionysius tried to reduce the pay of his older mercenaries. But the soldiers, being angry, banded together in groups and said they would oppose this measure. He then tried the use of force, shutting the gates of the acropolis, but the soldiers immediately charged the walls, shouting some barbaric war cry, at which Dionysius became fearful and conceded all the demands, and even more, to those peltasts who had then gathered together. Word quickly spread that Heraclides had been responsible for these troubles, and when the man heard this he took himself off and disappeared, while Dionysius tried to capture him. He summoned Theodotes to the garden where I happened to be walking at the time, and although I do not know the rest of the conversation, nor did I hear it, I do know and remember what Theodotes said to Dionysius in my presence. “Plato,” said he, “I am in the process of persuading Dionysius here that should I prove capable of getting Heraclides to come here to discuss the accusations that have now been made against him, and should it be decided that he must no longer reside in Sicily, I think it best that he set sail for the Peloponnese, taking his wife and son, and dwell there without being a threat to Dionysius, while enjoying the income from his own property. And although I have already sent for him once, I shall do so again now, hoping that he might respond either to my previous summons or the present one. And I ask and implore Dionysius, should someone come across Heraclides, either in the countryside or here in the city, let no harm come to him apart from being deported from this land, until Dionysius decides otherwise.” Then, addressing Dionysius, he said, “Do you agree with this?” “I agree,” said he. “And even if he turns up in your own home, he shall suffer no harm beyond what has just been said.” 348 a 348 b 348 c 348 d 348 e

The next day, during the afternoon, Eurybius and Theodotes came to me in a hurry, remarkably troubled, and Theodotes said, “Plato, you were present yesterday when Dionysius entered into an agreement with both of us in relation to Heraclides, were you not?” “Of course,” I replied. “Well, right now,” said he, “there are peltasts running around seeking to apprehend Heraclides, who is probably somewhere around here. But you really need to come with us to Dionysius.” So we set off, gained admission, and while the other two stood tearfully in silence, I said, “My friends here are afraid that you might do something high-handed in relation to Heraclides, contrary to what we agreed yesterday. For I believe that there is evidence that he has come back here some- 349 a

<sup>19</sup> *Odyssey* xii.428, Lattimore.

where.” When Dionysius heard this he was enraged and turned all sorts of colours, just as an angry man would. Theodotes then fell at his feet, grasped his hands, wept, and implored him not to do anything of this sort. But I, in order to console him, said, “Take heart, Theodotes, for Dionysius will never be so bold to do anything contrary to what was agreed yesterday.” But Dionysius, in a highly tyrannical manner, said, “With you I agreed nothing, great or small.” “Yes you did, by the gods,” said I. “You agreed not to do the very things this man is now asking you not to do.” And with these words I turned around and walked out.

After this, Dionysius continued to hunt down Heraclides, while Theodotes was sending messengers calling upon him to flee. Dionysius ordered Tisias and the peltasts to keep up the pursuit, but according to reports, Heraclides was a few hours ahead of them and escaped into Carthaginian territory. After this, his ongoing plan to hold onto Dion’s property seemed to afford Dionysius a convincing basis for enmity with myself. First, he expelled me from the acropolis, finding an excuse for doing so in a ten-day sacrifice that the women had to perform in the garden in which I was residing. He then ordered me to stay with Archedemus during my time outside the acropolis. While I was staying there, Theodotes sent for me, and complained at length about everything that had happened, blaming Dionysius, who, on hearing that I had visited Theodotes, used this as another pretext for a further dispute with myself, much akin to the previous one. He sent someone to ask me if I really had met up with Theodotes when he had sent for me. “Absolutely,” I replied. And the messenger then said, “Well, he has instructed me to tell you that you are not acting at all well in attaching more importance to Dion and his friends than to Dionysius himself.” These were his words, and he never invited me to his residence again as he thought I was by then clearly a friend of Theodotes and Heraclides, and therefore Dionysius’ enemy. And he presumed that I did not think well of him because he was diverting Dion’s wealth in its entirety.

