

**Zeitschrift:** Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique  
**Herausgeber:** Fondation Hardt pour l'étude de l'Antiquité classique  
**Band:** 18 (1972)  
  
**Artikel:** Political thought and political programs in the Platonic Epistle  
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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-661086>

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Political Thought and Political Programs  
in the Platonic Epistles



## POLITICAL THOUGHT AND POLITICAL PROGRAMS IN THE PLATONIC EPISTLES

Nearly half a century ago E. Howald wrote about the authenticity of the Platonic *Epistles*<sup>1</sup>: «...ausser beim ersten Brief... liegt die Entscheidung letzten Endes jenseits des Beweisbaren, sie liegt im Stilgefühl, und nur die schmerzliche Erkenntnis, auf dieser subjektiven Basis zu keiner Verständigung gelangen zu können, treibt einen immer wieder zu dem aussichtslosen Versuch, doch noch beweiskräftiges äusseres Material zu finden. Aussichtslos ist der Versuch schon deshalb, weil ein Rückblick auf die Arbeit von Generationen von Philologen uns lehrt, dass dieses äussere Beweismaterial (sei es geschichtlicher, sprachlicher oder philosophiegeschichtlicher Natur) an und für sich nicht zum kleinsten allgemein anerkannten Resultat geführt hat.» Since 1923 many valuable contributions to the solution of the problem of the authenticity of the Platonic *Epistles* have appeared, by J. Harward, Fr. Egermann, G. Pasquali, Fr. Novotny, G. R. Morrow, R. S. Bluck, G. Müller, L. Edelstein, K. von Fritz, M. Isnardi Parente, and many others. Nevertheless we are as far as ever from a general consensus about the authenticity of the *Epistles*. Even the growing consensus about the authenticity of *Ep.* VI, VII and VIII, which Howald<sup>2</sup> thought he could discern, influenced no doubt by the impact of U. von Wilamowitz, now seems to have fallen away. It seems a presumptuous and not very promising venture to tackle the whole problem afresh within the limited scope of a contribution to the present *Entretien* — a venture the net result of which may be just another item added to the already bulky bibliography.

<sup>1</sup> E. HOWALD, *Die Briefe Platons*, Zürich 1923, 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

Therefore I shall concentrate upon a central aspect of the Platonic letters, the political thought and the political programs contained in them, in order to see whether this will yield some useful points of view in relation to the vexed problem of genuineness.

# I

First some preliminary remarks :

1. The Platonic *Epistles* are a disparate whole ; they are written to several addressees and with different purposes, while their dates or supposed dates extend over a period of more than ten years. It is not easy to imagine how this collection could have been composed as a "Briefroman", whether by Plato himself<sup>1</sup> or by someone else shortly after his death<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless they display a certain unity, for they are written to political protagonists or, in the case of *Ep.* X, to a close friend of one of these, and with exception of *Ep.* XIII, which was probably added later, they all have some relation with the concern of Plato, the philosopher, with practical politics. Even *Ep.* XIII, the later addition of which does not in itself exclude its authenticity, is addressed to a person who played a very important role in Plato's political activities. But the disparateness of addressees and of the occasions on which the letters are supposed to have been written, and the fact that some of them are of an entirely private character and others are open letters destined also for a larger audience, make it clear that we have to consider the authenticity of each letter on its own merits.

2. There is a general consensus concerning the value of the Platonic *Epistles* as historical sources, especially of

<sup>1</sup> So F. DORNSEIFF, Platons Buch 'Briefe', *Hermes* 69 (1934), 223 ff.

<sup>2</sup> So F. DORNSEIFF in 1939 in his *Echtheitsfragen antik-griechischer Literatur*, Berlin 1939, 31 ff. There he speaks on p. 36 of « ... die Tatsache eines Briefromans über Platon in Sizilien aus der Zeit bald nach seinem Tod ».

the *Seventh Letter*, by far the most important piece of the collection. Even if the author of this letter were not Plato himself, he cannot have been very distant in time from the events he describes and must have had very detailed and reliable information<sup>1</sup>; moreover, he will have aimed at the greatest possible historical accuracy, especially because a considerable part of his readers would be contemporaries or near-contemporaries of the events he wrote about. *Ep.* VII is by far the oldest source concerning Plato's Syracusan experiment that is extant, and we should accept its factual evidence as on the whole very reliable, whereas more caution is required with respect to the ideas and judgments contained in the letter. The same applies also to the *Ep.* V, VI and VIII.

3. It is a good method to accept the ancient tradition about the authorship of a literary document unless there is serious reason for doubt. The Platonic *Epistles* have been handed down as written by Plato and there seems to have been no doubt about this in antiquity, *Ep.* XII excepted. However, there *are* reasons for being cautious about accepting the other letters as genuine. Even irrespective of the fact that in the field of epistolography falsification in antiquity was rife, we have in the dialogues a number of doubtlessly Platonic documents which are not only of a totally different character, but which also seem to yield an image of Plato and his thought which is rather different from the image we get from the epistles.

4. The epistles display a number of remarkable similarities in style and in content with the later dialogues, especially with the *Laws*. This is, however, in itself no proof of authenticity and can also be attributed to a clever imitator. On the other hand there are, between letters and

<sup>1</sup> Cp. L. EDELSTEIN, *Plato's Seventh Letter*, Leiden 1966, 59 ff.

dialogues, considerable differences in style, in philosophical level, and in other respects. These differences, however, are in themselves no proof of spuriousness. The dialogues are a genre in itself with Plato always speaking from behind a mask or a veil. Even in the laborious seriousness of the *Laws*, where Plato is no longer speaking from behind the mask of Socrates, he veils himself thinly as the stranger from Athens. In the epistles, however, the author speaks directly, in his own name, and writes in another genre and with a different purpose, for another kind of reader mostly, and on another philosophical level. A. Diès<sup>1</sup> has drawn attention to the fact that the *Laws* suppose a lower philosophical ability of the readers than the *Politeia*—"le palier moyen"—and H. Görgemanns has fruitfully enlarged upon this idea<sup>2</sup>). The *Laws* are not merely an adaption to political reality and possibilities, nor are they mainly a product of resignation influenced by the outcome of the Syracusan experiment, but they are written for another circle of readers than the *Politeia*, for a public that is philosophically less sophisticated. This explains the absence of the theory of Ideas in the *Laws*, which nevertheless remains in the background<sup>3</sup>, as is also the case with the political ideal of the *Politeia*, about which it is expressly stated in the *Laws* that it has by no means been abandoned<sup>4</sup>. Now the intellectual and

<sup>1</sup> In the Introduction of the first part of the Budé edition of the *Laws* (Paris 1951), xc ff.

<sup>2</sup> H. GÖRGEMANN, *Beiträge zur Interpretation von Platons Nomoi*, München 1960, especially 59 ff. and 227.

<sup>3</sup> See G. J. D. AALDERS, *Moderne Critiek op de Nomoi van Plato*, *Tijdschr. v. Philosophie* 15 (1953), 614 ff. To the literatur there referred to may be added: T. A. SINCLAIR, *A History of Greek Political Thought*, London 1952, 205; H. GÖRGEMANN, *op. cit.*, 218 ff.; O. REVERDIN, *La religion de la cité platonicienne*, Paris 1945, 38; L. EDELSTEIN, *op. cit.*, 104 n. 77; C. J. DE VOGEL, *Het godsbegrip bij Plato*, *Acta Classica* 8 (1965), 48; H. C. CHERNISS, *The Riddle of the Early Academy*<sup>2</sup>, New York 1962, 60; N. GULLEY, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*, London 1962, 118 ff., 186 f. and *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> V 739 a sqq.; IX 875 c.

philosophical level which the *Epistles* seem to suppose is not very impressive, the philosophical excursus in *Ep.* VII excepted, which has a special function<sup>1</sup>. This is quite understandable in view of the purpose and the literary genre of the letters, in view also of the low level of philosophical interest and schooling of part of the audience they were written for. Therefore it would be as unjust to measure even *Ep.* VII with the yardstick of the *Politeia*, as it would be to judge the *Laws* by that supreme standard.

5. It is a well-known fact that a forger (or, broadly speaking, an author of pseudepigraphic literature) will try to make an impression as reliable as possible. So we may suppose that a forger of Platonic letters will not only try to imitate Plato's style and to insert words, turns of phrase and details from the dialogues, but also will do his utmost to avoid deviation from the dialogues in factual details, far more than probably would have been done by Plato himself, whose first concern certainly did not consist in exactness in detail. Therefore divergences, e.g. in historical details, between the dialogues and the epistles are often considered as indications of genuineness. Rightly so, but it should be emphasized that divergences of this kind do not always carry the same weight. As strong indications of authenticity we may consider those cases in which a forger who had carefully studied the dialogues certainly would have been aware of the divergence and thus wilfully would have impaired the credibility of his forgery. The detached way in which Plato speaks of his master Socrates in *Ep.* VII and the statement that, after Socrates' death, he gradually came to the conviction that it was impossible for him to cure

<sup>1</sup> The philosophical excursus is an act of philosophical self-defence against the philosophical pretensions and publicist activities of Dionysius II, which will have been less relevant for at least many of Dion's friends, to whom the *Epistle* was addressed. Cp. also 344 d 3, where the excursus is termed *μῦθος καὶ πλάνος*.

the Athenian state, are, in my opinion, very strong indications of the genuineness of *Ep.* VII<sup>1</sup>. However, the difference between *Ep.* VIII 354 b, where the institution of the ephorate, in accordance with the general opinion of classical Greece, is attributed to Lycurgus, and *Lg.* III 692 a, where this is ascribed to another lawgiver, may be an indication of the genuineness of *Ep.* VIII<sup>2</sup>, but certainly does not prove it. One should admit that the most plausible explanation is that in *Ep.* VIII, which was destined for a larger audience, Plato, for convenience or by mere negligence, followed the general opinion. And one cannot even exclude the possibility that the tradition of the establishment of the ephorate by a τρίτος σωτήρ became known to him only after the writing of *Ep.* VIII. However, in itself it is not impossible that a forger, even an astute forger, has made this mistake, or even silently corrected what he considered a slip of the pen in the *Laws*.

