

the scandal was officially revealed by Memmius (at Pompey's instigation), some time before October, and thereafter, although Memmius continued to expect Caesar's support, Cicero believed in November that *hic quidem friget*.²⁹ Memmius and Calvinus dissolved their partnership, but Calvinus continued to show loyalty to the triumvirs and in particular Pompey by openly voting for the acquittal of Gabinus in his *maiestas* trial in October.³⁰ His career after 49 indicates firm support of Caesar and then Octavian. In short, Calvinus was an Optimate early in 56, but a Caesarian in 54, and such a change could easily have come about because of Luca.³¹

29. Cit. *Att.* 4. 17. 2; *Q. fr.* 3. 2. 3 and 3. 8. 3.

30. Cic. *Q. fr.* 3. 4. 1.

31. In a recent article ("The Consular Elections for 53 B.C.," *Hommages à Marcel Renard* [Brussels, 1969], II, 315) E. Gruen has argued, contrary to other scholars, that Scaraus and Memmius were the triumvirs' original candidates, Calvinus and Valerius Messala the conservative candidates. Ambition alone, however, does not adequately explain why

What conclusions can then be reached? It is a recorded fact that a number of promagistrates and praetors visited Caesar at Luca in 56, but no other definite statement can be made. However, certain promagistrates and praetors for that year later revealed pro-Caesarian sympathies or had a sudden change in fortune, consistent with a realignment of forces. Judging by their subsequent behavior, C. Pomptinus, Valerius Orca, Cn. Domitius Calvinus, and C. Claudius Pulcher are men who might easily have made the journey to Luca.

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Calvinus was prepared to throw in his lot with a man openly backed by Caesar, or why Memmius should have approached Calvinus (was a colleague essential to the deal with the consuls?). Both men were triumphal opponents before 56. Why should Memmius have suspected that Calvinus might also have changed? It is tempting to assume both men had met before at Luca.

AGAIN—PLATO'S SEVENTH LETTER¹

It may seem otiose to add to the literature on the much-debated Seventh Letter of Plato, but, on the other hand, a very strong reaction may be worthy of record, especially when the basis for it has a somewhat different emphasis from points already made. As this strong reaction is on the side of the debate less favored at the moment, it may also for that reason suitably be added to the discussion.

The occasion for the adoption of this position in the long controversy over the Seventh Letter was a re-reading of the Letter for the sake of the historical information contained in it. This reading turned a casual acceptance of the present majority position into firm support of the negative minority, support bolstered by careful reading of the *Laws*, the work on which Plato must have been engaged when he wrote the Seventh Letter, if he did write it. To this reader the *Laws*,

in its language and manner, does not show the crabbed involutions that abound in the Letter. The *Laws* reads like Plato, the Seventh Letter does not.

It is very possible that this is not a matter of what is called "style," though the whole question of style in a language not one's own, no matter how well one knows it, is a very difficult one. In a recent book on Platonic styles, Thesleff has included a thorough description of the many and varied approaches to the question of style in Plato's works and their remarkably differing results.² He himself offers another kind of analysis and study, based on combinations of different kinds of writing and the coloring produced by patterns of sentence structure, grammatical constructions, figures of speech, and individual words characteristic of all these. He makes smaller claims for his method than analysts

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of these I am deeply grateful. My thanks go also to Professors Fordyce Mitchel and Robert Lloyd for corrections and suggestions.

2. H. Thesleff, *Studies in the Styles of Plato* (Helsinki, 1967), pp. 1-25.

of style have often done in the past, is tentative about judgments of fine points of chronology, and speaks of "the elusiveness of stylistic criteria in determining the inauthenticity of particular passages of works."³ He finds, however, that the Seventh Letter responds to his analysis and considers it genuine.⁴ Here one might mention the work being done with computers, which investigates essentially the same question, the use of words. To date no agreement has appeared here either. Levison, Morton, and Winspear find the Seventh Letter not, or at least not all, Platonic,⁵ while Brandwood's study supports its authenticity.⁶ Perhaps the noticeable difference between the Letter and the *Laws* is rather one of manner.