Thereafter, I was residing outside the acropolis among the mercenaries. But various people came to me, including some of the ships’ rowers who were fellow citizens from Athens, advising me that damaging stories about me were spreading amongst the peltasts, some of whom were threatening to kill me if they ever got their hands on me. So, I came up with the following plan to ensure my safety. I sent word to Archytas and other friends in Tarentum, explaining the predicament I happened to be in. Under the pretext of an embassy from their city, they sent a thirty-oared boat and also one of their own people, Lamiskus, who, on arrival, made a request to Dionysius concerning myself, saying that I wished to depart, and asking that he do nothing whatsoever to stop me. He agreed, and sent me on my way having given me provisions for the journey. But I neither demanded the return of Dion’s property, nor did anyone repay it.

On reaching the Peloponnese at Olympia I came across Dion, who was a spectator at the Games, and I told him all that happened. He, calling upon Zeus as his witness, immediately exhorted myself and my associates and friends to make arrangements to take revenge on Dionysius, because in our case there had been disloyalty to strangers. So he said and so he thought. And in his own case there had been his unjust banishment and exile. Having heard this, I encouraged him to call upon my friends to help him if they wished to do so. “As for myself,” said I, “it was you, along with others, who somehow forced me to share the table and hearth of Dionysius and join in his sacred rites. And although he probably believed, from numerous slanderous reports, that I was plotting along with you against himself and the tyranny, he nevertheless did not have me put to death, but showed me respect. Now, I am no longer really at an age to be of military assistance to anybody, but if you ever feel the need for friendship towards one another and wish to do one another some good, I am fully available to both sides. But as long as your intentions are bad, please call upon someone else.” I said all this because I had come to detest my disordered dealings with Sicily and my misfortune there. But when they did not heed me and were unpersuaded by my efforts at reconciliation, they themselves became responsible for all the evils that have now tran-

spired. For as far as human affairs are concerned, none of this would have ever occurred had Dionysius repaid Dion's money or been completely reconciled with him, for I could easily have conformed Dion to my wishes and influence. But now they have filled the world with evils by attacking one another.

Dion had the same intention as I would attribute to myself or, indeed, anyone else who is reasonable and intends to confer the greatest benefits in terms of power and honour on himself, his friends and his own city to the greatest possible extent. This would not be achieved by someone who makes himself, his associates and his city wealthy by scheming and gathering conspirators together, while being poor and lacking in self-control himself, defeated by cowardice in the face of pleasures. Nor is it achieved by someone who, having slain the property owners, branding them as enemies, distributes their possessions and encourages his own collaborators and associates so that none of them will complain to him of being poor. The same holds for someone who might be honoured as a benefactor by his city in this way, by distributing the wealth of the few to the masses through popular decrees, or someone leading a great city that rules over many lesser cities, who might distribute the wealth of the smaller cities to his own city in an unjust manner.

For neither Dion nor anyone else ever intentionally pursues power that will be a curse for all time to himself and his family. They pursue, rather, a political system and the provision of the best and most just laws, introduced without any murders or slayings. This is what Dion was engaged in at the time, preferring to suffer unrighteous deeds rather than perform them. But despite being careful to avoid suffering them, he fell when he arrived at the very point he was triumphing over his enemies, but his fate was no surprise. For a righteous person, being sound-minded and sensible, would never wholly be deceived about the souls of any unrighteous people he was dealing with. But it would be no surprise if he suffered the fate of a good ship's captain, who, although he might be fully aware of the coming storm, could fail to anticipate the extraordinary and unexpected magnitude of the storm, and having failed to anticipate this, he might be overwhelmed by its violence. This same failure brought Dion down, for although he was fully aware that those who brought him down were bad people, he failed to notice the height of ignorance they had attained, and their general depravity and greed, and because he overlooked this he now lies fallen, bringing countless misfortunes upon Sicily.