The same holds good also for the difference between the 37 nomophylakes of the *Laws* and the 35 of *Ep.* VIII. Plato may have changed the number subsequently when writing the *Laws*, he wilfully may have chosen another number when writing *Ep.* VIII, or he may have been inconsistent about such a minor detail<sup>3</sup>. But if *Ep.* VIII were a forgery the difference could easily be explained by negligence of the forger. I may, incidentally, remark here that, at least in my opinion, it is hardly possible to ascribe these and other inaccuracies in *Ep.* VIII *all* to the carelessness of an—otherwise very clever—forger<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See about this kind of argument especially the first chapter of K. VON FRITZ, *Platon in Sizilien und das Problem der Philosophenherrschaft*, Berlin 1968.

<sup>2</sup> So J. SOUILHÉ in the Budé edition of the *Epistles* (Paris 1926), LXII f.; G. J. D. AALDERS, *Die Theorie der gemischten Verfassung im Altertum*, Amsterdam 1968, 40 n. 11; The Authenticity of the Eight Platonic Epistle Reconsidered, *Mnem.* IV, 22 (1969), 240.

<sup>3</sup> See G. J. D. AALDERS, *Mnem.* IV, 22 (1969), 239.

<sup>4</sup> See G. J. D. AALDERS, *Mnem.* IV, 22 (1969), 240.

6. If one suspects that a literary document may be a forgery, it is a good method to try to establish the motive of the forger, though it will not always be possible to suggest a plausible one. A pseudepigraphic document may be a mere rhetorical exercise or tour de force, as may be the case with the letters attributed to Plato in the *Epistulae Socraticorum*. The collection of the 13 Platonic epistles is probably too early to be considered as a rhetorical exercise. Nevertheless, a forger may have been moved merely by his "Lust zum Fabulieren". Whereas for the spurious or probably spurious epistles in general the wish to emphasize and to enlarge upon Plato's concern with practical politics may be considered a very plausible motive of the forging, the author of *Ep. XIII* may have aspired only to write an interesting story about a celebrity and his concern with matters of everyday life, in order to "soddisfare la curiosità di generazioni avidi di documenti umani" <sup>1</sup>.

7. Many expressions and utterances in the *Epistles* have been considered as a proof or at least an indication of spuriousness on philosophic, linguistic or historical grounds, and they have also been defended as authentically Platonic. On external grounds we may be fairly sure of the spuriousness only of *Ep. I* and *XII*.

That Plato should have been entrusted with the exercise of the power of Dionysius II and, as this tyrant's deputy should have ruled Syracuse with full powers on several occasions (*Ep. I* 309 a-b), is flatly incompatible with our other evidence about Plato's activities in Syracuse. Apart from the fact that the authenticity of *Ep. XII* was contested already in antiquity, this letter mentions writings of some importance by a non-Greek, which had been sent to Plato by his friend Archytas. Even if this letter did not in Diogenes Laertius VIII 79 ff. appear to be the answer to a

<sup>1</sup> G. PASQUALI, *Le Lettere di Platone* <sup>2</sup>, Firenze 1967, 193.

clearly forged letter of Archytas to Plato, in which Ocellus Lucanus is mentioned, we should suspect in *Ep.* XII an allusion to the works attributed to this author, which are certainly later than the supposed date of *Ep.* XII. For we do not know anything about a philosopher of Italian stock, writing in Greek, in the 5th or 4th century B.C., and it seems indeed rather improbable that such a person existed at that time.

8. The foregoing, however, does not entitle us to accept the other eleven epistles at their face value. We will have to try to establish whether the differences in literary genre, in purpose, and in philosophical level, offer a sufficient explanation for the divergences between epistles and dialogues, and whether by accepting one or more letters as genuine we may arrive at a fairly consistent image of Plato, the man and the philosopher. Inevitably here will remain a certain margin of subjectivity.

As the Platonic *Epistles* circle mainly around the theme of Plato and practical politics, it may be rewarding to concentrate upon this topic and to try to establish how far the political thought and the political programs and counsels of the *Epistles* may be considered consistent with the Plato we know from the dialogues. In doing this we are not, of course, breaking new ground. Hence we should not expect startling novel results. But possibly this may lead to a certain reassessment of the evidence or of arguments, which may be of some use for future investigations.

9. It should be emphasized that arguments for or against the authenticity of a Platonic letter gained in this way will not always in themselves furnish sufficient proof. This is, in my opinion, only the case with *Ep.* V. But the results arrived at in this way may be of some value when combined with arguments of another kind; on principle they may form part of cumulative evidence for or against the genuineness of an *Epistle*.

## II

The form of government was for the Greeks an issue of central importance. The first question at stake was, whether rule should be exercised in accordance with fixed laws, or as a personal government free from codified legislation. The latter is recommended by Plato for the ideal state of the *Politeia*. Though Plato repeats in *Ep.* VII (326 a-b; cp. 328 a; 335 d) the central idea of the *Politeia*, that the state should be ruled by philosophers, there is no trace that for Syracuse he ever envisaged a personal rule free from written laws. On the contrary, it is said repeatedly in *Ep.* VII that Plato and Dion aimed at rule in accordance with the best laws (324 b; 332 e; 336 a; 351 c).

It should be kept in mind that the state of the *Politeia*, about the possibility of the realisation of which Plato is not certain, is an ideal that according to him should be approached as near as possible (V 473 a; IX 592 b; cp. *Plt* 300 c sqq.; *Lg.* V 739 e), and that this ideal presupposes two fundamental conditions, viz. philosophical kingship and a drastic purge of the existing population (VI 501 a; VII 540 sqq.; cp. *Plt.* 293 d; *Lg.* 735 d-e).

These conditions could not be fulfilled when Plato went to Sicily in 367 B.C. at the summons of Dion. Though philosophic rule was envisaged (*Ep.* VII 328 a; 335 c-d; 336 b; cp. 330 b), one may seriously doubt whether Plato can ever have fostered the hope that he might be able to obtain in Dionysius II—and perhaps even in Dion—the philosophical level and schooling required for the rulers of his ideal city. Further, Plato of course realized that he had to accept an existing polis with an existing population, and that therefore the *tabula rasa* theoretically required in the

*Politeia* was impossible<sup>1</sup>. Thus adaptation to the existing political realities was necessary, nor was Plato altogether averse from such adaptation if it was inevitable, as we saw already (cp. especially *Lg.* V 739 a sqq.). The state of the *Laws*, though requiring no radical purge of the citizens and no tabula rasa, presupposes a considerable freedom in building up state and society by the fiction of an imaginary colony in a remote and rather isolated part of the Greek world, moreover on a site distant from the sea. But even there a third kind of state is envisaged, an adaptation that goes farther than that of the state of the *Laws* which is termed ἀθανασίας ἐγγύτατα καὶ ἡ μία δευτέρως (V 739 b and e).

The political dialogue of Plato which is nearest in time to his Syracusan venture is the *Politicus*. There he maintains the ideal of the philosophic king, whose wisdom is not hampered by written laws, which always are more or less imperfect, but admits also the necessity of embarking upon a δεύτερος πλοῦς (301 d-e; 300 c), i.e. on a law-abiding régime, the best form of which he considers kingship in accordance with excellent fixed laws (302 e). If Plato had succeeded in converting Dionysius II into a philosophically minded βασιλεύς ruling in accordance with excellent laws, he would have reached something comparable to the best form of government of the δεύτερος πλοῦς of the *Politicus*. This presupposes a rather high intellectual level of the ruler, and it is perfectly in accordance with this that in *Ep.* VII the words φιλόσοφος, φιλοσοφία and φιλοσοφεῖν are not only used for Plato's own philosophical activity and in relation to the philosopher-kings of the *Politeia* (326 a-b; 329 b), but also for the instruction Plato thought he might be able to give to the young Dionysius and for the longing for

<sup>1</sup> In practical politics Plato abhorred such violent measures (cp. *Ep.* VII 327 d; 331 d; 351 c), nor did he accept them for the state of his *Laws* (cp. V 735 e sqq.). See G. J. D. AALDERS, *De wijsgeer en de praktische politiek*, *Tijdschr. v. Geschied.* 83 (1970), 8 n. 21.

τῆς φιλοσόφου ζωῆς which he hoped to be able to arouse in him (328 a; 330 b; 335 d; 336 b; 338 b; 339 b; 340 b sqq.). This presupposes of the ruler a higher intellectual capacity than is required for the rulers of the state of the *Laws* (except perhaps the members of the νυκτερινὸς σύλλογος), in relation to whom, as G. Müller observes<sup>1</sup>, φιλοσοφία and cognate words do not occur. Therefore we may be somewhat suspicious about the genuineness of a letter in which these words are used in relation to a comparable or lower intellectual level.

The rule of an enlightened monarch keeping to written laws is also envisaged in *Laws* IV 709 e sqq. There Plato says that the best condition for radical political reform would be offered by a city ruled by an intelligent young tyrant of excellent character. He does not say that this tyrant should be moulded into the philosopher-king of the *Politeia*; he will be advised by a capable lawgiver. In this passage Plato possibly had in mind—and nostalgically idealized—what he thought he might have achieved with Dionysius II.