There is not space in a short article for a full discussion of the many aspects of the controversy over the authorship of the Seventh Letter, but there are some guideposts which might be mentioned for the sake of those who are unfamiliar with it. Morrow gives a useful summary⁷ of the transmission of and early critical opinion on the *Letters*, concluding with the statement that "with striking unanimity the philological researches of the last forty years have confirmed the genuineness of at least the Seventh and Eighth Epistles."⁸ With this view Morrow himself agrees. One gets the same picture in Bluck's very brief survey of opinion on the authenticity of the *Letters* in *Plato's Life and Thought*, where he says, "Cherniss is now the only writer, so far as I know, who rejects Letter VII."⁹ In fact, however, there is not such unanimity on the question. In addition to Cherniss¹⁰ we find in the ranks of the unbelievers, to mention a few well-known scholars, Shorey, who has a

good bibliography of the whole debate,¹¹ Ryle,¹² and Edelstein.¹³ The latter has devoted his considerable monograph to a detailed study of the Letter, analyzing "the document as a whole, to bring out the interrelations between the single assertions of importance"¹⁴ both within the Letter and with the writings which are certainly Platonic. Edelstein necessarily pays a good deal of attention to historical matters.

It was Shorey's opinion that the belief in the Letter was partly, at least, the result of the historians' need for it as support for the history of Sicily in the fourth century.¹⁵ One also notes how much the philosophers depend on it for the life of Plato and for a picture of him,¹⁶ though the picture they get from it is not a single, recognizably uniform one. Edelstein finds in the Plato of the Letter "the wish to dissemble, lack of the courage to state [his] convictions, a twilight of truth and falsehood, fault-finding with others and excessive admiration for [himself]."¹⁷ Solmsen, however, in his review of Edelstein, sees Plato as somewhat lopsided in recounting things, protective, much interested in property rights, ready for compromise between principles and realities—in other words, as human.¹⁸ In some of the writing about this Letter a strongly emotional tone shows.¹⁹ In fact, when one looks in detail at even the coolest historical arguments for the Letter, it becomes clear that there is really no truly objective test which can be applied to it. To illustrate, Morrow and Edelstein, after careful examination of the Letter in relation to Plutarch, Diodorus, and Nepos, come to practically opposite conclusions. Morrow concludes that Timaeus and Plutarch used it and

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 171–72.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 150–51.

5. M. Levison, A. Q. Morton, A. D. Winspear, "The Seventh Letter of Plato," *Mind*, LXXVII (1968), 309–25.

6. L. Brandwood, "Plato's Seventh Letter," *RELO*, IV (1969), 1–25. Professor Cherniss referred me to this article.

7. G. Morrow, *Plato's Epistles* (Indianapolis and New York, 1962), pp. 3–11.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

9. R. S. Bluck, *Plato's Life and Thought* (Boston, 1951), p. 189. See also A. Diès, "Quelques études récentes sur les Lettres de Platon," *RPh*, Sér. 3, IX (1935), 375–77.

10. H. Cherniss, *The Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1945), p. 13.

11. P. Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago, 1933), p. 537, ad 118A16, and p. 450, n. 40.

12. G. Ryle, *Plato's Progress* (Cambridge, 1966).

13. L. Edelstein, *Plato's Seventh Letter* (Leyden, 1966).

14. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

15. *Op. cit.* (n. 11), p. 41.

16. E.g., K. von Fritz, *Platon in Sizilien und das Problem der Philosophenherrschaft* (Berlin, 1968), p. 62; W. Neumann and J. Kerschenshteiner, *Platon: Briefe* (Munich, 1967), pp. 194–98.

17. *Op. cit.* (n. 13), p. 50.

18. *Gnomon*, XLI (1969), 33.