As for the situation following the events described, the advice I have to offer has more or less been presented, so let that suffice. But it seemed to me to be necessary to state the reasons for my second visit to Sicily, because what happened then was so strange and unusual. So, if what has now been described seems more reasonable to some, and anyone believes that there were adequate motives for what happened, then the present accounts would be sufficient in measure.

## — EIGHTH EPISTLE —

*Plato to the relatives and associates of Dion: may ye fare well*

352 b I shall attempt to explain to you, as best I can, what principles you should keep in mind if you really are to fare well. And I hope my advice will be of benefit not only to yourselves, to yourselves  
352 c especially, but secondly, to all those in Syracuse, and thirdly, to your enemies and adversaries, unless some of them have performed an unholy deed, for these are incurable and no one could ever purge them. So, pay attention to what I am now saying.

Now that the tyranny has been undone, your entire struggle throughout all of Sicily involves two factions, one side wishing to restore the regime again, the other wishing to finalise the elimi-  
352 d nation of the tyranny. Now, most people in such situations think the correct advice about such matters is to recommend whatever will do most harm to your enemies and most good to your friends. But it is not at all easy while doing much harm to others to avoid suffering a lot of other evils yourself.

And there is no need to travel far to see clear examples of this; what has happened here of late, in Sicily itself, is enough. One side is trying to act in this way, while others are engaged in  
352 e defending themselves against such actions, and if these stories were recounted to others, they would constitute a sufficient, consistent series of lessons. Now, there is almost no shortage of examples of this sort of behaviour, but examples where people act for the benefit of all, friends and enemies alike, or do almost no harm to both, are neither easy to discern nor to enact. For advice of this sort, and the attempt to speak it, are much like a prayer.

353 a Let this then be a prayer in all respects, for everyone should speak and think by beginning with the gods, and let our prayer be fulfilled in directing us to the following account. Now, and ever since the war began, yourselves and your enemies have been ruled throughout, more or less, by a single family which your ancestors once appointed in their hour of utmost need, at a time when there was an extreme threat to Greek Sicily of being entirely overrun by the Carthaginians and  
353 b coming under non-Greek ways. For they then chose Dionysius, who was young and warlike, for the military activities that suited him, and Hipparinus as his senior adviser. For the safety of Sicily, these two were appointed as sole rulers, or, in other words, as tyrants. And, indeed, everyone may decide for themselves whether they wish to believe that it was divine fortune and God, or the excellence of the rulers, or these two factors with the help of the citizens of that era, that were responsible for ensuring their security. In any case, that was how safety came to the people of that age.

Now, it is perhaps only right that those who were saved should all be grateful after such  
353 c achievements as these. And if since then the tyranny has not used the gift from the city in the right way, the just penalty has been paid in some cases, while in other cases it is still to be paid. So what penalties might rightly be imposed upon them under the present circumstances? If you could easily escape these people without any great danger or hardships, or if they could readily seize the reins of power once more, I could not even give the advice I am about to offer. But now both sides need  
353 d to bear in mind and remember just how often you have both presumed, with high expectations, now and almost always, that something minor was all that was needed in order to achieve your objectives. But note, furthermore, that this minor detail proves again and again to be the cause of countless evils in each and every case. No limit is ever reached. The conclusion of a past issue  
353 e always seems to be linked to the beginning of a new one, and because of this cycle there is a danger that the entire class of tyrannical folk, and democratic folk too, will be destroyed. And if this happens, and any of these likely developments take place, God forbid, then the Greek language will be almost extinct throughout all of Sicily, which will become some dominion or dependency of the Phoenicians or the Opici.<sup>20</sup> It therefore behoves all Greeks, with all eagerness, to come up with a remedy for these evils.