It seems appropriate to say here something about the difficult words πᾶσιν κοινὰ ἀγαθὰ in *Ep.* VII 337 d. What Plato and Dion had hoped to achieve after the definitive breach with Dionysius II is termed δεύτερα μὲν. It is a kind of compromise régime and a kind of republican government, which is, according to Plato, inferior to law-abiding kingship (cp. the *Politicus* and *Lg.* IV 710 d-e). Whatever Dion secretly, deep in his heart, may have longed for, Plato seems never to have envisaged the possibility that Dion would become philosopher-king of Syracuse. Πρῶτα is what Plato has hoped to achieve with Dionysius II as ruler and himself acting as his adviser. That would have resulted in πᾶσιν κοινὰ ἀγαθὰ. It is clear that this cannot refer to the communal state, the lofty ideal of the *Politeia*, but must refer

<sup>1</sup> G. MÜLLER, *Studien zu den platonischen Nomoi*, München 1951, 13.

to a rule by a philosophically trained and minded king in accordance with the best possible laws. Some scholars<sup>1</sup> have proposed to consider *πᾶσιν κοινὰ ἀγαθὰ* as a gloss referring to the community of goods, wives and children of the *Politeia*. This is no doubt a clear and easy solution, and it would not be difficult to explain the addition of the marginal gloss to the text. However I wonder if such a violent solution is not too easy. On the other hand the tame rendering by "for the benefit of all"<sup>2</sup> turns the words *πᾶσιν κοινὰ ἀγαθὰ* into a rather lame phrase; what is termed *δεύτερα* no doubt also aimed at the benefit of all. Therefore I venture the suggestion that Plato, after many years and after sorrowful deceptions, in retrospect idealized the possibilities that seemed to offer themselves in 367 B.C. and, perhaps unconsciously, attributed to them traits of the political ideal of the *Politeia*.

Not less important than the question of personal or law-abiding rule was the fiercely debated problem whether the government should be exercised by one ruler, by a selected minority or by all citizens. Although, regarding his ideal state, Plato is rather indifferent as to the number of rulers, he considers that for states ruled according to codified laws some forms of government are better than others, as is clear from *Politeia* VIII-IX, from the *Politicus* (cp. especially 302 e sq.) and from *Lg.* IV 710 d-e. And he says explicitly that kingship is the best form of state available in the *δεύτερος πλοῦς*. In *Ep.* VII he also considers the rule of an enlightened monarch in accordance with the best laws as the best.

In the *Laws* this is considered as something unattainable, and therefore, in that dialogue there is envisaged a kind of

<sup>1</sup> See G. R. MORROW, *Plato's Epistles*<sup>2</sup>, Indianapolis-New York 1962, 161; R. B. LEVINSON, *In Defense of Plato*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1953, 112.

<sup>2</sup> «We must therefore interpret *πᾶσιν κοινὰ ἀγαθὰ*, if the words are not an interpolation, as meaning 'for the benefit of all'» (R. S. BLUCK, *Plato's Seventh and Eight Letters*, Cambridge 1947, 112).

mixed government <sup>1</sup>, a combination of kingly or aristocratic government with democratic rule, which de facto is preponderantly aristocratic. Now it cannot be denied that in Plato's eyes tyranny is the worst form of government, and this applies also to *Ep.* VII. But in certain—exceptional—circumstances tyranny may offer possibilities for a change into lawful kingship <sup>2</sup>. This idea does not occur explicitly in the dialogues, though it is implicitly assumed in *Lg.* IV 709 e sqq., but it seems to have been rather common in fourth century Greece and occurs in Isocrates and in Xenophon's *Hiero*. There is no reason to consider it as un-Platonic <sup>3</sup>, certainly not when one takes into consideration the purpose and the addressees of the *Epistles* <sup>4</sup>.

The device, however, according to Plato applied only to exceptionally favourable circumstances—and Plato went to *Sicily* in 367 B.C. because he thought such circumstances might exist there—and though he recognizes the merits of the Syracusan tyrants in averting the Carthaginian threat he does not try to apply it as a general device, as is done in the *Hiero* of Xenophon <sup>5</sup>. For more generally occurring circumstances Plato advocates moderate republican government in accordance with the best laws, or, as in *Ep.* VIII, a mixed constitution. This is in accordance with the idea, expressed in the *Politicus* (cp. 309 b ; 311 b-c) that the true statesman is the kingly weaver who reconciles the contrasts in society, and it is also in accordance with the ideas underlying the *Laws*. This involves a certain acknowledgment of the

<sup>1</sup> See G. R. MORROW, *Plato's Cretan City*, Princeton 1960, 521 ff.; G. J. D. AALDERS, *Die Theorie der gemischten Verfassung*, 38 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* VII 333 b. Cp. also *Ep.* VIII and *Lg.* IV 709 e ff.

<sup>3</sup> As L. EDELSTEIN does, *op. cit.*, 148 f.

<sup>4</sup> See G. J. D. AALDERS, *Mnem.* IV, 22 (1969), 245.

<sup>5</sup> The kingship of the political advice of *Ep.* VIII is a shared kingship with a very limited power.

merits also of democracy, however restricted de facto the influence of the δῆμος may be in Plato.

At first sight this seems hardly compatible with the radical condemnation of (Athenian) democracy in the *Gorgias* and the *Politeia*. However, on another level of knowledge, that of the ἀληθὴς δόξα, this condemnation is, in the *Meno*, not so absolute, and in the *Menexenus* and the *Laws* there is a certain appraisal of a good law-abiding democratic government, as well as in the δεύτερος πλοῦς of the *Politicus*. We may be sure that Plato never advocated radical egalitarianism and thought more in terms of the geometric equality about which he speaks elaborately in the *Laws* (V 744 b-c; VI 757 b-c; cp. *Grg.* 508 a; *Resp.* VIII 558 c). In *Ep.* VII he is as averse as ever from radical egalitarian democracy, which he rejects forcibly (351 b) together with its (at last in Athens) concomitant, imperialistic policy. But we should not be astonished that he displays in that letter a certain positive appraisal of ἰσονομία (326 d 5), which is here not identical with democracy<sup>1</sup>, and recommends it for the extant situation (336 d 4; cp. also 337 c 5: τὸ δὲ ἴσον καὶ κοινόν). So there is no reason to consider the use of ἰσόννομος and ἰσονομία in the climate of the political thought of *Ep.* VII as an indication of spuriousness<sup>2</sup>.

This preference for a moderate or balanced régime, after the failure of the conversion of Dionysius II to philosophy, is linked up with aversion from στάσις. This aversion, common in Greek political theory, is stressed especially in

<sup>1</sup> See i.a. G. J. D. AALDERS, *Die Theorie der gemischten Verfassung*, 9 ff.; M. OSTWALD, *Nomos and the Beginnings of Athenian Democracy*, Oxford 1969, 181 f. The latter says that Plato in *Ep.* VII may have used ἰσονομία in the sense of "having equitable laws". This would indeed fit into the context, but we may doubt whether the readers of the letter would have understood this word in such an unusual sense, when no further explanation was added.

<sup>2</sup> As has been done by G. VLASTOS, 'Ἰσονομία πολιτική in *Isonomia. Studien zur Gleichheitsvorstellung im griechischen Denken*, Berlin 1964, 33 ff. and L. EDELSTEIN, *op. cit.*, 38 and 167.

*Ep.* VII and VIII in relation to a Sicily torn by fierce party-strife. Plato is convinced that compromise and reconciliation are called for in such a situation, and strongly advocates legislation that treats victors and conquered on the same footing (336 e sq.; 337 c-d). It is not impossible that he had in mind the Athenian amnesty of 403 B.C. and its success (cp. *Ep.* VII 325 b), and by his care for equitable administration of justice after the hoped-for reconciliation we may probably explain the preponderance of the regulations for distribution of justice in the rather summary political advice of *Ep.* VIII <sup>1</sup>.

This is perfectly in accordance with the fact that Plato in Syracuse never envisaged a new start after a radical purging of the citizenry and that, in political practice, he abhorred violence and bloodshed <sup>2</sup>.

In the world of Greek *πόλεις*—as well as in the modern world—a peaceful internal order may be threatened from outside. However, neither in *Ep.* VII nor in *Ep.* VIII are explicit provisions made for foreign policy or for military organisation. The same applies to the states of the *Politeia* and the *Nomoi*. In the latter work military organisation properly speaking is treated summarily, whereas Plato enlarges upon the educational aspects of the military training of the youths. Certainly Plato was not a pacifist, but she seems to have been not very interested in warfare and “Realpolitik”. Even when advocating all-Greek unity, panhellenism, he does not enter into the military and political implications of this notion.

Panhellenism was a rather general and hazy notion which was in the air in the fourth century B.C. and which is by no means specifically Platonic. The notion occurs not only in the *Epistles*, but also in the *Menexenus*, the *Politeia* and the

<sup>1</sup> See G. J. D. AALDERS, *Mnem.* IV, 22 (1969), 249 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. *Ep.* VII 327 d; 331 d; 336 e; 351 b-c. See also *supra* p. 156. n. 1.

*Nomoi*, and therefore cannot be considered un-Platonic <sup>1</sup>. Plato must have been aware that panhellenic policy required, in Sicily, a forceful and warlike policy and he realized that in order to establish Greek rule over the whole island warfare against the Carthaginians in the future might be inevitable (cp. *Ep.* VII 336 a). But it is characteristic of Plato that even in this case he does not expatiate upon the military and political consequences of panhellenistic policy.

He envisages no doubt some kind of Syracusan leadership of the Sicilian Greeks, but only in the framework of a loose federation of Greek πόλεις (cp. *Ep.* VII 332 e; 351 b-c), perhaps in the spirit of the federation of Argos, Sparta and Messenia in *Lg.* III <sup>2</sup>.

