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IV

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Thirteen letters have come down to us in the manuscripts of Plato. They exhibit a Plato who is very much the practical political adviser. Eight of them, including all the really substantial ones, deal with Plato's participation in Syracusan affairs in the period after the accession of the younger Dionysius in 367 B.C. For convenience, I will sometimes refer to these as the Syracusan letters. In the most substantial letter of all—*Epistle* VII—Plato presents an elaborate defence of his motives and aims throughout his dealings in Syracuse from 367 to 353 B.C. with Dionysius II, Dion, the brother-in-law of the elder Dionysius, and Dion's followers.

If the *Epistles* are authentic they are a valuable direct source of information about Plato's life and thought. In none of his other writings does Plato speak in his own person. Moreover the *Epistles*, if authentic, provide a unique contemporary account, at first hand, of some parts of Syracusan affairs between 367 and 353 B.C. No other contemporary, or near-contemporary, account is extant. It is expecially these two factors which give importance to the problem of the authenticity of the *Epistles*.

The authenticity of the *Epistles* is initially made problematic by the fact that we have no early external evidence of authenticity. The ideal testimony would come from an author reliable in judgment and close in time to the time when the *Epistles* purport to have been written. We are a very long way from that ideal. The earliest date we have for the *existence* of our collection of thirteen letters is the first century A.D. It is the collection catalogued at that time by Thrasyllus as part of the Platonic corpus [1]. Inclusion in

[1] Diog. Laert. III 61.

this catalogue is not, however, a sufficient condition of authenticity. Some of the works which it lists as Platonic are now almost universally condemned as spurious. Quite apart from this point, we can be sure from purely internal considerations that not all the thirteen letters recognised by Thrasyllus are authentic. The eight letters dealing with Syracusan affairs naturally invite comparison with one another at many points in their treatment of the same issues and situations. The comparison reveals several serious discrepancies. The most striking of the discrepancies is that, while *Epistle* I describes Plato as absolute master for some time in Syracuse, *Epistles* III and VII depict him as having no such power and never aspiring to have it. Again, the author of *Epistle* VII condemns Dion's proposed military operations against Dionysius; the author of *Epistle* IV wishes him the best of luck in them.

But this criterion of internal consistency, while it can show that not all the thirteen letters are by the same hand, cannot show which letters, if any, are Platonic, and which are not. Nor is there any satisfactory external evidence earlier than the time of Thrasyllus to help to solve this problem. The only earlier references to particular letters which recognisably belong to Thrasyllus's collection are Cicero's references to *Epistles* VII and IX [1]. Cicero assumes the Platonic authorship of these two letters. By itself his testimony can be given no weight. And before Cicero we have no references at all of this kind to support his testimony. In the late third century B.C. Aristophanes of Byzantium includes a collection of *Epistles* in his list of Plato's works [2]. But we have no specific information about them, not even how many letters were in his collection. So that we cannot unquestionably assume that the *Epistles* in Aristophanes' list

[1] *Tusc.* V 100; *De Fin.* II 92.

[2] Diog. Laert. III 62.

are the same as those recognised by Thrasyllus. Indeed there are some grounds for thinking that *Epistle* XII—a short letter addressed to Archytas—was written later than the time of Aristophanes[1]. And before Aristophanes there is no literary evidence at all to indicate which particular letters are likely to have been in Aristophanes' collection. What is conspicuously missing is reference to Platonic letters in Aristotle. There is not the remotest hint that he knew of any.

So far I have mentioned external evidence of only one kind. It has been explicit evidence that letters attributed to Plato were in existence before the time of Thrasyllus or explicit reference before that time to this or that particular letter as Platonic. But the fact that some of the *Epistles*, especially the Syracusan ones, purport to relate historically Plato's active participation in political affairs makes it possible to take into account external evidence of a less direct kind. An obvious example would be evidence that Plato did in fact participate in Syracusan affairs in the way that the *Epistles* say that he did and that the course of events in Syracuse from 367 B.C. onwards was exactly the course described by the *Epistles*. It is not necessarily the case that such evidence is simply evidence that the author of this or that letter got his facts right. For it is arguable that, if Plato did write the Syracusan letters, he was, in respect of some events, uniquely privileged to know what was going on; hence his description of those events would be the primary historical authority for their occurrence. So that if a historian whom we had good grounds for trusting in whatever else he related also related these events, we could reasonably infer that he was relying on Plato's account in the *Epistles*. And this would count as sound indirect evidence for the Platonic authorship of the particular letters involved.

[1] H. DIELS, *Doxographi Graeci*, 187 ff.

Again I am stating an ideal. But it is a sound Platonic procedure to keep one's eye on the ideal in assessing the status of actual instances. In the present instance I will concentrate on the Syracusan letters in assessing the indirect historical evidence. Only in the case of these letters do we possess any body of historical writing dealing with the period of events also dealt with in the *Epistles*. It is soon apparent that this evidence is very seriously deficient when matched against the ideal. To begin with, the historical evidence for the relevant period of Sicilian history is late. The work of the fourth and third century historians of Sicily is lost, and such fragments as we have contain nothing about Plato's part in Syracusan affairs. Diodorus and Nepos, writing in the first century B.C., thus become our earliest extant authorities, excepting the *Epistles*, for the relevant period of Sicilian history. Not much later there is Plutarch, writing a little time after Thrasyllus. As indirect evidence for the authenticity of the *Epistles* the accounts by these three historians of Plato's participation in Syracusan affairs are of little, if any, value. Only Plutarch pays any substantial attention to the part played by Plato. And only Plutarch refers to the *Epistles*. In his life of Dion he is clearly making use of *Epistle* VII. There are apparent references also to *Epistles* IV and XIII [1]. The attraction of the *Epistles* for Plutarch is understandable enough; especially attractive to him is the idea in *Epistle* VII of Dionysius becoming a philosopher-king under Plato's tuition. Plutarch adds some colourful detail to this idea, probably of his own invention [2].

Nepos, in his much briefer life of Dion, refers to Plato's influence with Dion and the younger Dionysius but gives no specification to this except for the statement that Plato

[1] Plut., *Dion* 8; 21; 52.

[2] Plut., *Dion* 13; 14.

tried to persuade Dionysius to give up the tyranny and restore to the Syracusans their freedom [1]. Unlike the *Epistles* and Plutarch, Nepos does not mention any *second* visit by Plato to the court of the younger Dionysius. And Diodorus makes no mention at all of Plato in his account of Sicilian affairs after the accession of the younger Dionysius. He mentions only a visit by Plato to Syracuse in the reign of the elder Dionysius.

Thus there are striking differences between our three historians in their accounts of the *extent* of Plato's participation in Syracusan affairs. Plutarch, like the *Epistles*, allots to Plato three visits to Syracuse, Nepos allots two to him, Diodorus allots only one. They agree only in alloting to Plato a visit to Syracuse in the reign of the elder Dionysius. And the only event concerning Plato during that visit which they all report is Dionysius's order for Plato to be sold as a slave [2]. Oddly enough, the *Epistles* do not mention this event, nor any of the other dealings between Plato and Dionysius I mentioned by Diodorus or Plutarch.

We can safely conclude, from this curious diversity in our late accounts of Plato's Sicilian career, that there was no consistent historical tradition about the events in that career. And it seems impossible to me to distinguish the sound from the unsound in this respect within that tradition, as a basis for arguments for or against the authenticity of the Syracusan letters. I offer, for illustration, one or two arguments of that kind. Here is the first. Diodorus's principal source for the relevant period is Ephorus. Diodorus's silence about Plato entails Ephorus's silence about Plato, which entails the non-availability to Ephorus of *Epistle* VII, which entails that *Epistle* VII was written after 330 B.C., which entails that it is a forgery. Plato died in 347. Here

[1] Nepos, *Dion* 3.

[2] Diod. XV 7; Nepos, *Dion* 2; Plut., *Dion* 5.

is another: (a) Plutarch's use of the Syracusan letters is a direct use; (b) neither Diodorus nor his source used any of the Syracusan letters; (c) no reliable evidence exists that any of the fourth or third century writers on Sicilian history used any of those letters. Granting all this, the following inferences may reasonably be made: (i) the Syracusan letters were unknown to the early historians of Sicily down to Timaeus; hence (ii) they were not in existence until after 260 B.C., the probable date of Timaeus's death; hence (iii) they are forgeries.