19. As in E. Howald, *Die echten Briefe Platons* (Zurich, 1951), pp. 23 ff.

that it was indeed written for and sent to the friends of Dion to whom it is addressed, though it also takes into account existing criticism;²⁰ Edelstein, that the historians contradict the Letter on all the important historical points and that the Letter was written to defend Plato against criticism.²¹

Some objective tests which might be applied in an attempt to clarify the authorship of the Letter are demonstrated in K. J. Dover's *Greek Word Order*. Dover discusses lexical and semantic determinants of word order, syntactical determinants, and logical determinants. The first of these showed a wide range of difference among Herodotus, Lysias, and Plato in the samplings he used.²² It does indeed seem reasonable that the position in a sentence of certain common, rather undistinctive words, neither postpositives nor prepositives, should give a clue to a writer's preference in the use of these words, and this preference, while it may possibly change from time to time, would probably be fairly consistent at any given time. One's preference in the use of such words is largely automatic and unconscious, as it cannot be in the case of the rhetorical and aesthetic indications of style, such as symmetry, imagery, the rhythms of sentence endings, and so on. For this reason it is more difficult to imitate, or, rather, it is unlikely to be noticed as an object of imitation. It seemed worthwhile, then, to analyze the position of such common, undistinctive words in the Seventh Letter and the *Laws*, dealing with the latter book by book (each approximately the length of the Letter) and as a whole. In a test of this kind, one can only say that variations must be marked to have any significance: a wide variation of pattern between two works written at about the same time would strongly support the presumption of two authors, whereas a similarity of pattern is rather negative—we may have one author, or two who favor the same pattern. Worth mentioning here is a very brief note by Shorey on the use of δ'οὖν in the Letter and the

Laws.²³ It is used 11 times in the Letter and 21 in the whole of the *Laws*, each book having 0, 1, 2, or 3 occurrences, never more. This is the same kind of word as those just mentioned, one whose use is automatic. Shorey's figures are at least suggestive of different authors.

In his discussion of lexical and semantic determinants, Dover is concerned with a group of words which, though they may occur anywhere in a sentence, have a very strong tendency to appear as near the beginning as the prepositives in it will allow.²⁴ These words fall into the following categories: interrogatives; negatives; demonstrative δ; words relating whole successive clauses to one another, e.g., πρῶτον, ἔπειτα, εἰτα, ὁμως; ἐγώ, ἔγωγε, and oblique cases; σύ, ἡμεῖς, ὑμεῖς (nominatives only); οὗτος, τοσοῦτος, τοιοῦτος, τηλικούτος, etc.; οὕτως, οὕτωςί; ἐκεῖνος; δεῦρο, ἐνταῦθα, ἐνταυθοῖ, ἐντεῦθεν; ἐκεῖ, ἐκεῖσε, ἐκεῖθεν; νῦν, etc.; τότε; αὐτός = self; ὁ αὐτός; ἄλλος; ἕτερος; ἀμφότεροι; πολλός, πλείων, πλείστος; πολλάκις; εἰς; ὅδε, τῇδε, ὧδε, τοιόσδε, τοσόσδε; πᾶς and its compounds; and adverbs with the stem παντ-. The relative position of these words in sentences, or rather clauses, was noted in several subdivisions, but the main point at issue is whether the word in one of these categories (1) stands first in its clause (allowing, of course, for prepositives) or is preceded only by another of its kind (this will be indicated by A in Table 1 and discussion) or (2) stands farther back in the clause and is preceded by a word whose position is completely free (B in Table 1 and discussion). Obviously some of Dover's words and categories will occur in any given work so rarely that they are of no use statistically. In the *Laws* and the Seventh Letter this was the case with δεῦρο, etc.; ἐκεῖ, etc.; ἀμφότεροι; and πολλάκις. Moreover, the first four categories (interrogatives; negatives; demonstrative δ; and πρῶτον, etc.) all come predominantly in the A position in the Letter and the *Laws*, as a whole and in the individual books, so they need not be considered further.