This policy involved recolonisation and re-hellenizing of the crippled and destroyed Greek cities in Sicily. This is expressly mentioned by Plato and Dion in their programs. The argument of K. J. Beloch <sup>3</sup>, revived by L. Edelstein <sup>4</sup>, that this presupposes the situation of the time of Timoleon, not of Dion, does not hold good <sup>5</sup>. For Greeks like Plato

<sup>1</sup> As G. MÜLLER does, *Die Philosophie im pseudoplatonischen siebten Brief*, *Archiv für Philosophie* 3 (1949), 274. The *Menexenus*, according to him, is spurious; he considers *Resp.* V 464 c 5 - 471 c 3 as an interpolation (*ibid.*, n. 48), and as for the *Laws* he does not consider panhellenism as a "wesentliches Motiv Platons" (*Studien zu den platonischen Nomoi*, 145 n. 3; cp. *Archiv für Philosophie* 3 (1949) 274). There is however in the *Laws* (and also in the *Critias*) abundant evidence for Plato's panhellenistic views; see G. J. D. AALDERS, *Tijdschr. v. Philos.* 15 (1953), 633.

<sup>2</sup> As has been suggested by G. R. MORROW, *Plato's Epistles*, 154; see also R. B. LEVINSON, *op. cit.*, 384 n. 319.

<sup>3</sup> K. J. BELOCH, *Griechische Geschichte* <sup>2</sup>, III, 2, Berlin-Leipzig 1923, 45.

<sup>4</sup> L. EDELSTEIN, *op. cit.*, 32 ff.; cp. 166: "In part, the political counsel attributed to him (Plato) presupposes a historical situation that existed only after Plato's death."

<sup>5</sup> See G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 43 ff.; W. H. PORTER, *Plutarch: Life of Dion*, Dublin 1952, XXV. G. MÜLLER, in his review of Edelstein's book, speaks in relation to the program of resettlement and federation of Greek cities and of anti-Carthaginian panhellenism of «dies realpolitische und durchaus dem Zeitgeist um 350 konforme Ziel» (*Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* 221 (1969), 191).

and Dion, an anti-Carthaginian policy must have been an obvious possibility. This policy had firm roots in a glorious tradition among Sicilian Greeks and had also been one of the chief aims of the government of Dionysius I. There was also some reason to fear too great a power of the Oscan soldiers in Sicily <sup>1</sup>, a considerable number of whom had been settled by Dionysius I in Sicilian towns. And there was certainly a serious decay of Greek civic life in Sicily outside the big city of Syracuse. In *Ep.* VII 332 c it is said that Dionysius I concentrated the whole of (Greek) Sicily into one big city, and in 334 c 6-7 Sicily is spoken of as a single polis <sup>2</sup>.

This fits in with the image of the Greek cities in Sicily we get from Diodorus Siculus. By the devastating effects of the Carthaginian offensive of the last decade of the fifth century B.C. many Greek cities on the island had been laid waste, others had been destroyed subsequently by Dionysius I. Though resettlement took place, it seems to have been on a restricted scale (cp. D.S. XIII 114, 1; XIV 47, 5-6; XVI 82, 7), and Campanian mercenaries were settled in Catane, Naxos, Aetna and Leontini (D.S. XIV 15, 3 and 68, 3; XIV 96, 4; XIV 58, 2 and 61, 4 ff.; XIV 78, 2). Greeks from southern Italy and the Peloponnese were settled by Dionysius I in Messina and in the new-founded Tyndaris in 396 B.C. (D.S. XIV 78, 5-6). Whether Hadranum, founded by him about 400 B.C. (D.S. XIV 37, 4) was also a Greek city, is doubtful (though Diodorus here speaks of a πόλις) <sup>3</sup>. This picture seems to be in accordance with our tradition concerning the support Dion received from Sicilian

<sup>1</sup> G. J. D. AALDERS, *Mnem.* IV, 22 (1969), 243.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 50 f.; K. F. STROHEKER, *Dionysios I. Gestalt und Geschichte des Tyrannen von Syrakus*, Wiesbaden 1958, 168 ff.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that all foundations of Dionysius I in Sicily date from 402-392 B.C.; see F. F. STROHEKER, *op. cit.*, 172.

Greeks after his descent on Sicily in 357 B.C. ; only Geloans, Acragantines from Ecnomus, men from Camarina and Sicels from the interior of the island are mentioned (D.S. XVI 9, 5 ; Plut., *Dio* 26, 4). Obviously the Acragantines mentioned did not dwell in their city, which was refounded as a πόλις considerably later, by Timoleon.

The scantiness of organized Greek civic life in Sicily outside Syracuse seems also to be borne out by the fact that Dionysius II had Naxos refounded as Tauromenium, about 358 B.C. (D.S. XVI 7, 1), by the father of the historian Timaeus. He refounded also Rhegium, another town captured by Dionysius I, under the name Phoibeia (Strab. VI 1, 6, 258 C.).

The absence of important traces of public building activity (apart from fortifications) outside Syracuse<sup>1</sup> in the first half of the fourth century B.C. seems also to point to a considerable limitation and low level of Greek civic life in Sicily, Syracuse of course excepted. Nor is there important epigraphic evidence available which testifies to the contrary. Numismatic evidence is very scarce, which also may be a symptom of the meagerness of Greek city-life, for flourishing Greek cities were proud of their own money. Outside Syracuse no silver coins seem to have been struck, except under Carthaginian rule<sup>2</sup>.

Avowedly this can be explained by centralization of coining in the capital by Dionysius I, but even then the absence of silver coins from other Greek cities on the island is significant for the dwindling of civic life, for the striking

<sup>1</sup> In contradiction to the extensive building activities inaugurated by the restauration of Timoleon ; cp. *Kokalos* 4 (1958).

<sup>2</sup> See *i.a.* B. V. HEAD, *Historia nummorum*<sup>2</sup>, Oxford 1911, 117 ; W. GIESECKE, *Sicilia numismatica*, Leipzig 1923, 151 ; C. M. KRAAY, *Greek Coins*, London 1966, 280 ; K. CHRIST, Historische Probleme der griechisch-sizilischen Numismatik, *Historia* 3 (1954/5), 393 ; survey of the Sicilian coinage by K. CHRIST in *Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte* 5-6 (1954/5), 226 ff.

of coins is a token of sovereignty and its absence may be considered an indication of loss of autonomy and even of the identity of the poleis, in any case of a low ebb of πόλις-life. For adherents of the traditional πόλις-idea like Plato and probably also Dion (both admirers of the Doric way of life) there certainly must have been reason enough to advocate in their political program revival of the πόλις-life in the Greek towns of Sicily.

### III.

It seems appropriate now to try to assess what results are yielded regarding the genuineness of the *Epistles* by focussing especially upon the political thought and political programs contained in them. So far our attention has inevitably been concentrated mainly on *Ep.* VII, and in a lesser degree on *Ep.* VIII, which are by far the richest in relation to political thought and programs. I think we may sum up our investigations by concluding that the political thought of *Ep.* VII is fairly compatible with that of the dialogues, especially of the *Politicus* and of the *Laws*, taking into account the purpose and the addressees of the letter. There are no matters of detail, historical or other, which offer unsurmountable difficulties to accept the genuineness of the letter. So, when (in 337 c) a legislative commission of 50 men is said to be sufficient for a μυρίανδρος πόλις, this does not imply that for the big city of Syracuse a commission of several hundreds would be needed, for as H. Schaefer has shown<sup>1</sup>, the expression μυρίανδρος πόλις may simply denote a rather great, but not extremely great city. The religious mood of the epistle seems not to differ very much

<sup>1</sup> Πόλις μυρίανδρος, *Historia* 10 (1961), 292 ff., especially 295.

from that of the *Laws*<sup>1</sup>. As for the difficult problem of the philosophical excursus, I think the objections against its genuineness raised in recent times, especially by G. Müller and L. Edelstein, are not conclusive<sup>2</sup>.

On the other hand it is difficult to imagine how a forger could make Plato speak about Socrates in the detached way he does in *Ep.* VII or about the gradual growth of his conviction that it was impossible for him to cure the Athenian state. Nor is it very plausible that a forger would have fathered upon Plato the rather moderate programs that occur in the letter. Therefore we should, in my opinion, accept *Ep.* VII as it has been transmitted to us, as a letter of Plato.

The same applies to *Ep.* VIII<sup>3</sup>. The sketchy character of the political counsel contained in that letter and the lack of balance in this advice can be explained in a satisfactory way. Moreover one wonders how and why a forger should hit upon the idea that the despicable Dionysius II should be invited to become one of the kings of Syracuse. The preservation of just those two letters by Plato himself can be plausibly explained. *Ep.* VII was an open letter<sup>4</sup> with an

<sup>1</sup> See H. GUNDERT, Θεῖος im politischen Denken Platons, in *Politeia und Respublica* (Palingenesia IV), Wiesbaden 1969, 106 f.

<sup>2</sup> See *i.a.* B. STENZEL, Is Plato's Seventh Letter spurious?, *AJP* 74 (1953), 383 ff.; H. PATZER, Mitteilbarkeit der Erkenntnis und Philosophenregiment im 7. Platonbrief, *Archiv für Philosophie* 5 (1951), 19 ff.; H. G. GADAMER, Dialektik und Philosophie im siebenten platonischen Brief, *Sitzungsber. Ak. Heidelberg*, phil.-hist. Kl., 1964, 2; K. VON FRITZ, Die philosophische Stelle im siebten platonischen Brief und die Frage der 'esoterischen' Philosophie Platons, *Phronesis* 11 (1966), 117 ff.; H. GUNDERT, Zum philosophischen Exkurs im 7. Brief, in "Idee und Zahl. Studien zur platonischen Philosophie", *Sitzungsber. Ak. Heidelberg*, phil.-hist. Kl., 1968, 2, 85 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See G. J. D. AALDERS, *Mnem.* IV, 22 (1969), 233 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cp. 324 b 5-6; 330 c 6; 337 e 5: ᾧ μέλει ἀκούειν; 345 a 5-6; 352 a. See R. S. BLUCK, *op. cit.*, 112; U. VON WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, *Platon* II<sup>3</sup>, Berlin 1962, 299, who even says: "... ein offener Brief, für das Publikum bestimmt, nur zum Schein für die Adressaten".

explicitly apologetic aim, which may have had a rather large circulation. *Ep.* VIII was destined clearly for rather wide distribution in Syracuse<sup>1</sup>. Therefore they had far more chance of preservation than any purely private letter and it is not improbable that there were still copies of just these two letters available when, someday between Plato's death and the collection and arrangement of Plato's writings by Alexandrian scholars, someone put together a number of letters ascribed to Plato, which, furthermore, had as their main theme that of Plato and practical politics.