Now, if anyone has something more correct or better to offer than what I am going to say,

and he comes before us, he may rightly be called a friend of Greece. But I shall now try to set out for you my own present views, in all frankness, based on our shared concept of justice. For I am speaking as a sort of arbitrator conversing with the two parties, the former tyrant and the subjects of the tyrant, giving to each one my old advice. Now, my word of advice to any tyrant would be to avoid this title and this role, and to transform tyranny into kingship if possible. And it is possible, as Lycurgus,<sup>21</sup> that wise and good man, has proved in practice. For on seeing that the related families in Argos and Messene had turned from the rule of kings to that of tyrants, and had in each case brought ruin upon themselves and their city, he was afraid for his own city and for his people too. As a remedy, he introduced the authority of the Elders and of the Ephors as a bond to preserve the kingship. As a result, he brought security and fame to his own people, because for those people the rule of law became king, and people did not exercise tyrannical power over the laws. 354 a 354 b 354 c

These are my words of exhortation to you all now. Those who are intent upon tyrannical power should turn back from what mindless folk crave so greedily and count as happiness. Let them try to change to a kingly form and be subject to kingly laws, acquiring the highest honours from willing subjects and from the laws. I would advise those who are pursuing the ways of freedom and fleeing from the yoke of slavery as if it were an evil to be careful never to fall foul of the disease of their forefathers, a greedy and immoderate freedom, which the people of the time suffered from because of their excessive resistance to authority, born of an unmeasured love of freedom. For before Dionysius and Hipparinus came to power, the Sicilians of that age thought they were living a happy life, enjoying luxuries, and at the same time ruling over their own rulers. They even stoned to death the ten generals who preceded Dionysius, deciding the matter without recourse to a single law, so that they would be slaves to none, subject neither to justice nor law, entirely free in every respect. Consequently, they got the tyrants, for slavery and freedom in excess are in both cases utterly evil, whereas in due measure they are entirely good. Slavery in due measure is slavery to God, whereas slavery to man is devoid of measure, and while sound-minded people have law as their god, for fools it is pleasure. Since this is the natural state of affairs, I call upon the friends of Dion to pass on to all Syracusans the advice I have given, advice common to myself and Dion. And I shall put into words what he would have said to you were he alive and able to speak. “Well, then,” someone might ask, “what argument would the advice of Dion convey to us about our present predicament?” The answer is as follows. 354 d 354 e 355 a

“O Syracusans, accept, first of all, such laws as would obviously not turn your thoughts and desires towards moneymaking and wealth. Rather, since there are these three things, soul, body and wealth, assign the greatest honour to the excellence of the soul, second greatest to that of the body, setting it below that of the soul, and assign the third and last place of honour to wealth, the servant of body and soul. The ordinance that brings these arrangements about may rightly be laid down as a law for yourselves since it really does bring happiness to those who live by it. But the argument according to which the rich are called happy is itself a miserable one, being a mindless argument of women and children, which makes those who are persuaded by it just as miserable. If you come to experience what is now being said about the laws, you will know in practice that my exhortations are true. Indeed, practice seems to constitute the truest test of everything. Accepting such laws as these, since Sicily is in a precarious situation and your side is neither sufficiently dominant nor entirely defeated, it would surely be just and advantageous for you all to adopt a middle course, between yourselves who are fleeing the harshness of the regime, and those who would love to regain power. These are people whose forefathers once performed the great 355 b 355 c 355 d

<sup>20</sup> The Phoenicians and Opici were two ancient peoples. The former originated in modern-day Lebanon but had established colonies in Sicily. The latter occupied the Campania region in modern-day Italy.

<sup>21</sup> Lycurgus was a Spartan legislator.

feat of saving the Greeks from the non-Greeks, so that today we are allowed to have this discussion about political systems. But had they lost on that occasion, neither discourse nor any hope whatsoever would be left for us. So now, let one side have their freedom along with kingly rule, while the other has responsible kingly rule where the laws are master of the citizens in general, and of the kings themselves, in case they do anything contrary to the law.