20. *Op. cit.* (n. 7), pp. 17–60.

21. *Op. cit.* (n. 13), pp. 15–69, esp. 46, 62.

22. K. J. Dover, *Greek Word Order* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 12–24.

23. "Statistics of Style in the Seventh Platonic Epistle," *CP*, XXI (1926), 258.

24. *Op. cit.* (n. 22), pp. 20–24.

TABLE 1
AN ANALYSIS OF LEXICAL AND SEMANTIC DETERMINANTS
IN THE SEVENTH LETTER AND THE "LAWS"

	Seventh Letter	Laws in toto	Laws 1	Laws 2	Laws 3	Laws 4	Laws 5	Laws 6	Laws 7	Laws 8	Laws 9	Laws 10	Laws 11	Laws 12
<i>ἐνός, ἑνός</i> & oblique	B, 1.3	A, 3-	A, 5.5	A, 5	A, 2+	A, 5	A, 7	A, 3	A, 3	=	A, 3	=	A, 4	A, 1.5
<i>σύ, ἡμεῖς,</i> <i>ὕμεις, nom.</i>	A, 4	A, 2+	A, 1+	A, 1.25	A, 1.5	A, 2	A, 3	A, 3	A, 2	B, 2	A, 3	A, 3	A, 2	A, 8
<i>οὗτος</i>	A, 1+	B, 1+	A, 1.4+	A, 1.6-	A, 1+	A, 1+	A, 1.2+	B, 1.3-	A, 1+	B, 1.2+	B, 1.2+	A, 1+	B, 1+	B, 1.7+
<i>οὗτος</i>	A, 1.7	A, 1.3+	A, 1.7+	A, 1.5+	A, 1.1+	A, 1.1	A, 1.2+	B, 2-	A, 1.1+	A, 4	A, 1.1+	A, 4-	B, 2	A, 2-
<i>ἐκεῖνος</i>	B, 2+	B, 1.7+	B, 2.3+	B, 7	A, 1.45	=	B, 2	B, 1.3+	B, 1.5	=	B, 2-	B, 5	B, 12	B, 1.5
<i>νῦν, etc.</i>	A, 1.6-	A, 1.4+	B, 2	A, 1+	A, 2	A, 1.4-	A, 1.3+	=	A, 1.4-	A, 1.2+	A, 2+	A, 1.5	A, 5	A, 2-
<i>τότε</i>	B, 1.15	B, 1.3+	=	B, 3	B, 1.6+	A, 1+	=	B, 2.3+	B, 1.25	A, 2	B, 2	B, 1.4+	A, 2	A, 2
<i>αὐτός = self</i>	B, 1+	B, 1.45-	B, 3+	A, 1+	A, 1.2	A, 1.4+	B, 2-	B, 1.1	B, 1.25	B, 3-	A, 1+	B, 2-	B, 1.5+	=
<i>ὁ αὐτός</i>	A, 1+	A, 1.1+	A, 1.1	A, 1.25	B, 1.25	A, 1.4	B, 2-	A, 1.5+	A, 1+	B, 1.3	B, 3.3	B, 2+	A, 1.25	A, 1.5
<i>ἄλλος</i>	B, 1.5	A, 1.1+	A, 2	A, 2.5-	A, 1.5	A, 1.5+	A, 1.2-	A, 1.1	A, 1.6-	A, 2	A, 1.3-	B, 1+	B, 1.4+	B, 3
<i>ἕτερος</i>	B, 1.5	B, 2.2+	B, 6	A, 4	B, 1.4	B, 3	B, 2-	B, 11	B, 2	B, 2	B, 8	B, 2+	B, 2.25	A, 1.5
<i>πολύς, etc.</i>	B, 1+	B, 1.2+	B, 1.2	B, 1+	B, 1.27	B, 1+	B, 1.3-	B, 1.27	A, 2-	B, 1+	B, 2+	B, 1.7-	B, 1.3-	B, 1+
<i>εἰς</i>	A, 2	A, 1+	B, 1.5	B, 2-	A, 1.5-	A, 1.2	B, 2.25	=	B, 1.3+	A, 2.5-	B, 1.5	A, 1+	A, 1.5-	A, 1+
<i>ὅδε, etc.</i>	B, 2-	B, 1.4+	A, 1+	=	A, 1.3	B, 1.3	B, 2	A, 1+	B, 2-	B, 10	B, 2	B, 1+	B, 4+	B, 1+
<i>πᾶς, etc.</i>	B, 2+	B, 1.6	B, 1.27	B, 1.6-	B, 1+	B, 1.7+	B, 1.6+	B, 1.6+	A, 1+	B, 2+	B, 1+	B, 3+	B, 2	B, 1.8+
<i>παντ- adv.</i>	B, 2.4	A, 1.3-	=	A, 2	A, 1.2	A, 2	A, 3	A, 2.25	A, 1.6+	B, 1.3-	A, 1.4-	B, 1+	=	A, 3