Here is another, for the other side: (i) Nepos reports that Plato had great influence with Dion and the younger Dionysius and that he tried to persuade Dionysius to give up the tyranny; (ii) on these points Nepos agrees with *Epistle* VII and with Plutarch; (iii) a common source for Nepos and Plutarch is Timaeus; hence (iv) Timaeus probably used *Epistle* VII; (v) Timaeus was a trustworthy historian; hence (vi) his acceptance of *Epistle* VII as a historical source is an indication of its authenticity.

I do not think much weight can be given to source-searching arguments like these, as arguments for or against Plato's authorship of the *Epistles*. A question mark can in each case be placed against the truth of one or other of the premisses or against the validity of one or other of the inferences. Each argument leaves us a long way short of satisfactory evidence for the authenticity or the non-authenticity of the *Epistles*. There is, however, just one argument within this field of indirect historical evidence which I would consider to have some real weight. It is an *argumentum ex silentio*. The silence is Aristotle's. Not only does Aristotle make no mention of Platonic letters. There is also lacking any reference to Plato's participation in Syracusan affairs when Aristotle is specifically dealing with those affairs for purposes of historical illustration. In the fifth book of the *Politics* he discusses at some length the causes of the over-

throw of tyrants. On three occasions he refers to Dion's attack on Dionysius [1]. He mentions Dion's expulsion of Dionysius and Dion's subsequent death. He mentions, as motives for Dion's revolution, family dissension and Dion's contempt for Dionysius and his drunken habits. If Aristotle had known the Syracusan letters, particularly *Epistle* VII, would not some mention of Plato have come in here? I think we can be sure that if Plato was the author of *Epistle* VII, Aristotle would have known the letter at the time when he was writing *Politics* V, i.e. between 336 and 322 B.C.

Aristotle does mention Plato's views in the final part of his discussion of tyranny [2]. He criticises his account of revolution in the *Republic*, one of his criticisms being that Plato does not say what is to follow tyranny. Again, if he had known *Epistle* VII, would he not have noted that Plato later envisaged, as a practical possibility, a peaceful revolution which would transform a tyranny into a constitutional government? Earlier in the *Politics* there is another indication that Aristotle had no conception of a Plato who engaged in schemes of practical political reform. At the end of Book II [3], after his review of various theories about the best state, including Plato's theories in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, he makes a distinction between those thinkers who put forward their views without having taken part at all in political activities and those who have taken part in political activities and have actually tried to put their views into practice as framers of laws or constitutions. He says that his previous review has dealt with the noteworthy features of virtually all the thinkers of the former class. He certainly includes Plato among those. Yet if he had known the

[1] 1312 a 4-6, 34-39; 1312 b 16-18.

[2] 1316 a 1 ff.

[3] 1273 b 27 ff.

Epistles and assumed them to be Platonic, could he have thought of Plato as one who took no part in any political activity whatever (οὐδ' ὡντινωνοῦν)? I think not.

Although I consider this *argumentum ex silentio* to have some weight, I do not think that any firm conclusion either in favour of, or against, the authenticity of the *Epistles* can be drawn from the kind of external evidence I have reviewed so far. All I would claim is that obvious deficiencies in this external evidence as evidence for the early existence or the authenticity of the *Epistles* make it more probably true that the *Epistles* are not by Plato than that they are. I would add that Aristotle's silence about the *Epistles* and Plato's Sicilian career inclines me to give greater significance than I otherwise would do, as evidence against the authenticity of the *Epistles*, to Diodorus's complete silence about Plato's Sicilian career after 367 B.C.

There remains one other body of evidence which can be used to test the authenticity of the *Epistles*. It is the evidence of Plato's dialogues, especially those written during the period from 367 B.C. until Plato's death in 347. This is the period within which all the letters, with the possible exception of two short and insignificant notes to Archytas, purport to have been written and within which, according to the *Epistles*, Plato's dealings with Dionysius II and Dion in Syracuse took place. It is also, almost certainly, the period within which both the *Politicus* and the *Laws* were composed. And I assume Plato expresses in those works his own serious political views. The same assumption can be made for the *Epistles*, if they are Plato's. Hence a comparison of *Epistles* with dialogues in respect of the political views they express has some importance as a means of testing the authenticity of the *Epistles*. For the *Epistles* are primarily concerned with the expression of political views and the advocacy of political programmes. The test is not simply a matter of establishing consistency or inconsistency in respect of specific

political doctrines. It is also a matter of establishing whether or not the *Epistles* bear the stamp of the mind of a philosopher of the calibre represented in the political dialogues.

A useful starting-point for the comparison is the ancient testimony about the significance of the *Epistles* as an expression of Plato's political views. This testimony gives us the view adopted in antiquity about the relation between the political thought of the *Epistles* and that of the dialogues. Both in the *Didascalicus* of Albinus, a survey in the second century A.D. of Platonic doctrine, and in the anonymous *Prolegomena* to Platonic philosophy in the sixth century, we find the following distinctions made [1]. In his political philosophy Plato is concerned with three forms of *politeia* : (i) the absolutely ideal communistic state represented by the *Republic* ; (ii) the state constructed on the basis of a presupposition (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως), i.e. on the assumption that certain conditions with regard to the site and the number and character of the citizens are already satisfied ; this is the state represented by the *Laws* ; (iii) the state established by reform (ἐξ ἐπανορθώσεως), i.e. an existing state made as good as it possibly can be by putting right what is wrong ; this is represented by the *Epistles*.

This classification is straightforward enough. The essentially Utopian schemes of the *Republic* and the *Laws* are firmly distinguished, both in form of construction and in purpose, from the essentially reformist and practical schemes proposed in the *Epistles*. The same kind of tripartite classification is found in Apuleius and in Proclus but without mention of the *Epistles* as the work describing the reformed state [2]. The classification is there made as a classification

[1] *Didascalicus* XXXIV ; *Prolegomena* XXVI. Text in Hermann's *Appendix Platonica*. Cf. Aristotle *Pol.* 1288 b 22 ff.

[2] Ap. *Dogm. Plat.* II, xxiv-xxvii (Thomas). Procl. *In Remp.* (Kroll) I 9, 17 ff ; II 8, 15 ff. ; *In Tim.* (Diehl) I 446, 1 ff.

of the political schemes of the dialogues. Proclus makes the point that, on Plato's grading, the reformed state is a third-grade state, a long way below the second-grade state of the *Laws*. He identifies it with the " third state " mentioned in the *Laws* as third after the ideal states of the *Republic* and the *Laws* [1]. I think he is wrong in this. I also think he is wrong in thinking that the reformist element in Plato's thought is the distinctive mark of one of three Platonic forms of state. My reasons for thinking so will be clear when I have considered the more general question of whether the political thought of the *Epistles* matches the reformist political thought of the dialogues. This is what I now propose to consider. It is a question immediately prompted by the political classification in the ancient testimony and its way of associating Plato's reformed state sometimes with the *Epistles*, sometimes with the dialogues.

I will begin with a brief review of the reformist thought of the dialogues and its relation to the Utopian thinking of the *Republic* and the *Laws*. The political thought of the *Republic* and the *Laws* is non-reformist in the obvious sense that it is not concerned with plans for the reform of an already established state. It is Utopian. Thus the state of the *Republic*, the ideally best state, is not limited at all in its idealism by consideration of the conditions of its realisation. In constructing the second-best state of the *Laws* Plato does allow consideration of such conditions to temper his idealism. He presupposes that certain external conditions are initially fulfilled [2]. And he obviously has an eye on the possibilities of those conditions being at some time satisfied. So that, though he properly emphasizes, in specifying the conditions, that it is theory he is concerned with and not practice [3],

[1] 739 a-e.

[2] 736 a 6 ff.