In the *Second Epistle* (310 e) we read that intellect and great power always try to combine. This is not compatible with *Ep.* VII nor with the dialogues. Even in the *Politeia* the ideal state ruled by philosopher-kings is considered as very difficult to realize, and in *Lg.* IV, 709 e sqq. the availability of a young and well-endowed tyrant is described as a case of good luck that only seldom occurs. This rouses doubt as to the authenticity of the *Second Epistle*. This suspicion of spuriousness is confirmed by other arguments. One is astonished at a Plato who is not only anxious about his own authority among his followers (310 c) and about his fame in posterity (311 c sqq.), but even says he went to Syracuse in order to make his philosophy popular (311 e sq.), at a Plato, moreover, who even after 360 B.C.<sup>2</sup> was in correspondance with the tyrant about philosophy. One wonders why Dionysius II should burn the letter after frequent reading (314 c 5-6), and if he did so, why Plato kept his copy. One wonders also about Prometheus as a

<sup>1</sup> See G. J. D. AALDERS, *Mnem.* IV, 22 (1969), 244.

<sup>2</sup> That the Olympic festival mentioned in 310 d is that of 364 B.C. seems not very probable because of the hostilities in Elis in that year. Moreover, in *Ep.* VII there is no trace of correspondance between Plato and Dionysius II, in which the latter shows his interest in philosophy, between 367 and 360 B.C. Finally, 314 b then would imply an improbably early date for the foundation of the Academy.

councillor of Zeus <sup>1</sup>. If we assume that *Ep.* VII is genuine or, at any rate, a very early document that is reliable about historical facts, we are embarrassed by the difference with *Ep.* II. What Plato says about the reactions upon his arrival in Olympia in 360 B.C. in *Ep.* VII, 350 b sqq. is incompatible with *Ep.* II, 310 d: Plato cannot have spoken the truth in saying he did not hear there evil about Dionysius II. The judgment of the philosophical aspirations of the tyrant in *Ep.* VII, 345 b-c is contradiction with *Ep.* II, 312 b and 313 b. The curious καλὸς καὶ νέος Σωκράτης (314 c) implies a distance from the dialogues that is hardly compatible with the emphasis with which the central political doctrine of the *Politeia* is repeated *Ep.* VII, 326 a-b <sup>2</sup>. One may be inclined to consider 311 a 1-3 as an allusion to Xenophon's *Hiero*, but this would defer the date of the *Epistle*, if genuine, too much, because that dialogue will hardly have been written earlier than 357 B.C. <sup>3</sup>.

In the *Third Epistle* Dionysius II is said to have reproached Plato for preventing him from becoming a king instead of a tyrant, and from colonizing the deserted Greek cities in Sicily (315 d; 319 c-d). It is pretty well impossible to suppose that Dionysius at that time considered himself as a tyrant, and moreover said so. Further, we know that about the time this letter is supposed to have been written Dionysius had re-founded two Greek cities. Thus it seems justified to doubt the genuineness of the letter. This doubt is strongly confirmed by other arguments: the queer rhetorical digression about the formula εἶ πράττειν, the contention that in 367 B.C. Dionysius II was σφόδρα νέος (316 c 8;

<sup>1</sup> 311 b. Cp. G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 169: «Questo Zeus abassato al livello di un sovrano mitico è assurdo. Altrettanto assurdo che i primi uomini inventino relazioni tra il maggiore degli dèi e un eroe».

<sup>2</sup> See G. R. MORROW, *Plato's Epistles*, 114.

<sup>3</sup> Cp. G. J. D. AALDERS, Date and Intention of Xenophon's *Hiero*, *Mnem.* IV, 6 (1953), 208 ff. More reserved, H. R. BREITENBACH, *RE* 9 A, col. 1745.

*Ep.* VII 328 a mentions only his νεότητα), and notably the far from negligible differences from *Ep.* VII in the reporting of facts <sup>1</sup>, especially the different report of the last discussion between Plato and Dionysius II (319 a-c; cp. *Ep.* VII, 349 a sqq.).

In the *Fourth Epistle* the author seems to approve of the attack of Dion on Dionysius II. This seems not to agree with what Plato says, after the death of his friend Dion, about his standpoint <sup>2</sup>. Thus the authenticity of this letter seems to be subject to serious doubt. So the warning against haughtiness (321 b-c) will indeed be what it sounds like, a *vaticinium ex eventu* <sup>3</sup>.

In the *Fifth Epistle* the author says that each of the three basic constitutions has its own voice. Consequently they are considered as living beings. There is no trace of such an idea in Plato <sup>4</sup>. Moreover, each constitution is considered as potentially good in itself, which is not compatible with the ideal program of the *Politeia* and *Ep.* VII, 326 a-b, nor with Plato's consistent opinion about the democracy of his own time, nor with the idea of mixis of constitutional forms in the *Laws* and also in *Ep.* VIII <sup>5</sup>. Therefore one may confidently consider this letter as spurious. An additional argument for the non-Platonic authorship of the letter is the addition of 322 a 4 sqq. in order to justify

<sup>1</sup> On the grounds of which G. PASQUALI said that if *Ep.* VII is authentic, this cannot be the case with *Ep.* III (*op. cit.*, 147).

<sup>2</sup> Cp. M. ISNARDI PARENTE, *Filosofia e politica nelle Lettere di Platone*, Napoli 1970, 38 f.

<sup>3</sup> See M. ISNARDI PARENTE, *op. cit.*, 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Resp.* VI 493 a-c has been alleged as a parallel (see J. SOUILHÉ, *op. cit.*, 23 n. 3), but there it is not the constitution but the mass that is depicted as an animal; cp. G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 229.

<sup>5</sup> See W. THEILER, *Gnomon* 14 (1938), 632: «Aber die Gleichsetzung der drei Hauptverfassungen besonders zusammen mit dem Verbot der Mischung ist unplatonisch».

Plato's abstention from political activity in democratic Athens, which has no significance for a Macedonian king. Probably the forger wished to kill two birds with one stone: to show that Plato entertained already good relations with the Macedonian court<sup>1</sup>, and to justify his political inactivity in Athens.

In the *Sixth Epistle* one is astonished by the importance attributed to Hermeias' experience in "Realpolitik" (322 d-e). This would be unique in Plato. In itself this may not yet be sufficient to condemn the letter as spurious, but the suspicion about the authenticity is corroborated by other arguments. One should not rely too heavily on the fact that, in contradistinction to the letter (322 e 6-7), Strabo (XIII 1, 57, p. 610 C.) mentions Hermeias as a disciple of Plato and Aristotle in Athens<sup>2</sup>. Strabo may simply be mistaken, and it is not altogether impossible even that Hermeias visited the Academy when Plato was absent from Athens<sup>3</sup>. It is strange, however, that the author speaks of the σοφία τῶν εἰδῶν whereas in the *Laws* there is no mention of the Ideas and even in *Ep.* VII the term does not occur. But the most serious difficulty is raised by the oath by the philosophical god in 323 d and the queer exhortation to re-read the epistle as often as possible (323 c; cp. *Ep.* II 314 c 5-6). E. Howald<sup>4</sup> has tried to solve the difficulty by assuming that this is all παιδικά, but, in my opinion, this does not hold water: for Plato even παιδικά is not nonsensical, and it seems incompatible with the deeply religious mood of the old Plato to associate the solemnity of an oath

<sup>1</sup> Cp. M. ISNARDI PARENTE, *op. cit.*, 14 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 214 ff.; M. ISNARDI PARENTE, *op. cit.*, 33 n. 37.

<sup>3</sup> See R. HACKFORTH, *The Authorship of the Platonic Epistles*, Manchester 1913, 78; J. HARWARD, *The Platonic Epistles*, Cambridge 1932, 186; D. E. W. WORMELL, *The Literary Tradition concerning Hermeias of Atarneus*, *Yale Class. Stud.* 5 (1935), 59.

<sup>4</sup> E. HOWALD, *op. cit.*, 153.

with παιδιά. So there seems to be sufficient cumulative evidence to consider this letter spurious.

That Archytas, who served his city so well, did not need an admonition to remain in office is in itself no sufficient argument against the authenticity of the *Ninth Epistle*: Plato may have thought such an exhortation necessary in view of what he heard about Archytas' aversion from further political activities. Nor is the allusion to the φαῦλοι ἄνθρωποι (358 b) who would succeed Archytas an insult to Archytas and his friends, as G. Pasquali thought <sup>1</sup>, for the author may have feared that non-Pythagorean rulers would step into office when Archytas resigned. Nevertheless I feel rather uneasy about the authenticity of this letter, which is fairly unimportant with regard to political thought. This uneasiness is strengthened by the fact that the names of the Tarentines Philonides, Echecrates<sup>2</sup> and Archippus also occur in Pythagorean tradition<sup>3</sup>. Anyhow it is chronologically impossible that the Archippus of this letter is the same as the Pythagorean who together with Lysis survived the Cylonian slaughter<sup>4</sup>.

The *Tenth Epistle* is a quite unimpressive "billet de recommandation". Its philosophical content is extremely trite and pedestrian. One might ask if there was any reason for Plato to insert such an exhortation and moreover to speak on this level of φιλοσοφία.

The politico-philosophical contents of the *Eleventh Epistle*, which is considered as genuine by such an eminent philologist as G. Pasquali<sup>5</sup>, is not very impressive.

<sup>1</sup> G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 242.

<sup>2</sup> This cannot be the Echecrates of Plato's *Phaedo*, who came from Phlius and cannot have been νεανίσκος when Plato wrote to Archytas.