Table 1 gives the results for the remaining sixteen categories, with the letter to the left indicating the more frequent position and the figure to the right giving the ratio of greater frequency. In a few cases the number of A and B positions is equal; this is indicated by =.

It is clear from Table 1 that the only word which shows any consistent behavior is ἐγώ, which is in the B position more often in the Letter, and the A position in the *Laws*. It is, to be sure, not surprising that ἐγώ occurs more frequently in the Letter than it does in the dialogue, but it is a little startling to see how much more frequently. The figures are 108 times in the Letter and 122 in the whole of the *Laws*, which is, after all, cast in the form of a dialogue with three speakers taking part, giving their views on the points under discussion. It does seem that there may be some significance in the way in which this word is used, especially since the Letter, in which ἐγώ and its oblique cases occur naturally so frequently, is also the only place where we find it occupying the less prominent position a good deal more often. The evidence about ἐγώ goes into the balance on the side of non-Platonic authorship of the Letter. It does not, however, when viewed along with the rest of the words studied, give us a strong enough basis for a positive conclusion, though it is worth bearing in mind.

On the supposition that, if the Letter was written by Plato, the above statistics for ἐγώ would suggest that it was written when Plato was using this word in much the same way as he did in Books 8 and 10 of the *Laws*, it is worth looking carefully at Books 8, 9, and 10 to see whether they show the involved word order and complex and crabbed sentence structure of the Letter. A few examples will illustrate these characteristics of the Letter: 325C2-5 καὶ ἀπέκτειναν . . . ἔδυστύχουν αὐτοί; 328E4-5 πῶς οὐ . . . γέγονεν; 329E1-3 ὁ δὴ μηχανώμενος . . . Διονυσίου; 333A2-5 ἔτοιμον γὰρ . . . τοῖς βαρβάροις; 335B1-5 ἐάν

τε ἀκούσῃ . . . τοῦμπίμπλασθαι; 344D5-7 ὡς οὐδὲν ἀκηκοῶς . . . κατὰ τὸν ἐμὸν λόγον; 346A7-B1 ἐμοὶ καὶ σοὶ . . . διαφέρεσθαι; 347B1-3 τάλαντα γὰρ . . . οὐσίᾳ; 351A1-5 καίτοι τήν γε . . . μεγίσταις. The last three books of the *Laws* are not entirely free of complicated Greek, as an example from each book will show: 849A7-B1 τῶν δὲ ὠνίων . . . ἑκάστα; 855E4-6 ὅτι ἂν παρ' ἑκατέρου . . . τινα τρόπον; and 886E6-887A1 πότερον ἀπολογησώμεθα . . . ὡς ὄντων θεῶν. These passages are, however, not so tortuous as the examples offered by the Letter, and instances of involved sentence structure are much less numerous in the *Laws*; they are, in fact, the unusual, rather than a very usual, form of expression.