[3] 736 b 7. Cf. 745 e 7 ff.

he does not make the conditions impossibly hard to meet. But there is nothing reformist about this. The conditions are conditions of the successful foundation of a new state—conditions about the site and about the number and the purity of character of the citizens. It is *presupposed* that they are satisfied. And it is made clear that they are not conditions one could expect to satisfy by any reformist schemes within an already established state [1]. It is also made clear that there is no question of the use of dictatorial power as a possible means of satisfying the conditions. Thus one can reasonably include the presence of a wise legislator as one of the satisfied conditions. One cannot reasonably include the presence of a powerful dictator ready to back the legislator. It would be virtually impossible, Plato argues, ever to find such a combination of power and wisdom [2]. These points are important. They show that the *Laws*, even where it is more realistic and more pragmatic than the *Republic*, remains firmly non-reformist. And it remains so because it rules out the use of the only weapon of political reform which Plato recognises in the dialogues—the use of dictatorial power.

Discussion of the possible use of such power to realise his political ideals is found not only in the *Laws* but also in the *Politicus* and the *Republic*. In the *Laws* it is said that the legislator, if given a perfectly free hand in presupposing conditions for the realisation of his ideals, would ask for the absolute power of a young dictator, equipped with all the qualities of mind and temperament demanded of those selected for training as rulers in the *Republic* [3]. Given this, the legislator would have the best possible chance of realising the best state, surpassing the second-best state in which the legislator lacks political power. Indeed, Plato envisages

[1] 736 c-d.

[2] 711 d 1-e 4. Cf. 875 c 3-d 5.

[3] 709 e 6 ff.

the possibility of realising this ideal quickly and with quite ruthless efficiency. The dictator himself would set an example of moral behaviour to the rest. And wherever his example was not followed he would use his power to carry out drastic purging to the point, if thought necessary, of exile or death [1].

The same licence for drastic purging is granted to the true statesman in the *Politicus* [2]. He may, Plato says, purge the state to promote the good, putting some citizens to death and banishing others. The end justifies the means. Provided that power is backed by knowledge the statesman is justified in using force, whether to reform the character of the citizens, to banish them, or to execute them. And in the *Republic* [3] Plato argues that, presupposing that one or more philosophers have become rulers in the state, then the best and quickest means of realising the best state is to send out of the state all inhabitants over the age of ten and then take the children over to educate them to the required pattern. He recommends this in language which recalls the reformists passages in the *Politicus* and the *Laws*.

This kind of radical and ruthless reformism is the one genuine reformist element in the dialogues. It is, like all Plato's political thinking, itself idealistic. In the first place it is geared exclusively to the ideally best state. When Plato thinks of the second-best state, he rules out reformism. In the second place, it presupposes a combination of wisdom and supreme power which, as the *Republic*, *Politicus*, and *Laws* all agree, is not wholly an impossible occurrence but is certainly a most rare and always unlikely one.

Having reviewed the reformist thought of the dialogues in its relation to Plato's Utopian schemes we can now look

[1] 711 b 8-c 4; 735 d 1-e 3.

[2] 293 d.

[3] 540 e-541 a.

at the political ideas and proposals of the *Epistles* and see how they compare with it.

It is principally in two of the *Epistles*—III and VII—that Plato's dealings in Syracuse with Dionysius the younger and Dion are described. These two *Epistles* have an apologetic aim. They aim to dissociate Plato from Dionysius's political activities; *Epistle* VII aims also to dissociate him from Dion's attack on Dionysius. Responsibility for the unhappy political history of Syracuse from the accession of Dionysius to the death of Dion in 354 is placed firmly on the shoulders of Dionysius or Dion. At the same time it is emphasized how happy everything would have been if Plato's advice had been followed. Let us now look at the advice which was given. *Epistle* VII says that when Plato first visited Sicily, i.e. in 387, he was already convinced that a necessary condition for the cure of political maladies was that political supremacy should be in the hands of philosophers [1]. This is the philosopher-king ideal of the *Republic*. At Dion's suggestion Plato agrees to visit Syracuse again in 367 to try to realise this ideal in the person of Dionysius the younger [2]. Not surprisingly he finds Dionysius unwilling. Indeed he is contemptuous of such an educational plan [3]. *Epistle* III does, however, speak, obviously with Plato's *Laws* in mind, of Plato and Dionysius working on preambles to laws [4].

Finally, Plato reluctantly agrees to revisit Syracuse in 361 and try again. He has a single philosophical discussion with Dionysius. And that is all. On this unpromising basis both Plato and Dion are represented as placing the most ambitious political reforms. At one point *Epistle* VII [5]

[1] 326 a-b.

[2] 328 a.

[3] *Ep.* III 319 b-c; *Ep.* VII 330 a-b.

[4] 316 a.

[5] 337 d.

describes, in the manner of the *Laws*, the rule of law as second-best to what it was hoped to realise with Dionysius. The brief description of this latter ideal as an ideal of " goods common to all "—πᾶσι κοινὰ ἀγαθά—is clearly meant to be a reference to the communistic ideal of the *Republic*. And the remark that the conversion of a single person, i.e. Dionysius, to Plato's ideals would have effected all manner of good repeats the phrase in the *Laws* describing the untold good realisable in a state when wisdom and power are conjoined in its ruler [1]. In respect of this high ideal we might well criticise the Plato of the *Epistles* as wildly unrealistic in thinking of Dionysius as a possible engineer of his reformist plans. Yet at least, if we overlook Dionysius's apparent lack of the minimum qualifications for the benevolent dictator, the plans are so far consistent in principle with the reformist thought of the dialogues.

But it is difficult to find any consistency beyond this. In the first place, both Dion and Plato are represented in *Epistle* VII as aiming, through the conversion of Dionysius, at a completely non-violent revolution. Dion, soon banished, abandons this aim in favour of violence. But Plato sticks rigorously to the principle of non-violence. He condemns Dion's plan to attack Dionysius as morally bad [2]. He subsequently lays down as a principle to Dion's followers that force should never be used in effecting a political revolution [3]. He specifies the killing and banishment of citizens as the forms of violence specifically to be avoided. They are the forms which in the *Politicus* and the *Laws* Plato describes as the legitimate tools of the knowledgable ruler in reforming a state. Moreover the Plato of the *Epistles* emphatically rejects the reformist principle of the dialogues that the end

[1] 328 c; *Lg.* 711 d.

[2] *Ep.* VII 350 d.

[3] *Ep.* VII 331 d. Cf. 327 d, 336 e, 351 c.

justifies the means. If, he says, the best state is not realisable without the killing or banishment of its citizens, then the political adviser should keep quiet and trust merely to prayers [1]. Thus on this question of the legitimacy of the use of force the thought of the *Epistles* is totally inconsistent with the reformist thought of the dialogues.

There are other surprising features of Plato's proposals in the *Epistles* for a peaceful revolution. In *Epistle* VII Dion's followers are advised to adopt the rule of law instead of personal despotism as the basis of political prosperity [2]. Although the advice is characterised as second-best to what was attempted with Dionysius, it is emphasized that the prescription of the rule of law is the same prescription as given previously both to Dionysius and to Dion [3]. This is a curious anomaly. The many indications of *Epistle* VII that Plato envisaged, initially through the conversion of Dionysius, the realisation of the " best state " in Syracuse naturally prompt us to expect that the plans for realising it will be in general conformity with the thought of the dialogues. We have seen that in respect of the principle of the use of force there is no conformity. We can now see that in one further important respect there is no conformity. In both the *Politicus* and the *Laws* Plato states that, given the very unlikely combination of wisdom and power in a state, then the ruler is above the law [4]. The *Epistles* reject this. Not only does *Epistle* VII represent Plato as advising Dionysius to accept the rule of law [5]. In *Epistles* III and VIII a plan to substitute a constitutional

[1] 331 d.

[2] 334 c-d; 337 c-d.

[3] 334 d.

[4] *Plt.* 293 a-e; *Lg.* 875 c 4 ff.

[5] 334 c-d.

monarchy for a tyranny is represented as the plan proposed to Dionysius by both Plato and Dion [1].