<sup>3</sup> Iambl., *V.P.* 267; 249; Diog. Laert. VIII 39. Cp. G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 243 f.

<sup>4</sup> See G. PASQUALI, *ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 234 ff. Cp. M. ISNARDI PARENTE, *op. cit.*, 43, who deems authenticity possible

However, the letter cannot be denied to Plato a priori. We are not entitled to declare un-Platonic the contention that legislation by itself does not yet warrant a good city-life, but that an authority is needed which regulates everyday life (359 a). One may think of the ephorate added, according to *Lg.* III 692 a, to the Spartan constitution by a τρίτος σωτήρ and of the nocturnal council of the *Laws*<sup>1</sup>. Though this condition seems not to be fulfilled in the colony on behalf of which Laodamas calls in Plato's aid, a good result may not be excluded if a good leader emerges, says the letter (359 a-b). It would be rash to contend that Plato cannot have thought so: one could allege the relatively good government achieved by Cyrus and Darius in Persia according to *Lg.* III; one may perhaps point also to the possibilities afforded in exceptional cases by a clever young tyrant.

According to a wide-spread tradition, based no doubt on historic reality, Plato sent advice or advisers to assist in the legislation of various cities<sup>2</sup>. But in *Ep.* XI he clearly avoids being implicated in the political problems of a new-founded city. If the addressee of the letter is indeed, as has often been thought, the mathematician Laodamas of Thasos, who was at least in mathematics a disciple of Plato (*D.L.* III 24), and if the colony in question is Datum or Crenides (possibly the same colony), referred to by ancient sources as a Thasian foundation about 360 B.C.<sup>3</sup>, this attitude is quite understandable<sup>4</sup>. The colony had been founded on the initiative of the banished Athenian politician Callistratus

<sup>1</sup> See G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 239; R. HACKFORTH, *op. cit.*, 260.

<sup>2</sup> See P. M. SCHUHL, Platon et l'activité politique de l'Académie, *REG* 49/50 (1946/7), 46 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Isocr. VIII 24; *D.S.* XVI 3, 7; Scyl. 67, p. 27; Zenob. IV 34 (*Corpus Paroemiogr. Graec.* I, 94).

<sup>4</sup> Laodamas is not mentioned in relation to Datum and Crenides, but also in our letter he is clearly distinguished from the οἰκισταί (359 a 1). It might

and Plato may therefore have wished not to be entangled in political troubles in Athens by proffering advice with regard to his foundation. This could also explain why the politico-philosophical content of the letter is rather meagre for Plato to write to one of his disciples (who possibly, however, had only learnt analytical mathematics from him). Everything considered, there are no clear indications for either the spuriousness or the genuineness of the letter. It is, as a whole, too vague and too unimportant to assign it with any confidence either to Plato or to a forger.

The *Thirteenth Epistle*, which is not concerned with political philosophy, is in our tradition addressed to Dionysius II, styled τυράννῳ Συρακουσῶν. This would be an affront, but in this form the address may be a later addition. However, that Plato should have corresponded rather confidentially with Dionysius II after 367 B.C. does not seem very probable — there is no trace of such correspondence in *Ep.* VII — and the same applies to his alleged financial dealings with this tyrant after his first failure at the Syracusan court. Moreover, one is surprised at the rather benevolent tone of Plato in this letter. What we know about the seigniorial behaviour of Dion towards Plato and his nephew Speusippus (cp. Plut., *Dio* 17) can hardly be reconciled with Plato's trying to get some rather modest sums from Dionysius II, the more so because earlier Plato had refused an offer of money by the tyrant (*Ep.* VII, 333 d; Plut., *Dio* 19, 2). The passage about Plato's financial obligations to his family arouses suspicion, especially what he says about the funeral of his mother, who at the supposed time of the

speak in favour of the authenticity of *Ep.* XI that Socrates is here not called νέος Σ. That from all the members of the Academy exactly this Socrates has been asked for by Laodamas can also be explained: he was, like Laodamas himself, an analytic mathematician (see G. PASQUALI, *op. cit.*, 235 f.).

letter must have been extremely old and who, after Plato's father, had married a rather well-to-do individual <sup>1</sup>.

In spirit as well as in details this letter differs widely from the other letters, especially from *Ep.* VII. The writer's exhorting Dionysius II to philosophize (360 e; 363 c) is astonishing if we accept as historical the failure of the test for Dionysius' ability for philosophical life as described in *Ep.* VII. That Plato would have said to the tyrant that he should philosophize in order to get a good reputation (ἐνα... εὐδοξῆς, 360 e) is in contradiction with *Ep.* VII, 344 e. His behaviour towards Dion (362 e) is astonishing and would make him into an agent or at least a confidant of the tyrant, which is incredible. In short, this letter, which pretends to offer detailed information about Plato's more down-to earth dealings with the ruler of Syracuse, deviates so much from our other evidence, that we are entitled to consider it as a forgery.

Recapitulating we can say that focussing on political thought and programs has yielded for *Ep.* VII and VIII a rather consistent and credible image of Plato's involvement in practical politics and, in virtue of that, a substantial argument in favour of the Platonic authorship of these letters. By the same procedure we found sufficient argument to declare *Ep.* V spurious and some argument against the authenticity of *Ep.* II, III and VI, which, together with other indications of spuriousness, entitled us to consider those epistles as very probably spurious. As to the other epistles, we found by this method no indications of any importance

<sup>1</sup> Cp. E. HOWALD, *op. cit.*, 194: «Dieser letzte Brief ... ist weitaus der unverschämteste; keiner prunkt so, wie er, mit Kenntnissen der intimsten Dinge am syrakusanischen Hof und aus dem platonischen Leben; sie lassen sich leider nicht kontrollieren; gerade die Dinge aber, die noch am ehesten bis zu einem gewissen Grade auf ihre Wahrscheinlichkeit hin geprüft werden können, nämlich die Angaben aus Platons Verwandtenkreis (361 c 7 ff.) müssen unser Bedenken erwecken».

for or against spuriousness, though for other reasons their genuineness seems to be at least very doubtful, *Ep.* XI possibly excepted.

## DISCUSSION

*M. von Fritz*: Das Exposé von Herrn Aalders behandelt mehr Probleme vielseitiger als dasjenige von Herrn Gulley. Auch er beschäftigt sich hauptsächlich mit Echtheitskritik. Aber er untersucht jeden einzelnen Brief für sich und berücksichtigt die Fragen nach dem jeweiligen Zweck, den Umständen, unter denen er wahrscheinlich entstanden ist, nach Zeit und Ort, mit denen sich die Entretiens dieses Jahres vor allem beschäftigt haben.

Wir können vielleicht mit den Problemen von *Ep.* VII beginnen.

*M. Burkert*: Seit vielen Jahrzehnten sind die Argumente für oder gegen die Echtheit des VII. Briefs hin- und hergewendet worden; ich bekenne meine Unsicherheit.

Fragt man nach der Absicht des Briefes, so ist sie am Schluss klar ausgesprochen: *προφάσεις πρὸς τὰ γινόμενα ἱκανάς*. Zu solcher Erklärung und Verteidigung hatte Platon nach Dions Katastrophe gewiss Anlass; nicht minder aber auch die Akademie nach Timoleons Erfolg: dem unphilosophischen Praktiker war geglückt, woran Platons Freund und Schüler gescheitert war, und er rief die Griechen *ἐπὶ πάσης Σικελίας κατοικισμὸν τε καὶ ἰσονομίαν* (vgl. 336 d). Neben der direkten Verteidigung Platons steht indirekte, u.a. in einer gewissen Distanzierung von Dions Unternehmen. Anders das ganz persönliche Bekenntnis zu Dion in dem berühmten Grabepigramm; *καλῶν ἐπινίκιον ἔργων* dort, *κακὰ ἕως ἂν ἐπιθυμῇτε* hier (350 d). Doch auch Dion wird indirekt verteidigt: Die Feststellung (351 c), er habe das Grässliche lieber leiden als tun wollen, blendet die berüchtigte Ermordung des Herakleides durch Dion aus. Eben vom Eintreten Platons für diesen Herakleides handelt das dramatischste Stück des Briefes (348 b-349 c); das Schweigen dort, die Ausführlichkeit hier sind kaum ohne Zusammenhang.

Nun ist in die apologetische Absicht eine andere eingeflochten, der der Brief sein berühmtes Zentrum verdankt, den *philosophischen Exkurs*: Dionysios habe eine Schrift über die Prinzipien des Seins verfasst (341 b, 344 d); Platon habe ihm jedoch darüber nichts mitgeteilt, überhaupt sei dergleichen nicht schriftlich fixierbar. Hatte Platon ein solches Interesse, nicht-autorisierte Verbreitung seiner Lehre zu verhindern, oder ist dies eher ein vitales Interesse der Akademie, allein das Erbe Platons zu verwalten? Dionysios müsste das Buch zwischen 360 und 352 verfasst haben, in einer Periode dauernder Wirren zwischen Kriegsvorbereitung, Vertreibung und Vorbereitung der Rückkehr. Musse zur Schriftstellerei hatte Dionysios, als er, endgültig vertrieben, sich in Korinth bestaunen liess. Damals hat ihn Aristoxenos besucht und nach der Wahrheit über sein Verhältnis zu Platon befragt (fr. 32 Wehrli) — in Aristoxenos' Πλάτωνος βίος war darüber zu lesen, und Platon kam nicht gut weg dabei. Damals musste die Akademie ein Interesse haben, gegenüber solch trüben Dionysios-Informationen den wahren Platon dem Publikum vorzustellen.

Dies ist kein Beweis; immerhin: manches wird einleuchtender unter der Hypothese, dass ein Manifest der Akademie aus der Zeit um 340 vorliegt, geschrieben von einem Schüler, der vielleicht mit in Sizilien gewesen war und der vielleicht auch einen authentischen λόγος Platons einarbeiten konnte. Dass Platons Schüler in der Lage waren, den Stil des Meisters zu kopieren, zeigt die *Epinomis*.