One must remember that we have, on the one hand, a letter, and on the other a work which is the result of long thought and which was carefully written and polished for "publication." It is true that letters are usually simpler and more straightforward in expression than essays and books, but the fact is that the interlocked word order with frequent separation of closely related words, so characteristic of the Letter, gives the impression of elaboration rather than haste and does not fit epistolary simplicity. Indeed, the very diversity of opinion on the skill of writing in the Letter and on its status as a letter makes one wary. To give a few examples: Bluck speaks of the marks of "hurried writing";²⁵ Harward makes the same remark and adds that "the whole can hardly have taken more than two or three months to write."²⁶ But Pasquali comments that so carefully written a letter must have taken weeks or perhaps months to write.²⁷ Novotný seems to want to have it both ways. In his Preface he states that the *Letters* cannot be shown to be written with the same care and skill as the dialogues; they are ἐπιστολικόν.²⁸ But later, when he is writing specifically about the Seventh Letter, he says that, because the letter was called forth by the need to defend Plato and Dion, it does not fit properly into the form of a letter; it is a *libellus* to

25. R. S. Bluck, *Plato's Seventh and Eighth Letters* (Cambridge, 1947), p. 23.

26. J. Harward, *The Platonic Epistles* (Cambridge, 1932), p. 192.

27. G. Pasquali, *Le Lettere di Platone* (Florence, 1938), p. 56.

28. F. Novotný, *Platonis Epistulae commentariis illustratae* (Brno, 1930), p. vi.

present to the eyes of all.²⁹ Since there are such markedly different reactions to the manner of writing of the Letter, it is not unreasonable to suggest a slightly different approach to it: that its peculiar difficulties are not the marks of hurried writing, of jotting things down as they come to mind (in view of Plato's use of language in the works which are indisputably his, it is hard to conceive of words coming into his mind as they appear in the Letter), but rather are the sign of someone trying to write in the manner of a person whose words and ideas he finds difficult and awesome.

In the actual content of the Letter, there are several striking oddities. The Letter says, in 329A7–B3, that Plato came to Sicily, in answer to Dion's pleas, leaving his own occupations, *οὐσας οὐκ ἀσχήμονας*. This querulous and defensive tone really does not even fit the Plato pictured in the Letter, who wants to show that he does not live in an "ivory tower," and it certainly does not fit the writer of the *Republic* and the *Laws*. Here was an opportunity to try to do what he was describing so capably in the *Laws*, to work along the lines of his "not unseemly pursuits." This phrase most surely sounds like someone looking at Plato from the outside.³⁰

The sentence in 331A5–B4 in which the writer speaks of someone consulting him about one of the most important things in his life, namely the acquiring of money, or his physical well-being, or the care of his soul, does not fit, in this simple form, anything we know about Plato. The passages³¹ to which one is referred in connection with this statement do indeed mention these as the three objects worthy of a man's efforts, but in all of them it is most strongly stated that money is the third consideration, concern for the body second, and care of the soul first. This is an important enough point to warrant a brief glance at these passages. In *Laws* 631B–D wealth is ranked fourth of the human goods, with health, beauty, and strength above it in

descending order; and all are ranked below the divine goods: wisdom, rational temperance of soul, justice, and courage. In 661A ff., we read that health, wealth, and beauty are good possessions only for men who are just and holy. At 697B there is the question of apportioning honors rightly in a state which is to endure and be happy: the goods to do with the soul are first and most honored, when temperance accompanies them; next are the goods associated with the body; third, those that are concerned with property and wealth. To move wealth up to honor is an unholy and unpolitical act. And in 743E ff., we find another emphatic statement: "Wherefore we have said, not once only, that care for money must be honored last, for of all three matters for which every man puts forth effort the concern for money, when rightly handled, is third, that for the body comes in the middle, and first is that for the soul." The sentence in the Letter seems to give an entirely different impression and emphasis. It is difficult to believe that Plato, even under great strain, would write this, but it seems perfectly possible from someone who had heard Plato talking about these things or had read some of the passages quoted without having the firm understanding of and feeling for the idea that its originator had.