This is a far cry from the reformist idealism of the dialogues. The ideal of the rule of law is the ideal of Plato's non-reformist *Laws*. Reliance on the *Laws* is particularly evident in *Epistle* VIII, the only letter to give detailed specifications of a constitutional kind. This letter, like *Epistle* VII, is written to Dion's followers soon after Dion's death. It proposes a constitution with a triple kingship, with Dionysius as one of the kings [2]. This is recommended as a means of reconciling the factional strifes for the control of Syracuse following Dion's death. And it would appear that the author of *Epistle* VIII thinks of his constitutional ideal as being broadly the same as that previously envisaged for a constitution with Dionysius as monarch. For the advice given is said to be essentially the same as that previously given to Dionysius himself [3]. In specifying his proposals [4] it is immediately obvious that the writer of *Epistle* VIII is drawing largely not only on the principles but also on the language of Plato's *Laws*. He recommends the same scale of values for the state to maintain, the same middle course of moderation between the excesses of liberty and slavery, the same prescription of good law as the source of happiness, the same plans for the appointment of law-wardens and the establishment of courts of law. And, following the penal code of the *Laws*, he prescribes death, imprisonment, and exile as forms of punishment for citizens.

All this is presented in a rhetorical style which gives to the letter the tone of a rhetorical exercise. And its author does have the grace to admit that his proposals are a mere

[1] *Ep.* III 315 d; *Ep.* VIII 354 a-c.

[2] 355 e-356 b.

[3] 354 a.

[4] 355 a-357 c.

pious wish [1]. Certainly they are just as ludicrously impractical as the philosopher-king ideal found in *Epistle* VII. The Utopian ideal of the *Laws* presupposes conditions which are in no case remotely matched by the conditions obtaining in Syracuse. Only the composer of a rhetorical exercise would be prompted to imagine three such kings as are proposed in the letter amicably heading a Syracuse dedicated to the rigid moral and religious ideals of the *Laws*.

Once it is recognised that *Epistle* VIII is a forgery there is no longer any temptation to try to read its constitutional ideas back into *Epistle* VII. The writer of VIII certainly looks back to VII. And he uses Plato's *Laws* for such specification as he thinks fit of the "rule of law" ideal which he finds put forward in *Epistle* VII. But this is simply a licence which he can very plausibly take for his rhetorical purposes. Let me now return to *Epistle* VII. As I have argued, it seems impossible to find any real consistency in its political ideals. In its plans for Dionysius it appears to be recommending a non-violent revolution with the twin ideals of philosopher-king and the rule of law, a mixture grossly inconsistent with the reformist ideas of the dialogues. I suppose "constitutional monarchy" is about the best compromise one could reach in fixing a single label on this oddly mixed ideal. And I need hardly add that no such ideal has any place in the reformist thought of the dialogues. It is true that in the *Politicus* Plato affirms that among states which lack the guidance of a truly wise statesman those which follow the rule of law are preferable to those which do not, and, moreover, that of the three forms of state in the former class, monarchy is preferable to aristocracy or democracy [2]. But Plato has no interest at all, either in the *Politicus* or elsewhere, in making such a

[1] 352 e.

[2] 291 d-292 a; 301 a-303 b.

law-abiding monarchy the object of any reformist ideal. Indeed, when he goes on to consider how the law-abiding states he has mentioned come into being, he gives a deeply ironic sketch of how the development of such states makes a mockery of the art of statesmanship [1].

What we have, then, in *Epistle* VII is an apparently mixed ideal (for convenience of labelling, I have called it constitutional monarchy) which cannot be matched anywhere in the reformist thought of the dialogues and which in most fundamental respects is inconsistent with that thought. The author of *Epistle* VII adds only one specification of a constitutional kind. It is, in my view, the oddest element in what is already a curious mixture. In two places in the letter we find the author advancing the principle of ἰσονομία as a constitutional ideal [2]. The principle is first mentioned in the description of Plato's reaction to the intemperance and instability of the Sicilian character when he first visited Sicily in 387. Plato is represented as arguing that such instability entails constitutional instability, constant changes between tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy. The rulers in such states, he says, cannot bear to hear a δίκαιος καὶ ἰσόνομος πολιτεία mentioned. Much later, in 353, after Dion's death, when counselling the followers of Dion, Plato is represented as still upholding this principle of ἰσονομία. He advocates a policy of πάσης Σικελίας κατοικισμός τε καὶ ἰσονομία. Here the principle is associated with the proposal to resettle the Greek cities throughout Sicily, a proposal which *Epistle* III represents as advanced to Dionysius by Plato when he first visited him in 367. Thus the principle is advocated as one to be applied not only in Syracuse itself but in all the Greek cities in Sicily.

[1] 297 d ff.

[2] 326 d; 336 d.

These are, in every respect, very odd proposals and ideas to attribute to Plato. And it is to be noted that nowhere except in the *Epistles* do we find them attributed to Plato. Even Plutarch, who was attracted by the *Epistles* and followed them in some part in his presentation of Plato's political ideals for Syracuse, is silent about *these* proposals and ideas. What is odd in attributing to Plato an ideal of ἰσονομία is that, as a term which means equality of political rights, it is naturally and properly associated with democracy [1]. As Aristotle says, it is democratically governed states which are considered to pursue ἰσότης most of all things; and as he also says, the kind of ἰσότης which ὁ δῆμος pursues is the kind which gives them membership of the deliberative body and the power to make decisions on everything [2]. In his dialogues Plato is highly contemptuous of this kind of indiscriminate equality and of the concept of ἰσονομία which he associates with it. In the *Republic* [3] he describes the democratic man as ἰσονομικός in character, in the sense that his each and every desire is accorded an equal right to be indulged. He describes with similar scorn, as a mark of liberty carried to excess under democracy, the ἰσονομία which characterises the relations between the sexes. This equality prized by the democrat is, he says, the kind of equality distributed to equals and unequals alike.

In the *Laws* too he is similarly critical of this kind of equality. He contrasts it [4], as numerical equality, with the proportional equality, or, as he alternatively calls it, proportional inequality, which he advocates in the *Laws* as the right principle to use in determining what is just. This principle recognises that men are unequal in merit and that

[1] Hdt. III 80; Isoc. XII, 178. Cf. Aeschin. I 4-5.

[2] *Pol.* 1284 a 19-20; 1298 a 10-11.

[3] 561 e. See also 558 c; 563 b.

[4] 757 a-758 a.

the distribution of honour and office must be proportionately unequal. It is a principle of equality only in the special sense that each man gets the same as any other man, i.e. what is proportionate to his merit. Plato understandably avoids any use of the term ἰσονομία in reference to this special kind of equality.

Thus Plato's attitude to the principle of ἰσονομία in the political thought of the dialogues and his uses of the term there make the advocacy of ἰσονομία in *Epistle* VII a very un-Platonic piece of advocacy. Nor is this the only suspicious feature of the use of political terminology in the letter. In general there is a lack of precision and of definition in the use of moral and political terms which, even when we have granted the comparative informality belonging to the style of a letter, continually suggests the orator rather than the philosopher. What, precisely, are the " best laws " or the " fitting and best laws " which Dion would like the Syracusans to have? [1] What is the " justice " which, in a highly rhetorical passage, Dionysius is blamed for not practising and which Dion, it is said, *would* have practised if he had not been murdered? [2] Almost at the end of the letter Dion's true political aims are represented, idealistically, as (I quote) πολιτεία καὶ νόμων κατασκευὴ τῶν δικαιοτάτων τε καὶ ἀρίστων [3].

The use of πολιτεία here is suspiciously like the unqualified use of πολιτεία by the fourth-century orators to designate a free state, as opposed to monarchy or tyranny or oligarchy [4]. Sometimes they use it virtually as an equivalent of democracy [5]. And, if I am right in thinking that *Epistle* VII uses

[1] 324 b; 336 a.

[2] 335 c-d.

[3] 351 c.

[4] Dem. I 5; VI 21; VIII 43; XV 20. Isoc. IV 125; *Ep.* VI 11.