*M. Speyer*: Auffallend ist 341 b die dort gemachte Bemerkung über Dionysios als Plagiator Platons. Fälscher üben gerne Echtheitskritik, um von ihrem Tun abzulenken (Beispiele in meiner Monographie über die Fälschung, S. 61-3). Natürlich ist diese Parallele kein durchschlagendes Argument gegen die Echtheit von *Ep. VII*.

*M. Smith*: I admit to scepticism and I think that we should begin the discussion from more general considerations. If we

were to agree with Sir Ronald's opinion, that an ancient document of this sort is to be considered spurious until proved genuine, then I think the case for the authenticity of *Ep.* VII would be hopeless. But if, as I believe, ancient documents generally are to be considered genuine until proved spurious, the case is altered, and so is the scope of our discussion—we have to consider only the reasons for doubting the authenticity. To those already given one might add that most of the letters of the collection in which it occurs are admittedly spurious, but I must admit that Prof. Aalders has anticipated this by giving a good reason why *Ep.* VII and *Ep.* VIII should alone have been preserved.

*M. von Fritz:* Herr Burkert hat eine sehr einleuchtende Erklärung gegeben, unter welchen Umständen und aus welchen Motiven ein Brief wie *Ep.* VII von einem Fälscher verfasst worden sein könnte. Aber das alles sind nichts als Möglichkeiten. Man könnte demgegenüber darauf bestehen, dass « the burden of the proof » auf dem lastet, der die Unechtheit beweisen will. Aber im Fall von *Ep.* VII gibt es, wie mir scheint, ausnahmsweise eine Reihe von durchschlagenden positiven Beweisen für die Echtheit, von denen ich nur zwei anführen will.

1. Herr Aalders hat in seinem Vortrag darauf hingewiesen, dass ein Fälscher wohl nicht Platon so verhältnismässig leichthin vom Tode des Sokrates hätte sprechen lassen und die Verzweiflung Platons an den Zuständen in Athen nicht auf einen Zeitpunkt lange nach dem Tode des Sokrates datiert hätte.

Immerhin wäre das an sich, wenn auch unwahrscheinlich, bei einem klugen Fälscher nicht ganz unmöglich. Das Entscheidende ist, dass, was der Autor des Briefes in der zweiten Hinsicht sagt, nachweislich wahr ist. Man hatte immer angenommen, der *Gorgias* als der leidenschaftlichste Dialog müsse kurz nach der Erschütterung Platons durch den Tod des Sokrates geschrieben sein, bis Jean Humbert mit unwiderleglichen Argumenten bewiesen hat, dass der *Gorgias* nach der Anklageschrift des Rhetors Polykrates,

daher mehr als zehn Jahre nach dem Tode des Sokrates verfasst sein muss. Es ist also *wahr*, dass Platons Verzweiflung an Athen erst so viel später eingetreten ist. Nun kann *Ep.* VII, ob gefälscht oder nicht, nicht vor 352 geschrieben sein. Es wäre ein wahres Wunder, wenn ein Fälscher so lange nachher so genau über die emotionale Entwicklung Platons ein Jahrzehnt nach dem Tode des Sokrates Bescheid gewusst hätte.

2. Das zweite wie mir scheint, durchschlagende Argument ist von Maddalena als Argument *gegen* die Echtheit vorgetragen worden. Es beruht darauf, dass Platon sagt, als er heimlich nach Athen habe zurückkehren wollen, habe kein Schiffseigentümer gewagt, ihn aufzunehmen, weil das Gerücht verbreitet gewesen sei, er stünde mit dem Tyrannen wieder auf dem besten Fusse. Das sei, meint Maddalena, doch ganz absurd. Wenn das Gerücht gewesen wäre, sie stünden schlecht miteinander, sei das Verhalten der Schiffseigner verständlich, aber nicht, wenn sie gut miteinander standen. Aber wie hätte ein sonst so geschickter Fälscher so etwas erfinden sollen?

In Wirklichkeit ist, was geschah, ganz verständlich, aber nur, wenn man etwas hinzunimmt, was nicht in *Ep.* VII steht, sondern von Plutarch überliefert ist: dass nämlich Platon bei seiner Ankunft in Syrakus mit riesigem Prunk empfangen wurde. Wenn er also gut mit dem Tyrannen stand, hätte er zum mindesten mit ehrenvollem Geleit entlassen werden müssen. Wenn Platon unter solchen Voraussetzungen sich heimlich davonmachen wollte, dann konnte irgendetwas nicht stimmen. Viel eher hätte eine solch klanglose Abreise harmlos erscheinen können, wenn man gehört gehabt hätte, der Tyrann sei Platons überdrüssig geworden.

Aber wem als demjenigen, der selber in der Lage gewesen war, konnte die Begründung des Zögerns der Schiffseigentümer mit dem Gerücht von dem *guten* Verhältnis zum Tyrannen, so natürlich erscheinen, dass er sie ohne Erklärung vortrug. Die Annahme, das ein Fälscher darauf hätte kommen können, erscheint als phantastisch.

*M. Aalders*: It is not incompatible with Plato's distancing himself from the warlike policy of Dion that he remained his friend and retained a deep-felt affection for him.

*M. Thesleff*: Prof. Burkert referred to the discrepancy between the *Dion epigram* and *Ep.* VII. However, a brilliant prose author does not necessarily write brilliant epigrams. Though I would like to think that the *Dion epigram* is by Plato, I find it hard to accept that Plato would have given any kind of publicity, let alone poetical publicity, to his feelings at the death of Dion, or at the memory of it.

*M. Aalders*: Plato may have spoken in one way about Dion and his politics before Dion started his expedition against Dionysius II, and in another afterwards, when this expedition was an irrevocable fact, and especially many years later, moreover under the fresh impression of Dion's death.

As to the philosophical writing of Dionysius II, one might also think of the possibility that Dionysius II wanted to compete with his rival Dion, who of course showed off his connection with Plato and his interest in philosophy, and even to outdo him. Of course this is very hypothetical, but no more than the other solutions offered for Dionysius' motives for posing as a platonising philosopher.

*M. Thesleff*: A few words on the stylistic aspect may perhaps be appropriate here. It is possible that a sound and sensible application of computers to these things will produce reliable results in the future. However, if computers are left out of account, I believe that a close reading of the Platonic letters, with particular regard to style, will reveal that the only two letters that have some claim to authenticity are *Ep.* VII and *Ep.* VIII. Of these, the 7th is in my opinion really very Platonic. It has some touches of Plato's late "baroque" (ὄγκος) style (cf. my *Studies in the style of Plato* = *Acta Philos. Fenn.* 20 (1967), 150 ff.), and it follows the normal pattern of Plato's

authentic works in having a *pedimental* structure with a visionary section in the centre (cf. *ibid.* 167 ff.). We do not know of any Academic able to imitate Plato as closely as this, as all the suspect or evidently spurious works of the Platonic corpus either lack these features or, occasionally, overdo them (see *ibid.*, 155 ff.; cf. e.g. the concluding sentence of *Ep.* XI with its ἀνοητάλπειν); Philippos of Opous may be an exception, if he wrote the *Epinomis*, but surely he has nothing to do with *Ep.* VII.

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*M. von Fritz*: Wenn zu *Ep.* VII nichts mehr zu sagen ist, können wir uns wohl zum *Ep.* VIII zuwenden, über den Herr Aalders sehr viel Neues zu sagen hatte.

*M. Aalders*: About the linguistic argument just advanced by Prof. Thesleff I remain very sceptical. Opinions of scholars with a good knowledge of Greek differ widely; so long as no convincing stylometric evidence emerges, it does not seem right to me to condemn this letter on the grounds of stylistic arguments.

There are in *Ep.* VIII some apparent discrepancies from historical truth, but in my opinion they are not incompatible with Platonic authorship, as I have argued in my paper "The Authenticity of the Eighth Platonic Epistle Reconsidered", *Mnemosyne* IV, 22 (1969), 234 ff., to which I refer for the moment.

More serious seem the objections raised against the unclear and unbalanced character of the political advice. I think this may be explained by the fact that Plato in the existing situation took for granted the continuance of the existing institutions, ecclesia, boulè and minor officials, but wished to emphasize the necessity of a strong board of supreme magistrates called by him nomophylakes, and of a fair dispensation of justice. Therefore these topics, and of course the institution of a shared kingship with rather limited powers are delineated and even that has been done rather sketchily because Plato in the existing rather uncertain

situation must have postponed more precise regulations for future legislation.

*M. Thesleff*: I am sorry I cannot believe that Plato himself wrote *Ep. VIII*. The style is very rhetorical; apart from the *Gorgias*, Plato used such rhetoric only in parody. It is true that the *Laws* have rhetorical passages, but these are all more or less wrapped into the veil of Plato's late style, with its peculiar word order, archaisms, etc. The style of *Ep. VIII* seems to me very polished, almost Isocratean. If the contents seem authentic, it may perhaps be assumed that this is a 'secretary's work'. However, perhaps the use of computers will bring us closer to more objective results, some time.

*M. von Fritz*: Eine solche neue Befragung eines Computers müsste wohl mit grosser Vorsicht und Umsicht vorgenommen werden, da sich die Fehlbarkeit von Computern in Echtheitsfragen für *Ep. VII* erwiesen hat.