The same conclusion seems to be called for by the whole complaining discussion of Plato's and Dion's attempt at educating Dionysius, of Plato's talk with him (emphatically stated to be single and unfinished, 341A8–B1 and 354A3–4) when he arrived in Syracuse for the third time, of the much debated "philosophical digression," and of Dionysius' plans and plots. If one reads all these sections of the Letter with care, one finds a most disconcerting collection of contradictions and fuzziness. A few examples may help to make this point.

The analogy between the physician prescribing for his patient and the legislator advising his city, 330C9–331A5, is not set

29. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

30. G. Misch, *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity* (trans. E. W. Dicks, London, 1950), I, 154, thinks that this

"view from without" is that of a member of the Academy.

31. Novotny, *op. cit.* (n. 28), p. 177; see also R. G. Bury, *Plato: The Laws* (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), I, 235.

up as a true analogy³²—the patient is ill and living with a harmful regimen, and the physician is advising him to change his way of life. If the patient will not do so, the physician should leave him. On the contrary, one may sensibly advise the city if it is on the right path as far as its constitution is concerned and it simply needs advice, *εἰ μὲν κατὰ τρόπον ὀρθῇ πορευομένης ὁδῷ τῆς πολιτείας συμβουλευοῖτο τι τῶν προσφόρων*. Such a tangential analogy in a small compass does not sound like the voice of Plato.

The matter of the test conversation, described in 340B1 ff., which Plato had with Dionysius, is also far from clear and simple. The conversation is said to show what the whole subject is, how great, through what matters one proceeds, and how much trouble it involves; it is not, however, even an introduction to philosophical study. Then we are told that Dionysius did not ask Plato even to finish this test. But in his complaint about the book which Dionysius was reported to have written, Plato is at pains to emphasize the fact that one cannot write about the most important things, not the fact that Dionysius did not qualify as a student—there is even a suggestion that Dionysius might have learned something from Plato, though as the test is described and discussed it surely cannot have been a source of knowledge of any of the content of Plato's studies.

The "philosophical digression" begins with the well-known statement, 341B7–C5, that Plato never has written about, and never will, the things *περὶ ὧν ἐγὼ σπουδάζω* (not simply the Good or the climax of his studies, but rather "the subjects which I study," that is, surely, his whole area of concern). We read then the additional piece of information that this is not something that can be spoken about, which appears to rule out the often mentioned Lecture on the Good,³³ as well as philosophical discussion in general. It might even rule out the section which immedi-

ately follows: a fairly long, detailed, but extremely confused and self-contradictory, account of *ἐπιστήμη*, its tools and its object, and their relation to one another. But in 344C1–3 the reason for not writing down the results of one's most serious efforts is said to be not that it is impossible, but that one must avoid *φθόνος* and *ἀπορία*. There exist deep confusion and lack of connection and clarity here which make the whole digression sound like the production of a person who is familiar with Plato's work and writings, but who lacks the inner understanding and conviction and the capacity for expressing it possessed by Plato himself.

It is often emphasized, e.g., by Morrow,³⁴ that Plato was an old man when he wrote this Letter, so we should not expect the incisiveness and the exact, economical, organized writing that we get in his younger days. Against this must be set the *Laws*, which does not sound in the least like the work of a failing or querulous old man.

In fact, it is hard to believe that, at any age or under any pressure, if he had undertaken to write a defense of himself or an associate, Plato would not have produced a more connected, succinct, and effective *libellus*.³⁵ It is certainly possible to adopt and defend a position sharply opposed to Solmsen's when he speaks of what a remarkable individual the author must have been, if it was not Plato, and of his unique achievement.³⁶ Surely writing in a fairly close approximation of someone's style was not an impossibility for a Greek with any gift for style—many people can do it in English—and the preceding discussion strongly suggests that the content and manner of composition are far from being remarkably Platonic.