[5] E.g. Dem. VI 21; Isoc. IV 125.

the term in this unqualified way, we have further evidence, in the political terminology of the letter, of its non-Platonic authorship. Plato never uses *politeia* in that way in the dialogues.

In this brief review of the political ideas and proposals which the *Epistles*, and primarily *Epistle* VII, attribute to Plato in his dealings with Dionysius and Dion, I have indicated some of the major inconsistencies in thought between *Epistles* and dialogues. I do not think it is possible to resolve these inconsistencies. Nor do I find at all convincing such attempts as have been made to resolve them. The method adopted has usually been a method of treating the period 367 to 353 as a period in which there were radical developments in Plato's political thinking, prompted principally by his experiences in Syracuse. And it is argued that the *Epistles* and the dialogues, as records of these developments, are consistent with one another in respect of each major stage of development. The year 361 is taken as a key point, as the year in which Plato abandoned his ideal of converting Dionysius into a philosopher-king. Here are some examples of the application of the method. The distinction between violent and non-violent political revolution in Plato's reformist thought does not mark a distinction between the thought of the dialogues and that of the *Epistles*. It marks a distinction between pre-361 thought and post-361 thought in both dialogues and *Epistles*. In respect of the dialogues this is taken to be a distinction between the thought of the *Politicus* and that of the *Laws*, and hence to be a reason for giving a pre-361 dating to the *Politicus* and a post-361 dating to the *Laws*. Or, if it is felt that this cannot be reconciled with certain passages in the *Laws* which grant the legitimacy of violent revolution as a means of realising the best state, it is argued that the books of the *Laws* up to and including those passages should be dated before 361, the remaining books after 361. Again, the distinction bet-

ween the ideal of the ruler who is above the law and the ideal of the rule of law is not, it is argued, a distinction between the reformist ideals of the dialogues and those of the *Epistles*. It is a distinction between Plato's ideals up to 361 and his ideals after 361. The *Republic* and the *Politicus* represent the pre-361 ideals, the *Laws* represents the stage when those ideals are abandoned and the post-361 ideals take their place. And so on.

These are examples of arguments by scholars understandably reluctant to give up *Epistles* VII and VIII as sources of Platonic biography and thought. But the arguments simply will not do as interpretations of the thought of either *Epistles* or dialogues. Plato's reformist thought in the dialogues is, as I have indicated earlier, entirely consistent from beginning to end. And what we have in *Epistle* VII, the only letter which purports to review Plato's political ideals in Syracuse from 367 to 353, is, as I have also tried to show, an ill-assorted collection of political ideas which are avowed to constitute a constant ideal from beginning to end and yet which, in almost all important respects, are irreconcilable with the reformist ideals of the dialogues. This fundamental irreconcilability is for me the most important of the reasons for concluding that *Epistle* VII is not by Plato.

If we now look briefly at the kind of picture of Plato as a political thinker which the author of *Epistle* VII is trying to paint, we see that he wishes to present Plato as a practical political adviser, not a man of words and theory only [1], an adviser who is liberal in his political views and yet recognisably the Plato known from his major political writings. Understandably enough he dissociates Plato's advice and ideals completely from what Dionysius and Dion actually carried out in their political careers. There is nothing in

[1] 328 c.

those careers to enhance the reputation of a thinker thought to be in any way responsible for them. So that, while our author is committed to presenting Plato's policies as completely ineffectual, he is left with considerable freedom in what he can plausibly attribute to Plato as a political adviser. For the advice can be presented as the advice which Dionysius and Dion ought to have followed. And the political ideals can be presented as ideals which Dionysius and Dion would have achieved if only they had followed the advice. The one restriction which the writer has to observe is the need to maintain a plausible compatibility with the political thought of the dialogues.

The result is a very unsatisfactory compromise. A surface conformity is preserved in respect of each of several political ideals and principles found in the political dialogues. But the attempt to fuse them into a composite ideal ruins the author's plan to maintain compatibility with the dialogues. His decision to introduce into the letter certain liberal principles and policies not found in the dialogues is part of the attempt to liberalise Plato's political thinking. It is also prompted by the need to give some practical and substantial content to Plato's programme. His choice of liberal principles and policies is pretty well what we would expect. Plutarch notes that the ideals which the rhetoricians of the fourth century were continually advancing to the Greeks in their panegyrical speeches were the ideals which Timoleon alone managed to realise [1]. They were the ideals of restoring liberty in Sicily and asserting the cause of Hellenism against the barbarians. These ideals are incorporated in Plato's programme by the author of *Epistle* VII. And for the more detailed presentation of it as a policy he probably had Timoleon's realisation of the policy in mind. As I noted, Plutarch's mention of it as a rhetorical theme

[1] *Tim.* 37. See Isoc. IV 115-32; 169. Lys. XXXIII (*Olympiacus*).

is made when he is praising Timoleon as the only man to achieve the ideal. And the numerous similarities in detail between what *Epistle* VII advises in respect of this policy and what Timoleon actually achieved are enough to make very plausible indeed the arguments that *Epistle* VII was written with Timoleon's achievements in mind, and hence written after 336 [1].

One final point. I am inclined to think that the letter is more than a rhetorical exercise. Its author is a rhetorician rather than a philosopher in his thought and attitudes. Yet there is an apparent seriousness of purpose in the attempt to present Plato as a liberal-minded political adviser. It suggests a background of criticism of Plato as harshly authoritarian in political theory and sympathetic to such authoritarian rulers as Dionysius. The desire to give some currency to a conception of a more liberal-minded Plato is a likely enough motive for the writing of the letter. The other Syracusan letters are much more obviously rhetorical exercises. The initial impetus for the writing of them no doubt came from acquaintance with *Epistle* VII. They are written by various hands, as is sufficiently shown by the discrepancies between them. There remain the short occasional letters to statesmen unconnected with Sicilian politics. The advice which they give is of the most general kind—that different political policies are appropriate to different forms of government, that a combination of theory with practical experience is the best basis for successful government, that men have a duty to take on public offices, and so on. Here and there we find echoes of Platonic theory or of phrases in the dialogues. We find, too, occasional curiosities of sentiment and expression which seem quite un-Platonic. But this does not give us much to go on.

[1] See especially Diod. XVI 70; 82-3; 90; Nepos *Tim.* 3, 5; Plut. *Tim.* 22-24; 35-7, 39.

And certainly the shortness of these letters and the generality and largely commonplace nature of their advice make it difficult to base any judgment of authenticity on their content. For me they make most sense as rhetorical extensions of the theme of Plato as the practical political adviser, the theme given currency by the more substantial Syracusan letters. Most probably they are products of the rhetorical schools.

In making out a case against the Platonic authorship of the *Epistles* I began by noting the inadequacies of the external evidence for their authenticity. The inadequacies are in certain respects serious enough, I suggested, to raise genuine doubt about the authenticity of the *Epistles*. But I have devoted the greater part of my attention to an examination of the compatibility between *Epistles* and dialogues in their political thinking. This seems to me to be a more positive and fruitful method in examining the problem of authenticity. I have tried to show that the political thought of the *Epistles*, and especially of *Epistle* VII, is irreconcilable with the thought of the dialogues and that this is a good reason for concluding that it is not Platonic. This conclusion does not have the serious consequences for our knowledge of Sicilian history from 367 to 353 B.C. which some scholars have imagined. The *Epistles* themselves assume that Plato's influence in the affairs of Sicily in that period was negligible. So that to remove from the historical tradition the evidence of the *Epistles* is to remove only a tale of ineffectual political advice. The consequences of the conclusion for the assessment of Plato's political theory are more substantial. If the conclusion is right, we need no longer try to accommodate the political thought of the dialogues to that of the *Epistles*. Those who have accepted the *Epistles* as Platonic have naturally assumed that such a method of interpretation is legitimate. But its application has resulted in a great deal of distortion of Plato's theory. The ancient tradition I mentioned earlier provides a simple illustration of this. It is

the tradition which assumes that the *Epistles* are by Plato and which on this assumption ascribes to Plato a tripartite classification of forms of *politeia*. It seems clear to me that Proclus was misled by this tradition into reading the classification into the political dialogues. It is not to be found there. It can be read into the dialogues only at the cost of distorting Plato's theory. In this respect, and in the many other respects in which the *Epistles* have been used to interpret and to date the political dialogues, it is wiser to let the dialogues stand on their own feet. The reasons for suspecting the authenticity of the *Epistles* are quite strong enough to justify us in leaving them out of account in interpreting Plato's philosophy [1].