“Under all these conditions, honest and sound in your thinking, with the help of the gods you should appoint three kings, my own son being the first because of a twofold debt of gratitude you owe, firstly to my father who in former times freed the city from the non-Greeks, and secondly to myself, who, of late, twice delivered you from the tyrants, as you yourselves have witnessed; then, as a second king, because of his present assistance and because of the piety of his character, appoint the man who is the son of Dionysius and bears the same name as my father. He, despite having a tyrant as a father, is of his own free will in the process of liberating the city, thus securing undying honour for himself and his family, instead of a transient and unjust tyranny. The third person whom you should call upon to become king of the Syracusans, as the willing king of a willing city, is the man who is now leading the army of your adversaries, Dionysius, the son of Dionysius, provided he is prepared, voluntarily, to transform himself into the shape of a king out of fear of misfortune, or out of pity for his fatherland and the neglected state of its temples and tombs, lest he, through his ambition, utterly destroys them all, thus becoming a source of delight to the non-Greeks. These three kings, whether you grant them the powers of Spartan kings or diminish their powers by mutual agreement, should be appointed in some such manner as follows. Although this has been described to you previously, you should nevertheless hear it again now.

“If you find that the people of Dionysius and Hipparinus are prepared, for the safety of Sicily, to put an end to the present troubles in return for honours granted to themselves and their people now and hereafter, you should, on these conditions, as I said before, call upon a mutually agreed number of emissaries, whom they may choose either from here or from elsewhere, or both, placing them in full charge of the reconciliation process. When these arrive, they are firstly to set down laws and a political system under which it is arranged that kings be in charge of sacred places, and whatever else is appropriate to those who had once been benefactors. They should appoint guardians of the law, thirty-five in number, with responsibility for war and peace, acting in conjunction with the populace and the council. There are to be various courts for various purposes, but in cases of the death penalty or exile, all thirty-five are to be involved. And, in addition to these, there are to be judges, always chosen from the officials of the preceding year, one from each official role, choosing whoever is deemed the best and the most just. These people are, for the following year, to judge any cases involving the execution, imprisonment or deportation of any citizens. Kings are not to be allowed to act as judges in such cases as these, just like a priest who is kept free of the taint of murder, bondage or exile.

“This is what I had in mind for you while I was alive, and still have now. Having defeated our enemies at the time with your assistance, I would have established the political system in the way I had in mind had not alien demonic forces prevented me. After this, had events unfolded as I intended, I would have recolonised the rest of Sicily by depriving the non-Greeks of the territory they now hold, except for those who fought on for our common freedom against tyranny, and then resettled the former occupiers of the Greek regions in their ancient ancestral homesteads. And I now advise all of you together to hold these same precepts, act upon them, exhort everyone to this course of action, and regard anyone who refuses as a common enemy. None of this is impossible, for these ideas are present in two souls and are easily found, upon reflection, to be the best, so whoever decides they are somehow impossible is unsound in his thinking. The two souls I am referring to are of Hipparinus, the son of Dionysius, and of my own son. For once these two have come to agreement, I believe that the other Syracusans who care about their city will be in accord.

But having given honours, accompanied by prayers, to all the gods and to any others who deserve honour along with the gods, never desist from gently persuading and exhorting friends and foes in any way you can, until the words we are now speaking shall, like a divine dream presented to waking eyes, be worked out in clear, full and happy completion by yourselves.” 357 d

—— NINTH EPISTLE ——

*Plato to Archytas of Tarentum: may you do well*

Archippus and Philonides and their associates have arrived, bringing us the letter you gave them and reporting the news from yourself. They concluded their dealings with the city quite easily, since these were not particularly troublesome. They then told us your news and explained that you are losing patience over your inability to get free of the busyness of public affairs. Now, it is more or less obvious to everyone that the greatest pleasure in life consists in attending to your own affairs, especially if someone chooses to deal with the sort of affairs you deal with. But you should also ponder the fact that none of us has been born for ourselves alone. Rather, our fatherland confers part of what we become, our parents another part, our remaining loved ones another, and much comes from the circumstances that overtake us in life. And when our fatherland itself summons us to public affairs, it would surely be improper to disobey. For as a consequence, we also, at the same time, leave room for lesser people who do not enter into public affairs from the best motives. So much for these matters. We are now looking after Echecrates, and will continue to do so hereafter for your sake, for the sake of his father, Phrynion, and for the sake of the young man himself. 357 e 358 a 358 b

