



# The Seventh Letter

Plato

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### Plato to the Relatives and Friends of Dion. Welfare.

You write to me that I must consider your views the same as those of Dion, and you urge me to aid your cause so far as I can in word and deed. My answer is that, if you have the same opinion and desire as he had, I consent to aid your cause; but if not, I shall think more than once about it. Now what his purpose and desire was, I can inform you from no mere conjecture but from positive knowledge. For when I made my first visit to Sicily, being then about forty years old, Dion was of the same age as Hipparinos is now, and the opinion which he then formed was that which he always retained, I mean the belief that the Syracusans ought to be free and governed by the best laws. So it is no matter for surprise if some God should make Hipparinos adopt the same opinion as Dion about forms of government. But it is well worth while that you should all, old as well as young, hear the way in which this opinion was formed, and I will attempt to give you an account of it from the beginning. For the present is a suitable opportunity.

In my youth I went through the same experience as many other men. I fancied that if, early in life, I became my own master, I should at once embark on a political career. And I found myself confronted with the following occurrences in the public affairs of my own city. The existing constitution being generally condemned, a revolution took place, and fifty-one men came to the front as rulers of the revolutionary government, namely eleven in the city and ten in the Peiraeus—each of these bodies being in charge of the market and municipal matters—while thirty were appointed rulers with full powers over public affairs as a whole. Some of these were relatives and acquaintances of mine, and they at once invited me to share in their doings, as something to which I had a claim. The effect on me was not surprising in the case of a young man. I considered that they would, of course, so manage the State as to bring men out of a bad way of life into a good one. So I watched them very closely to see what they would do.

And seeing, as I did, that in quite a short time they made the former government seem by comparison something precious as gold—for among other things they tried to send a friend of mine, the aged Socrates,