[1] The scholars to whom I owe most in forming my views about the *Epistles* are Edelstein, Hackforth, Meyer, Morrow, Novotny, Post, Souilhé, and Vlastos. I have not weighted my notes with detailed references to their work. But my indebtedness to them will be clear, I trust, at many points in my argument.

DISCUSSION

M. von Fritz: Da Herr Gulley leider erkrankt ist und nicht hier sein kann, fällt mir die Aufgabe zu, seine Thesen zu verteidigen. Das ist etwas schwierig für mich, da ich nicht mit seinen Resultaten übereinstimme. Ich werde daher seine Argumente so gut wie möglich formulieren und dann die Frage an Sie alle richten, was Sie dafür oder dagegen zu sagen haben.

Das erste Argument ist, dass es vor Plutarch in der antiken Literatur keine Erwähnung von *Ep.* VII oder seines Inhalts gibt.

M. Aalders: It should be noted that Plutarch has information about Plato in Sicily which has not been derived from the Platonic *Epistles*. Without more proof it cannot be assumed that these details have been invented by him, as Prof. Gulley supposes. Though Plutarch is by no means a very critical historian, it is not his habit to invent additional evidence.

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M. von Fritz: Das zweite Argument ist, dass Diodor die Aufenthalte Platons in Sizilien unter Dionys II nicht erwähnt habe, also auch sein Gewährsmann Ephoros nicht. Es ist wohl darauf hinzuweisen, dass mit diesem Argument nicht nur die Echtheit von *Ep.* VII, sondern auch die Geschichtlichkeit des 2. und 3. Aufenthaltes Platons in Sizilien bestritten wird.

M. Aalders: Prof. Gulley has mentioned this way of reasoning only as possible, without saying that he endorses it personally.

M. von Fritz: Aber es ist wichtig festzustellen, ob es sich für Herrn Gulley nur um die Echtheit von *Ep.* VII oder auch um die Geschichtlichkeit der Aufenthalte Platons in Sizilien handelt.

M. Aalders: It should be remarked that Diodorus' account of the beginnings of Dionysius II is rather poor and one may even doubt whether for that period he has made an extensive use of Timaeus.

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M. von Fritz: Das dritte Argument ist, dass Aristoteles, wo er von Dions Empörung gegen Dionys spricht, als Grund nur Familienstreitigkeiten und ähnliches angibt, aber mit keinem Wort Platon erwähnt. Man kann das Argument vielleicht dadurch zu verstärken versuchen, dass man darauf hinweist, dass Aristoteles, wenn er schon aus irgend einem Grunde Platon nicht erwähnen wollte, doch mehr Einzelheiten über Entstehung und Entwicklung des Konfliktes zwischen Dion und Dionys II hätte anführen können (oder müssen?), wenn er *Ep.* VII gekannt hätte, den er doch, wenn er echt wäre, zur Zeit der Abfassung von *Politics* V hätte kennen müssen.

M. Aalders: It seems that Aristotle did not have such a favorable opinion about Dion as Plato had. In his *Politics* he mentions as Dion's motives for attacking Dionysius II ambition, scorn, and strife within the ruling family. After having mentioned the fall of the Deinomenids following the revolt of other members of the family against Thrasybulus, he mentions (V 1312 b, 16 ff.) Dion's attack on Dionysius II. It even seems arguable that he considered Dion as a tyrant; in this respect I may point also to V, 1306 a, 1 ff., where it is said that the elder Hipparinus established the tyranny of Dionysius I; this offers an image of this Hipparinus which diverges from that of Plato. Moreover, in *Rhet.* I 1373 a 20, Aristotle sees in the embitterment of Callippus against Dion more or less an exculpation for his murder.

So we may infer that Aristotle probably considered Dion more as an ambitious politician, perhaps even a would-be tyrant,

than as a high-minded political reformer, and possibly had also his aftertoughts about Plato's involvement in Syracusan affairs : he may have considered this a personal affair of Plato, who because of his friendship with Dion became entangled in a fierce family strife and in dynastic intrigues ; therefore, he may have considered this whole affair irrelevant for political theory.

M. von Fritz : Man kann die Argumente von Herrn Aalders vielleicht dahin zusammenfassen, dass Aristoteles, wenn er *Ep.* VII überhaupt erwähnt hätte, sich sehr ausführlich damit hätte auseinandersetzen müssen.

M. Speyer : Aristoteles hat wohl aus Rücksicht auf Platon an dieser Stelle geschwiegen.

M. Aalders : I don't think that Aristotle is very careful not to criticize his master. But in the context of his *Politics* he was not interested in what he considered probably only as a private venture of Plato, which was irrelevant for his political analyses.

M. Hengel : Für den Aussenstehenden war der Streit in Syrakus eine Intrige innerhalb einer Tyrannenfamilie, die mit Verbannung und Mord endete. Aristoteles schweigt über Platons Rolle in dieser Sache und dessen Apologie, weil er Platons Meinung bei dieser unglücklichen Affäre nicht teilte und ihn nicht blossstellen wollte.

M. Smith : Ep. VII is definitely a letter of political and philosophical theory. Therefore to suppose that Aristotle considered Plato's relations with Dionysius and Dion a matter merely of personal intrigue, is to suppose that he ignored *Ep.* VII.

M. Thesleff : On the other hand one could argue that a reader of *Ep.* VII might well have become convinced (if he did not know it before) that Plato's advice was not followed, and that

Plato was not really responsible for what happened in Sicily. Hence Aristotle, if he knew the letter, rather naturally could ignore it in this connection.

M. Smith: Another possibility is that Aristotle *may* have distinguished between Plato's published and unpublished works, and have passed over the letter as not published and therefore not part of Plato's publicly acknowledged philosophy. But the letter seems designed for publication.

M. Speyer: *Ep.* VII scheint aber eine Apologie zu sein.

M. Thesleff: In that particular Aristotelian context there was surely no reason for mentioning such an apology.

M. Smith: But *Ep.* VII does contain specific political proposals.

M. Aalders: *Ep.* VII certainly contains some political ideas, but they may not have been very important in Aristotle's eyes: the letter offered nothing new for an author who had treated extensively the Platonic *Laws* and the Spartan constitution. Even the somewhat more elaborate treatment of the administration of justice in the Epistle is little more than a repetition of the regulations of the *Laws*.

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M. von Fritz: Das vierte Argument Herrn Gulleys ist, dass Aristoteles, wo er zwischen den Verfassungstheoretikern unterscheidet, die nur Theorien aufgestellt haben, und denen, die auch eine tätige Rolle in der Politik gespielt haben, Platon ganz zur ersten Gruppe rechnet. Wenn er *Ep.* VII gekannt hätte, hätte er ihn zu den nicht nur theoretisch, sondern auch praktisch sich Betätigenden rechnen müssen. Auch dieses Argument richtet

sich nicht nur gegen die Echtheit von *Ep.* VIII, sondern auch gegen die Geschichtlichkeit des 2. und 3. Aufenthaltes Platons in Sizilien.

M. Aalders: If Aristotle did not consider the Syracusan venture of Plato as a serious endeavour to put his political theory into practice, he had no reason to mention Plato among the πολιτευόμενοι.

M. Thesleff: Aristotle, of course, is thinking of active politicians. However, even in *Ep.* VII Plato does no pretend to be an active politician, but an " éminence grise " at the most.

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M. von Fritz: Das fünfte Argument richtet sich gegen den Gebrauch des Ausdrucks πολιτεία δίκαιος καὶ ἰσόνομος in *Ep.* VII: der Ausdruck ἰσονομία oder ἰσόνομος bezeichnet im Griechischen die Demokratie, die Platon keineswegs hochschätzte, während der Ausdruck in *Ep.* VII in durchaus positivem Sinne gebraucht wird.