—— TENTH EPISTLE ——

*Plato to Aristodorus: may you do well*

I hear that you are one of Dion’s most faithful companions at present, and have been so throughout, which is the wisest characteristic of those who apply themselves to philosophy. For I maintain that true philosophy is steadfastness, loyalty and honesty, while other forms of wisdom and cleverness, tending as they do in other directions, are what I refer to, correctly I believe, as platitudes. So, remain strong and continue in the qualities in which you are now abiding. 358 c

—— ELEVENTH EPISTLE ——

*Plato to Laodamas: may you do well*

I wrote to you previously that it is most important for all the matters you speak of, that you yourself come to Athens. But since you maintain that this is impossible, the second best course, as you said in your letter, is that myself or young Socrates<sup>22</sup> come to you, if possible. At the moment though, Socrates is sick with strangury, and it would be unseemly for me to go there and not accomplish what you asked of me, but I am not very hopeful that any of this can be achieved, and it would require a long letter to explain everything. Besides, at my age I am not physically up to the task of travelling and running the sort of risks that are encountered by land and by sea, journeys nowadays being beset with all sorts of dangers. I can, however, give advice to yourself and the colonists, which may, to quote Hesiod, “sound commonplace, while being hard to understand”. Now, they 358 d 358 e 359 a

<sup>22</sup> This is the young Socrates who appears as an interlocutor with the Eleatic Stranger in Plato’s *Statesman*.

are mistaken in their thinking if they believe that it is ever possible for a political system to be well established by instituting laws of any sort without there being some authority looking after the day-to-day life of the city to ensure that it is both sound-minded and vigorous in the case of slaves and free alike. Now, this could happen if there were already men worthy of such authority, but if someone is needed to provide education, then I think there is among you neither the educator nor candidates for education, and what's left for you is, rather, to pray to the gods. For most earlier cities were also established in this way and then went on to enjoy good government as a consequence of major events, military or otherwise, whenever in such circumstances there arose a noble and good man, possessed of great power. Until then you should – indeed, you must – set your hearts on these outcomes, keep in mind what I am saying about them, and don't be so foolish as to think you will definitely accomplish anything. May good fortune be yours.

—— TWELFTH EPISTLE ——

*Plato to Archytas of Tarentum: may you do well*

We received the treatises that came from you with wondrous delight, and we had particular admiration for the man who wrote them, whom we deemed worthy of those ancient ancestors of his. In fact, your people were said to have been Myrions who were among the Trojans who left during the reign of Laomedon, good men as the traditional story declares. As for my own treatises about which you wrote, they are not yet fully complete, but I have sent them to you in their present state. And since we both agree that they are to be kept safe, there is no need for me to make that request.

—— THIRTEENTH EPISTLE ——

*Plato to Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse: may you do well*

*This is said not to be by Plato<sup>23</sup>*

Let this greeting mark the beginning of my letter, and at the same time be a sign that it is from me.<sup>24</sup> Once, when you were entertaining the Locrian youths and were seated some distance from me, you got up, came over to me, and in a friendly way addressed some admirable words to me, so I thought, and so too did the person beside me, one of the good young men, who then said, “Presumably, Dionysius, when it comes to wisdom, Plato here has been of great benefit to you.” And you replied, “And in many other respects too, since from the very moment I issued the invitation, because of the fact that I sent for him, I derived immediate benefit.” Now, this is the spirit we must preserve so that our mutual benefit from one another may continually increase, and to bring this about I am now sending you some Pythagorean writings, and some ‘Divisions’, and also a man who, as we agreed at the time, could prove useful to yourself and Archytas, if indeed Archytas has come to Syracuse. The man's name is Helicon, and his people are from Cyzicus. He is a student of Eudoxus,<sup>25</sup> and is well versed in everything that man knows. What's more, he has also studied with one of Isocrates' <sup>26</sup>pupils and with Polyxenus, one of the associates of Bryson.<sup>27</sup> And, unusually for such people, he is not devoid of social charm, nor it seems is he of bad character; rather, on the contrary, he seems to have a light touch and to be of good character. But I am saying all this with trepidation because I am expressing an opinion about a human being, and although a human is no ordinary creature, we are for the most part fickle, with a few rare exceptions. So, being wary and cautious even in this case, I looked into the matter by meeting the man personally, and I also enquired of his fellow citizens, but no one said anything bad about him. However, keep an eye on him yourself and be careful. Now, it is best, if you have any time available, that you