There is no need to call the writer of the Letter a forger, a derogatory term whose connotations, as they are familiar to us, have little relation to the time in question. It seems most unlikely that we will ever know the

32. Morrow, *op. cit.* (n. 7), pp. 57–58.

33. See G. Boas, "Ancient Testimony to Secret Doctrines," *PhR*, LXII (1953), 87.

34. *Op. cit.* (n. 7), p. 57.

35. J. B. Skemp, reviewing K. von Fritz's *Platon in Sizilien*

in *CR*, LXXXV (1971), 27, says, "One still wonders whether Plato himself needed to, or was likely to, write in just this way in the latest years of his life."

36. *Op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 33.

exact circumstances of the composition of the Letter. Nor need we worry about its genuineness in connection with its importance as a source for the history of Syracuse in the fourth century. By the middle of the century, the Greeks had become very sophisticated in the matter of historical writing and were well aware of the historical significance of political developments. There were many participants in the events of those years, and many

documents relating to them, to furnish the material used as sources in the biographies and historical fragments that have come down to us. The fact that we do not know just what they were and do not have them at hand to study should not make us put on Plato's shoulders a burden which is not his.

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A NEW CRITICAL EDITION OF THE *ETYMOLOGIAE* (*ORIGINES*) OF ISIDORE OF SEVILLE

The new edition of the *Etymologiae* will appear in twenty volumes, each volume containing one of the books in which the work appears in its last seventh-century edition. Each volume will contain a critical text, based on the state of the manuscript tradition, according to the norms fixed by the Isidorian colloquy held at the Sorbonne on 23 June 1970 (see *RHT*, II [1972], 282–88). The text will be accompanied by a selective apparatus of variants and sources, by a translation into the language of the editor (English, Spanish, French, Italian, or German), and by an introduction, which will be aimed to place the particular book into the contexts of the *Etymologiae* and of Isidore's other works, of the Greco-Roman cultural tradition, and of the language and style of Isidore and of the manuscript tradition in general.

The detailed presentation of the manuscripts and the exposition of critical problems in general will be reserved for a separate volume. The edition will be supervised and revised by the International Committee of Isidorian Studies (B. Bischoff, M. C. Díaz, J. Fontaine, J. N. Hillgarth). It will be published at León (Spain) by the Editorial San Isidoro. Ten out of the twenty books are already "reserved" by individual French, Spanish, or Italian scholars. Those interested in editing a particular book are invited to write to Prof. J. Fontaine, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1 rue Victor-Cousin, Paris (V^e), or to Prof. J. N. Hillgarth, Boston College, Dept. of History, Chestnut Hill, Mass. 02167.

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SENECA *AGAMEMNON* 766–68 (LEO)

et ossa vasti corporis
corrupta longinquo situ
palude limosa iacent.

Friedrich Leo *ad loc.* first detected a difficulty: *quid significant obscurum*. Moricca repeats his verdict. F. J. Miller elaborates: "If Seneca wrote lines 766–768, he may have had some definite reference in his mind unknown to us, or he may have meant merely to add further gruesome detail to the picture." Richter transposed the offending verses to follow 772 and referred them ineptly to Tantalus. A simple explanation exists. The lines refer to Priam and more precisely recall *Aeneid* 2. 557–58:

"iacet ingens litore truncus / avulsumque umeriscaput et sine nomine corpus." *Iacent* and *corporis* are the Vergilian words. His *ingens* (cf. *Il.* 24. 477) becomes *vasti*; *litore* becomes *palude limosa*. By now the flesh is gone; *ossa* only remain. Seneca's *ossa* are "without a name."

The Furies (759–64) are those of Priam, not of Iphigenia, who is scarcely (162 ff.) an issue in Seneca's play. The unavenged and unburied bones of the king represent the curse about to be fulfilled and easily follow the Furies. The reference anticipates the equation Agamemnon = Priam explicit at 794 (*Et*