M. Aalders: Ἰσονομία is more a device than a form of constitution. The notion originated probably in Ionia towards the end of the 6th century B.C. and denoted a fair, republican government in contradistinction to tyranny. It has often been applied to democracy (cp. Her. III 80 and VI 43), but it does not necessarily denote that form of constitution. Cp. e.g. Thuc. III 62, 3 where there is talk of an ὀλιγαρχία ἰσόνομος in Thebes. The term had no doubt a strong democratic flavour, but was not identical with democracy. So Plato may have used this word in the *Republic* in an unfavourable sense when condemning radical democracy, and later, acknowledging a certain form and a certain restricted amount of democracy, in a more favourable sense. Ἰσονομία is a rather hazy idea. But it has certainly a marked connotation of fair, lawful, republican government.

M. Syme: Yes, "republican" is the proper term for translating ἰσόνομος. It stands in contrast to tyranny—or to anarchy. Ἰσόνομος and ἰσονομία are always employed in a favorable sense.

M. Aalders: I agree.

M. Hengel: Der Kontext von 326 d zeigt, dass Plato nicht grundsätzlich die Demokratie verteidigen will. Er wendet sich vielmehr gegen die katastrophalen politischen Verhältnisse in Sizilien, die zu einem ständigen Wechsel von Tyrannis, Oligarchie und Demokratie führten und ihren Grund in der dekadenten Lebensführung der sizilianischen Griechen hatten (326 b ff.). Ἰσόνομος ist hier fast mit δίκαιος identisch.

M. von Fritz: Man kann πολιτεία δίκαιος καὶ ἰσόνομος wohl am besten mit « Rechtsstaat » übersetzen.

M. Thesleff: I should like to draw attention to the context of the passage (326 d) to which Professor Hengel referred. It is carried by strong emotion, and even pathos. The same seems to apply to the other passage (336 d) where the ἰσονομία concept occurs, and here there is a curious reference to Athens which, in my view, either comes from the hand of a clumsy forger, or is an example of the somewhat grim playfulness of Plato in his old age. Now, it can be easily seen in Plato, like in other good authors, that an intense emotional engagement often produces linguistic ambiguities and other forms of play as part of the dramatization of the style (see e.g. Dorothy Tarrant, *Cl. Q.* 40 (1946), 109 ff; 8 (1958), 158 ff.).

Perhaps ἰσόνομος is here pregnant, so as to imply both a reference to the current sense in political jargon, and a reference to "proportional justice", and perhaps a reference to the "unchangeability" of the laws of a good State.

M. Smith: The question seems to be the sense of ἴσος in ἰσονομία and on this I should like to know Prof. Aalders' opinion.

Does he think it means (1) geometric equality—to each according to his worth—as recommended in the *Laws*; (2) the equality of all men *qua* subject to the same laws; (3) the equality of the laws, in the sense that they are to remain the same?

M. Aalders: You should, in my opinion, not press the term ἰσονομία in *Ep.* VII too much. But it is certainly in accordance with the overall trend of Plato's political ideas that he did not mean arithmetic or egalitarian equality, but the geometric equality, the equality κατ' ἀξίαν he enlarges upon in the *Laws*, and mentioned by him also elsewhere.

M. Smith: Would you then exclude definitely the second and third interpretations?

M. Aalders: I insist that you should not seek for a too precise and concrete meaning of ἰσόνομος and ἰσονομία in *Ep.* VII. That it should have there an unusual meaning does not seem very probable to me; the readers of the letter would not have thought of such a special meaning and would not have etymologized.

M. Burkert: Gewiss lässt sich ἰσονομία im Rahmen des Platonischen Werks im Sinn von *Leg.* 757 b-c interpretieren; trotzdem muss das Publikum des Briefes zunächst darunter das verstehen, was es ist: das alte, zentrale Schlagwort der Demokratie. Als solches hat es Platon im *Staat* lächerlich gemacht. Dass *Ep.* VII dieses Schlagwort programmatisch herausstellt, ist unbehaglich, auch wenn oder gerade wenn dies mit Hintergedanken geschieht.

M. Aalders: Just because ἰσονομία is not a very sharply defined notion we should not think it impossible that Plato used this notion in an unfavourable sense in the *Republic*, and in a different sense in *Ep.* VII. The flavour of this term is determined

by the content and the mood of the passage. One should compare the different use of δημοκρατία in the *Republic* and in the *Laws*.

M. von Fritz: Die Frage von Herrn Smith lässt sich vielleicht in folgender Weise beantworten:

Aristoteles diskutiert in der *NE* ausführlich das Verhältnis von δίκαιον und ἴσον. Das sind keine neuen Erfindungen von Aristoteles, sondern Analysen und Verdeutlichungen dessen, was schon früher in den Weisen, die Worte zu gebrauchen, enthalten war.

Er unterscheidet zwei Arten des ἴσον im Verhältnis zum δίκαιον: 1) das geometrische ἴσον; d.h. jeder soll bekommen, was ihm zusteht. Das ist jedoch nicht für jeden arithmetisch das selbe, sondern nach Stellung und Verdienst verschiedenes.

2) das arithmetische ἴσον: es findet seine Anwendung, wo das ἴσον Nr. 1 verletzt worden ist: jeder soll in dem, was ihm zukommt, in völlig gleicher Weise geschützt werden, der Arme oder nicht sehr Verdienstvolle um nichts weniger als der Reiche oder Verdienstvolle. In diesem δίκαιον διορθωτικὸν herrscht unbedingt Gleichheit.

3) Aber für Platon kommt noch ein drittes hinzu. M. Smith fragte, ob das ἴσον in ἰσόνομος bei Platon auch die Bedeutung habe, dass die Gesetze immer die gleichen bleiben sollten. Da Platon im *Politicus* die unvermeidliche Starrheit der Gesetze und ihren Mangel an Anpassung an die Mannigfaltigkeit des menschlichen Lebens beklagt, kann er kaum für absolute Unabänderlichkeit der Gesetze gewesen sein. Aber er sagt, dass in Staaten oder bei einer Lebensweise, wie sie in den italischen reichen Städten üblich ist, unvermeidlich ein Verfassungsumsturz auf den andern folgen muss, da unter solchen Umständen eine πολιτεία δίκαιος und ἰσόνομος unmöglich ist. Die ἰσονομία impliziert daher für ihn offenbar auch eine gewisse Stabilität der Lebensordnung und Gesetze.

M. Aalders: In this respect one might point also to *Ep.* VII 337 c 5, where Plato recommends the establishment of laws that

are equal to victors and conquered alike and speaks about τὸ ἴσον καὶ κοινόν, equitable distribution of justice for all citizens.

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M. von Fritz: Das sechste und Hauptargument Herrn Gulleys betrifft die Unvereinbarkeit der politischen Ideen und Prinzipien, die den in *Ep.* VII gegebenen Ratschlägen zu Grunde liegen mit den in den Dialogen zu findenden.

In den Dialogen unterscheidet Platon zwischen Staaten, die schon bestehen und Staaten die, wie z.B. Kolonien, ganz neu geschaffen werden, so dass man sich auch die Bürger dazu auswählen kann. Für solche Staaten ist wenig Gewaltsamkeit nötig. Wo dagegen ein bestehender, nach der Zusammensetzung der Bürger notwendig unvollkommener Staat reformiert werden soll, ist, wie der *Politicus* vor allem zeigt, eine gewaltsame Reinigung der Bürgerschaft notwendig. Hier muss der weise Herrscher oder vollkommene Staatsmann nach eigenem Ermessen und ohne Bindung an Gesetze die schlechten Bürger töten lassen oder verbannen — in flagrantem Gegensatz zu *Ep.* VII, wo überall die Gewaltanwendung verurteilt wird.