learn from him and continue your general study of philosophy. If not, then have someone else taught, so that when you do have time to learn, you may become better and improve your reputation, and the benefit you derive from me may not cease. Enough said about all this.

As for the items you wrote to me to send to you, I have had the Apollo made and Leptines is bringing it to you. It is by a good, young craftsman whose name is Leochares. I thought that another work of his was most charming, so I bought it, intending to give it to your wife because she looked after me in sickness and in health in a manner that was worthy of you and me. Please give it to her unless you think otherwise. I am also sending twelve jars of sweet wine for the children, and two jars of honey. We arrived too late to store the figs, and the stored myrtle berries had rotted. We shall look after them better in future. Leptines will tell you about the plants. 361 a 361 b

The money for these items, for these and for some taxes due to the city, I obtained from Leptines, telling him what I thought most creditable to ourselves, and truthful too, that the money spent on the Leukadian ship, amounting to almost sixteen minae, was ours. So, I obtained the money, used it myself, and sent these items to you. Next, I want you to hear about your own financial position in relation to your funds at Athens and with myself. I shall, as I said at the time, use your funds just as I do in the case of my other friends. I use the least amount possible, as much as is necessary, justified and seemly, in the opinion of myself and whoever I obtained the funds from. 361 c

Now, my own circumstances are that I have charge of four daughters of the nieces of mine who died on that occasion when you bade me wear a wreath and I would not do so. The eldest is of marriageable age, another is eight years old, another is just over three, and the youngest is not yet one. These must be provided with dowries, by myself and by my friends, for those whom I live to see married; otherwise they are to look after themselves. And there is no need to provide for those whose fathers become wealthier than myself, although at the moment I am better off than them, and along with Dion and others I provided dowries for their mothers. The eldest is to marry Speusippus. She is the daughter of his sister, and she requires a dowry of no more than thirty minae, which is quite reasonable with us. And furthermore, if my own mother should pass away, no more than ten minae would be required for the construction of her tomb. These, more or less, are all my present needs, and if any other expense, private or public, arises because of my visit to you, we should do what I said at the time. I am to strive to keep the expense as small as possible, and if I prove unable to do so, the cost is to be yours. 361 d 361 e 362 a

The next issue I address is the expenditure of your funds at Athens. Firstly, if I am required to incur some expense in funding a chorus or something of that sort, you do not have, as we had hoped, a single friend who will advance you the money. Secondly, if something very significant for you were to come your way, where payment there and then is to your advantage, and it is disadvantageous to delay until one of your people arrives with the money, such a situation presents a difficulty for you and is embarrassing. This I actually discovered for myself when I sent Erastus to Andromides of Aegina, from whom you told me to borrow if I needed anything, since he was a friend of yours. I wanted to send you some important items that you had asked for, but Andromides replied, reasonably and understandably, that on a previous occasion, having expended funds on your father's behalf, he had difficulty in recovering them, so he would now provide a small sum 362 b

<sup>23</sup> This comment comes from the best-attested manuscripts and may go back to Thrasyllus, one of the early editors of Plato's work.

<sup>24</sup> The greeting 'may you do well' is intended as an indication of authorship due to its frequent use. *Third Epistle* 315a-b.

<sup>25</sup> Eudoxus of Cnidus was an astronomer and mathematician who had studied with Archytus and Plato. He eventually moved his school from Cyzicus to Athens, and merged it with the Academy.