*M. Smith*: Computers of course do not say that works are genuine or false; they only answer quantitative questions, like, how many long and how many short sentences does a given work contain, or, more generally, how many words of certain kinds, and how many of certain sorts of arrangements of such words. The value of their answers depends therefore on two things: 1) the importance of the data on which they are asked to report; 2) how well the computer has been equipped to recognize these data. (It is not always easy to decide, for instance, just where a Greek sentence ends, and the computer, in this matter, has no better judgment than the man who prepares its data.) Consequently the fact that some uses of computers—Morton's for instance—have yielded obviously implausible results, should not be taken as discrediting the method in general. Computers should contribute greatly to the study and detection of pseudepigrapha, but I do not think that they should first be

used in disputed cases. If we could have, for all Greek literature, a detailed survey of the stylistic relations of recognizedly authentic letters to the recognizedly authentic literary works of their authors, and if we could also have a like survey of the stylistic relations of admitted spuria to the admittedly genuine works of the men the forgers imitated, we should then be able to make sense of the results about dubious cases. A primary task for computers, therefore, should be to produce such surveys, and their products would be so vast and so complex that they would have to be stored in tapes and consulted by computers.

*M. von Fritz*: Ich würde gerne noch einmal eine Stelle von *Ep. VIII* diskutieren, die mir so unklar erscheint, dass ich sie Platon schwer zutrauen kann: (356 d) πολέμου δὲ καὶ εἰρήνης ἄρχοντας νομοφύλακας ποιήσασθαι (...) μετὰ δήμου καὶ βουλῆς. Soll das heissen, dass die νομοφύλακες über Krieg und Frieden μετὰ δήμου καὶ βουλῆς zu entscheiden haben, oder dass sie im Krieg und Frieden μετὰ δήμου καὶ βουλῆς die Regierungsgewalt haben sollen. Herr Aalders hat in seinem Vortrag mit Recht gesagt, im ersten Fall müsste es κυρίους heissen.

Aber müsste es im zweiten Fall nicht ἐν πολέμῳ καὶ εἰρήνῃ heissen? Und was soll die Bestimmung heissen, dass sie im Krieg und Frieden die Regierungsgewalt haben sollen? Zwar gewinnen oft im Krieg die Generäle und Militärs mehr Einfluss auf die Regierungsentscheidung als sie im Frieden gehabt haben. Aber pflegt man irgendwo beim Übergang von Frieden zu Krieg oder umgekehrt automatisch die Regierung zu wechseln, so dass besonders betont werden müsste, dies solle unter der vorgeschlagenen Verfassung nicht der Fall sein?

*M. Aalders*: It is impossible that three bodies decide on war or peace—this decision must have been ultimately taken by the assembly. But Plato thinks a strong magistracy is needed in peace as well as in war.

*M. Burkert*: Die νομοφύλακες als πολέμου καὶ εἰρήνης ἄρχοντες entsprechen in ihrer Funktion, neben βουλή und δῆμος, den attischen ἄρχοντες καὶ στρατηγοί; die Formulierung ist vielleicht dadurch mitbestimmt, dass das Wort πολέμαρχος dem Autor vorschwebt.

*M. Aalders*: Indeed Plato seems to have wished to emphasize the need of a strong body of rulers with great power, who rule in accordance with council and assembly.

*M. Speyer*: Merkwürdig und ziemlich wirklichkeitsfremd ist der Vorschlag, in Syrakus mehrere Könige einzusetzen.

*M. Aalders*: The shared kingship is in Plato's eyes a necessity in order to attain his proposed new structure and for the necessary reconciliation of the members of the ruling family with their adherents and their soldiers. Otherwise the powers of the future kings of Syracuse are rather restricted; it is not even clear whether they would be, like the kings of Sparta, the supreme commanders of the army; only their priestly function (which has also its analogy in Spartan kingship) is mentioned explicitly.

The idea of a shared kingship was suggested by the dual kingship of Sparta. Moreover the idea of a shared rule—not altogether absent in Greek tyranny—seems to have been suggested by Dion to Dionysius I on his deathbed; it is said that such proposals had been made to Dion by Dionysius II, and Plato himself suggests a joint rule of Dionysius I and the elder Hipparinus (353 b); see *Mnemosyne* IV, 22 (1969), 252.

*M. Syme*: But the plan for the election of the νομοφύλακες is not very clear.

*M. Aalders*: Though Plato does not say *expressis verbis* by what procedure the νομοφύλακες should be appointed, we can suppose he thought they would be chosen by the people. For

also the supreme officers in Syracuse acting up to that date, the στρατηγοί, were chosen by the people, and moreover in the 4th century B.C. it was considered as aristocratic that officials were chosen (and not appointed by the κληῖρος). This is also in accordance with the *Laws*.

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*M. von Fritz*: Wenn damit die Diskussion von *Ep.* VIII zu Ende ist, können wir uns vielleicht *Ep.* XI zuwenden, der auch sehr interessante Probleme bietet. Es hängt hier wohl wieder auf die Frage hinaus, wer "the burden of the proof" zu tragen hat.

*M. Aalders*: I am rather uncertain about *Ep.* XI. There is no clear proof of its spuriousness, for every difficulty there is a possible explanation available, but the whole is a very shaky structure based on a number of superimposed suppositions: *if* Laodamas is the mathematician from Thasos, *if* the colony is Daton or Crenides, and so on; I doubt whether it is permissible, in this case, dogmatically to apply the rule that we have to accept a document as genuine unless its spuriousness can be proved clearly.

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*M. von Fritz*: Unter den Briefen, deren Unechtheit wohl mit Sicherheit angenommen werden kann, scheint mit *Ep.* II besonders interessant zu sein hinsichtlich Anlass, Zweck, und Zeit der Abfassung.

*M. Aalders*: *Ep.* II, which is certainly later than *Ep.* VII, gives a more favourable picture of the relations between Plato and Dionysius II than *Ep.* VII. Perhaps we may, with Pasquali (*Le Lettere di Platone*<sup>2</sup>, p. 193 ff.) think of circles which wished to revile Plato, as did e.g. Aristoxenus.

*M. Burkert*: *Ep.* II knüpft offenbar an die Andeutungen von *Ep.* VII über geheime Lehren Platons an und macht daraus einen geheimnisvollen gemeinsamen Besitz von Dionysios und Platon; Gipfelpunkt ist der den Neuplatonikern so wichtige Satz über den *König* (312 e), dazu der Hinweis auf das Erweckungserlebnis «unter den Lorbeerbäumen» (313 a), die Abwertung der publizierten Werke Platons (314 c), und schliesslich die Aufforderung, den Brief zu verbrennen (314 c) — die, wie jeder Leser beglückt bemerken kann, unbefolgt blieb! Sucht sich hier ein mystischer Platonismus gegen die Skepsis der Akademie zu behaupten?

*M. Speyer*: Die Aufforderung, die vorliegende Schrift nach der Lektüre zu verbrennen, begegnet in der pseudepigraphischen Literatur, soweit ich sehe, nur noch einmal: Augustinus berichtet über Leon von Pella, *Civ. dei* 8, 5 (CCL 47, 221): *timens enim et ille quasi reuelata mysteria, petens admonet Alexandrum, ut, cum ea matri conscripta insinuauerit, flammis iubeat concremari* (vgl. F. Pfister, Ein apokrypher Alexanderbrief, in *Mullus, Festschrift Th. Klauser* (= *JbAC* Erg.-Bd. I (1964), 291/7); zur Büchervernichtung, vgl. W. Speyer *JbAC* 13 (1970), 123/52).

Die Aufforderung, ein Buch zu verbergen, liest man dagegen in pseudepigraphischen Schriften recht häufig. Vielfach sollten dadurch Offenbarungen oder Geheimschriften magischen, alchimistischen und astrologischen Inhaltes in ihrem Wert gesteigert werden (vgl. meine Monographie über die Fälschung, S. 63/5).

*M. Burkert*: *Ep.* XIII hebt sich von den anderen ab als eigentlich literarische Fiktion; der Verfasser hat Spass an der Sache, er fordert auch den Empfänger auf, den Brief aufzuheben oder gut abzuschreiben.

*Ep.* XII, der mit dem *Archytas-Brief* über Okkelos zusammengehört, kann nicht älter als das 2. Jh. v. Chr. sein. Er ist dem Corpus vermutlich sekundär angefügt, seine Echtheit war strittig; der *Ep.* XIII ist dann wohl noch später.

*M. Speyer*: In der heidnischen Antike sind Briefsammlungen, die aus echten und unechten Stücken bestehen, sehr selten. Echtes Gut unter unechtes zu mischen, ist allerdings ein Mittel der antiken Fälscher gewesen (Beispiele in meiner Monographie, S. 83 f.).

*M. Burkert*: In dem fast durchweg fiktiven Corpus der Sokratikerbriefe steht der Brief Speusipps an König Philipp, der allen Anspruch hat als echt zu gelten.

*M. Speyer*: Eine nähere Untersuchung erfordert die Frage nach dem Ursprung derartiger Briefsammlungen. Die Platonbriefe scheinen durch die Hände spätgriechischer Grammatiker gegangen zu sein. *Ep.* XII galt ihnen dabei als seiner Herkunft nach zweifelhaft und nahm deshalb wohl die letzte Stelle ein (vgl. das Scholion: ἀντιλέγεται ὡς οὐ Πλάτωνος). *Ep.* XIII ist dann später hinzugefügt worden.

*M. Thesleff*: *Ep.* XIII includes much that might be described as « Pseudo-Pythagorean » matter. Several of the persons mentioned are elsewhere associated with Pythagoreanism, including Plato's mother (361 e ; cf. Periktione among the Ps.-Pythagorica). So it somehow belongs together with *Ep.* IX and *Ep.* XII. This group (like the letter to Dion which is not preserved, see D.L. VIII 84) seems to have been composed in order to emphasize Plato's connections with Pythagoreans (see also *Pythag. Texts*, p. 45-7).

*M. von Fritz*: Unsere Diskussion hat wohl nicht zu eindrucksvollen neuen und sicheren Lösungen von Problemen geführt, hat aber doch manche Aspekte der Probleme geklärt und vor allem auf neue Probleme, wie das der Sammlungen, aufmerksam gemacht und auf Wege, die zu ihrer Lösung führen können.