M. Aalders: I have some fundamental objections to the paper of Professor Gulley. I doubt whether it is right to apply the tripartite division of political reform mentioned by Olympiodorus and other later Platonists, which probably goes back to Aristotle, to Plato's writings in the way Prof. Gulley does. Thus he connects the use of violent measures with reformism, whereas for Plato violent measures are only allowed in order to attain the ideal state and attention is focussed on the question how near this ideal in the existing circumstances may be approached. Therefore I have some qualms about Gulley's qualification of the states of the *Politeia* and the *Laws* as utopian (apart from the fact that the notion of utopia is in discussion nowadays) : they

are far more models or blueprints which should be approached as nearly as possible. The third state of *Laws* V 739 e must, in my opinion, be a more extensive adaptation to practical circumstances and possibilities, for the state of the *Laws* which is already an adaptation to the realities of the polis-life and of human nature, is termed expressly the *only* second-best state.

Further I wish to emphasize that Plato never can have envisaged the realization of the ideal of his *Politeia* in Sicily. Indeed he always speaks in *Ep.* VII of a rule in accordance with the best possible laws.

M. von Fritz: Die Argumentation Herrn Gulleys stützt sich auf ein Missverständnis von Platons späten Dialogen. Was im *Politicus* über Recht und Pflicht des vollkommenden Staatsmannes gesagt wird, bezieht sich nur auf den Herrscher, der über der menschlichen Species steht. Im Folgenden wird gerade auf das nachdrücklichste auf die schlimmen Folgen hingewiesen, die daraus entstehen, wenn ein blosser Mensch sich einbildet, solche übermenschliche Qualitäten zu haben, oder seine Mitbürger sie ihm zuschreiben. Platon hat gewiss nicht Dionys II oder selbst seinen Freund Dion für einen solchen übermenschlichen Staatsmann gehalten.

In den *Gesetzen* finden sich mehrere Stellen, an denen darauf hingewiesen wird, dass, wie Kant es ausgedrückt hat, « der Besitz der Gewalt den freien Gebrauch der Vernunft unvermeidlich verdirbt » oder, wie Lord Acton es ausdrückt : « power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely », am eindruckvollsten *Lg.* IV 713 c-d: γιγνώσκων ... ἆρα, [...] ὡς ἀνθρωπεία φύσις οὐδεμία ἱκανὴ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα διοικοῦσα αὐτοκράτωρ πάντα μὴ οὐχ ὕβρεώς τε καὶ ἀδικίας μεστοῦσθαι, ταῦτ' οὖν διανοούμενος ἐφίστη τότε βασιλέας τε καὶ ἄρχοντας ταῖς πόλεσιν ἡμῶν, οὐκ ἀνθρώπους ἀλλὰ γένους θειοτέρου τε καὶ ἀμείνονος, δαίμονας, ... was sich natürlich auf den Κρόνος-Mythos des *Politicus* bezieht und beweist, dass zwischen diesem Dialog und den *Gesetzen* nicht die Diskrepanz besteht, die, worauf von Herrn Gulley hinge-

wiesen wird, manche Interpretatoren annehmen, um ihre unrichtige Interpretation des *Politicus* zu rechtfertigen.

In den *Gesetzen* steht auch, dass die beste Chance für die Verwandlung einer schlechten Verfassung in eine gute dann bestehe, wenn ein Tyrann bewogen werden könne, seine Herrschaft freiwillig zu Gunsten einer guten Verfassung aufzugeben. Denn nur, wo die Bürger an absoluten Gehorsam gewohnt seien, sei es möglich, alle *ohne Gewalt* zur Annahme einer neuen Staats- und Gesellschaftsordnung zu bewegen.

Die Warnung vor Anwendung von Gewalt « durch blosse Menschen » entspricht also durchaus den späten Dialogen *Politicus* und *Gesetzen*.

M. Hengel : Die zweite von Herrn von Fritz erwähnte *Nomoi*-Stelle würde das Engagement Platons in Sizilien hervorragend erklären. Er glaubte in Sizilien den philosophisch interessierten Tyrannen zu finden, der in der Lage war — ohne Gewalt — einer Polis eine bessere Verfassung zu geben.

M. von Fritz : Um zu der Frage zurückzukehren, ob *Ep.* VII zur Rechtfertigung Platons durch einen Fälscher geschrieben ist, darf man vielleicht bemerken, dass eine solche Rechtfertigung nur nötig war, wenn Platon im Gegensatz zu der Annahme Herrn Gulleys unter Dionys II in Sizilien war. Andernfalls bedurfte er keiner Rechtfertigung oder wäre es eine viel bessere Rechtfertigkeit gewesen, zu sagen : er war ja an der ganzen Sache gar nicht beteiligt.

Das eigentümliche ist jedoch, dass Maddalena, nachdem er die Unechtheit von *Ep.* VII nachzuweisen versucht, am Schluss zu der Vermutung kommt, Platon sei wahrscheinlich gar nicht unter Dionys II in Sizilien gewesen, obwohl damit der Zweck des Briefes hinfällig wird.

M. Syme : Let us rest assured that Plato was in Sicily. Perhaps his presence there was of negligible importance. None the less,

it would provide an attractive starting point for speculation (or for fiction) about the political role of a philosopher. Similarly, for the interest in his private life, compare the " corroborative details " in *Ep.* XIII, such as the four young girls needing dowries or the statue of Apollo acquired for the wife of Dionysius.

M. von Fritz: In diesem Fall wäre es wohl auch klüger gewesen, eben darauf hinzuweisen, statt Platon den Vorwurf « qui s'excuse s'accuse » zuzuziehen.

Note by Professor N. Gulley

I am very grateful to Prof. von Fritz for reading my paper in my absence and for presenting my arguments for discussion. I am also grateful to have the opportunity to add this reply to what appear to me to be important points in the discussion:

1. *The discussion suggests various possible senses for* ἰσονομία *in* Ep. *VII which would rid it of its apparent oddness as a Platonic political ideal. But I know of no evidence that the Greeks developed these possible usages of the term in the fourth century. It is significant that, although the distinction between numerical and proportional equality is made in political analysis by both Plato and Aristotle, neither of them extends the use of* ἰσονομία *to embrace the sense of proportional equality. I cannot imagine that Plato would introduce the term in a letter in any unprecedented sense without clear and precise specification of the meaning he was giving to it.*

2. *I agree with Prof. von Fritz's remarks about the " superhuman " status of Plato's perfect statesman and about the dangers of entrusting political power to less than perfect leaders. But I do not find anything in* Laws *709 e-711 c, as Prof. von Fritz seems to do, which enables the political thought of the late dialogues to be reconciled with that of* Ep. *VII. There are many difficulties in the interpretation*

of Laws *709 e ff. But if 735 d-736 c and 739 a-e are taken into account in interpreting it, the following points seem clear enough to me:*

i) *the dictator has the same licence for the drastic use of force in realising the best state (735 d-e, cf. 711 c 4) as the perfect statesman of the* Politicus.

ii) *the kind of dictator needed is just as unlikely to be found as the perfect statesman of the* Politicus *(711 c 8 ff.)*

iii) *the "best state" which he would aid in effecting is the ideally best state (710 d 6 with 712 a 2 and 739 a 5-7).*

iv) *the second-best state lacks any backing of dictatorial power for its establishment (735 d, 739 a).*

v) *Plato simply presupposes, as the condition of the voluntary general acceptance of the new state and its laws, a "purity" in the character of its citizens sufficient at least to predispose them to accept the prescriptions of what is second-best (735 d-736 c).*

Thus the benevolent dictator of the Laws *is not envisaged as a man who is persuaded to co-operate in promoting, without the use of force, the general acceptance of a better political régime to replace his own dictatorship.*

I agree entirely with Prof. von Fritz that Plato could hardly have thought of either Dionysius II or Dion as potentially perfect statesmen. I would add that he could hardly have thought of either of them in the rôle of the benevolent dictator of the Laws. *And the fact that the Plato of* Ep. *VII entertains the idea of making a philosopher-king out of Dionysius is, for me, in itself a ground for suspecting that the letter is not Plato's. But my paper was particularly concerned to emphasize that the least one would expect of the Plato of the letter is that, having adopted such an ideal, he would stick to the reformist principles consistently associated with it in the dialogues.*

3. *I should have made explicit that it was no part of the purpose of my paper to deny that Plato visited Sicily and met the younger Dionysius there.*