<sup>26</sup> Isocrates was an influential Athenian rhetorician and teacher of rhetoric.

<sup>27</sup> Bryson of Heraclea was a mathematician and sophist who is thought to have studied with Socrates. The ancient historian Theopompus claims that Plato had taken many ideas for his dialogues from Bryson.

and no more. That's how I came to borrow from Leptines, and for this at least he deserves praise,  
 362 c not because he gave but because he gave so readily. And in anything else he said or did concerning  
 you, he demonstrated the sort of friend he was. Indeed, I really should report upon such favourable  
 relationships and their opposites, and how I see the disposition of particular people towards your-  
 self. In any case I shall speak frankly to you about your finances, for it is only right that I do so,  
 and at the same time I can speak from experience of your own circumstances. Those who ever  
 report to you are reluctant to report anything that, in their opinion, involves a financial expense,  
 362 d for fear of your displeasure. So you should get them accustomed to this and compel them to speak  
 of these matters and of others too. Indeed, you should do your best to know everything, and be a  
 judge, and not avoid the knowledge. This will surely be the best course of all for you in terms of  
 your authority. For the correct disbursement and repayment of expenses are, as you say, and will  
 continue to say, good in general, and good also for the actual acquisition of possessions. So don't  
 let those who claim to care about you misrepresent you to the world, for it is good neither for your-  
 self, nor for your reputation, to be regarded as a difficult person to do business with.

I should speak of Dion next. I cannot yet speak to him of the other matters until the letters  
 from you arrive, as promised. However, although I neither mentioned nor discussed the matters  
 you forbade me to mention, I did test whether he would bear it ill or well if this were to transpire,  
 and I concluded that he would not take it easily. But, in general, I think Dion is reasonably disposed  
 363 a towards you in word and deed. To Cratinus, the brother of Timotheus, and my friend, let us give  
 an armoured breastplate, one of the softer variety for foot soldiers, and to the daughters of Cebes,  
 three seven-cubit robes of Sicilian linen, not of expensive fabric from Amorgos. You probably  
 recognise Cebes' name since he has been written of in the Socratic dialogues, conversing with  
 Socrates along with Simmias in the dialogue about the soul. The man is a kind friend to us all.

Now, I presume you remember what I said about the sign, indicating which of my letters  
 363 b are written seriously and which are not. Nevertheless, you should keep it in mind and give it your  
 utmost attention, for many people who ask me to write are not easy to turn away in an obvious  
 manner. A serious letter begins with "God", a less serious one with "gods".

The ambassadors asked me to write to you with good reason, for they sing your praises and  
 mine with great eagerness everywhere they go, especially Philargus, who had a problem with his  
 363 c hand at the time. And Philaides, on returning from the court of the Great King,<sup>28</sup> was talking about  
 you, and if it did not involve a lengthy letter I would have written out what he said. But you should  
 just ask Leptines.

If you are sending the breastplate or anything else I wrote to you about, please give it to  
 Terillus if you don't have someone whom you yourself prefer. He makes the journey regularly, he  
 is a friend of ours, and he is accomplished in philosophy and other subjects. He is related by mar-  
 riage to Teison, who held office as a city official when we were sailing away. Farewell, love wis-  
 363 d dom, and encourage the rest of the young accordingly. Send greetings from me to your fellow  
 ballplayers, and order the others, and Aristocritus too, to ensure that you are immediately made  
 aware of any communication or letter that comes to you from me, and tell them to remind you to  
 attend to what I have written. Don't neglect now the repayment of the money you owe to Leptines.  
 Repay him as soon as possible so that others, seeing this, may be more eager to be of service to us.

Iatrocles, whom I set free at the time, along with Myronidus, is now travelling with the  
 363 e items I am sending. Please give him some paid employment as he is well disposed towards you,  
 and use him for whatever you wish, and preserve this letter, either the letter itself or a reminder of  
 its contents, and be the same.

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<sup>28</sup> This is a reference to the King of the Persian Empire.

