

# Plato's *Epistles* and Letterness

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### 1. Introduction

1.1 This Working Paper is concerned with a topic of perennial importance for the WWW Project. This is, what is 'a letter' and what criteria are used to inform making a decision this about this? 'Letterness' is both essential, slippery and difficult to pin down, and at some point acts as an obfuscation which hinders other issues from being seen. An aspect of this raised by Plato's epistles or public letters is whether these are 'real' letters or not. These thirteen letters are referred to usually as *The Epistles*. They were written – or perhaps they were not – by the philosopher Plato and date from the fourth century BCE. As well as exploring issues concerned with provenance, there are also factors related to transcription and translation involved in tracing their time-travels from their point of origin to being read in the present moment.

1.2 The discussion in the working paper loosens the hold of content in considering such matters, and instead focuses on structure – their organisation around the conventions that shaped letter-writing at the time, also the author function, the use of pronouns, and the presence/absence of a collective 'we'. It places brackets around the question of 'real or fake', and concludes that whosoever the author was. they would have needed to have known what Plato knew.

### 2. The epistles and their lineage

2.1 Among the complete surviving works of philosopher Plato are a group of thirteen epistles, semi-public letters. Many translations exist, including in English and modern Greek among other languages. They have a common source. This is linked to the activities of poet, letter-writer and scholar Francesco Petrarch. In the 1340s Petrarch became interested in earlier, Greek philosophies and their absence in languages other than the original Greek. Working with friends and colleagues, they learned Greek in order to collect rare

Greek works and translate these into Latin, with Plato a particular focus. This scholarly lineage connects Petrarch with Leonardo Bruni and associates, and through him with Marsilio Ficino. There are reports that Aristopanes of Byzantium compiled an edition of Plato manuscripts which included some epistles in the third century BCE, and that Thrasyllus did so in the first century CE, which latter included thirteen letters. The assumption is that it was the collection by Thrasyllus that was obtained by Petrarch and colleagues and which eventually was translated in full.

2.2 During the early Middle Ages, Plato's dialogues remained inaccessible to the learned classes in many countries because not available in Latin. Explicitly following Petrarch, Renaissance scholars such as Bruni translated, among other things, various of Plato's dialogues into Latin. This was followed by Ficino's complete Plato translation, a full Latin edition of all the extant work. Ficino finished his translation in the 1460s and it appeared in print in 1484. This increased the available sources on early Greek philosophy and thereby came to change the form and content of world philosophy thereafter.

2.3 Marsilio Ficino was, then, the first person to translate all of Plato's works from Greek to Latin. This translation of the complete works is still considered authoritative and the 1588 edition of his *Platonis Omnia Opera* has been scanned and each dialogue made available as a PDF. There are also now, not surprisingly, many more translations from the Greek, including excellent scholarly online versions. Early English language translations, particularly from the start of the 19th century, often worked from Ficino's Latin versions, although increasingly there was a return to the Greek; but for present purposes it should be recognised that in some cases this is a transcription in Greek made in the Middle Ages from an 'original' version which was a copy made by a third-party after the event.

2.4 The edition of *The Epistles* used in this present discussion is a translation into English made by Robert Gregg Bury in the 1890s, using using a Greek version translated into Latin by Joannes Serranus and published by Henricus Stephanus in Paris in 1578 (3 volumes). This was for centuries the standard version, with the text appearing in it in both Greek and Latin; and it provides the now ubiquitous Stephanus numbering system (drawing on Aristotle) for referencing the manuscripts of Plato's works.

2.5 There are various controversies that swirl around Plato's epistles, in particular regarding provenance and whether they are fake or genuine. It seems

that for centuries they were all regarded as genuine Plato letters, and then for philological and other reasons various of them came to be seen as suspect and perhaps produced by literary letter writers as instructional in the art of letter-writing. Over time presumption lurched in the opposite direction, that they were all fake. The situation now is that some are seen as possibly genuine and others are seen as possibly fake. It is however not clear what 'fake' means in this context, when there are so many layers of translation involved and with these originating from an 'original' which was itself a copy or a transcription and not in a direct way from 'the hand of Plato' himself.

2.6 The approach adopted here is that these matters about fake or original can be suspended, in favour of looking in detail at what these epistles are like as letters, whosoever they are by. 'Letterness' in the title indicates not only the presence of features that are ordinary associated with letters, but also departures from this, which may take many different forms. Relatedly, whosoever the epistles are by, they have common features and are likely to derive from the same source even though this is difficult to pin down. The author is represented as a textual version of 'Plato', and they tell much of how letters were written and edited and represented in the 400s-360s BCE, and how these letters in particular were written and with what effects.

2.7 As is well known, most of Plato's extant writings come under the heading of Socratic dialogues. Rather than Plato himself, the key figure is Socrates, a textual figure that acts as the agent at work in these writings and is often portrayed in an interlocutory way in enquiring, proposing, requiring, and so on. The epistles are different, because in these the key agent playing this role is Plato himself, or rather it is an 'I' surmised to be representing Plato, as is discerned from the content of the epistles and also the way they are written.

2.8 Four of the epistles are addressed to Dionysius II, the tyrant or sole ruler of Syracuse; one is addressed to this man's uncle, Dion; six are to other men known to Plato and associated with political life in Sicily; and two were written after the assassination of Dion and have a more general address, to men who were Dion's associates. These epistles are generally seen as Platonic dialogues, because of the way the textual 'Plato' is located within these texts and that there is a dialogue or exchange between this 'I' and the textual 'you' that is variously invoked.

2.9 The more detailed discussion of Plato's thirteen epistles which follows explores a number of aspects of epistolarity and letterness in connection with

them, including action-in-the-world, reading the letters, the lateness of the reader, 'I' as a moving shadow across the page, 'you' as addressee, traces of 'we', signs of an epistolary ethics, correspondence and the collection. It will also address the important question, who wrote Plato's letters?

### **3. Action-in-the-world – the philosopher as political strategist**

3.1 Plato was born in Athens in c427 BCE. He comments he was a member of the elite class of men seen as destined to take an active role in Athenian and wider political life. However, although politics was certainly an important dimension of his philosophical thought, this did not happen. In the seventh epistle, he writes that he could not identify with any of the then-existing parties or networks and even less so the regimes they were part of. The democratically-reached decision to execute Socrates on a charge of impiety added to his remove and figures in many of the dialogues. All existing governments are bad and 'The human race will have no respite from evils until those who are really philosophers acquire political power or until, through some divine dispensation, those who rule and have political authority in the cities become real philosophers' (326a-326b). And it is important to remember here that the version of democracy that existed in Athens at the time was a crowd variety, could be swayed by demagogues, and so was subject to volatile decision-making and political practice.

3.2 However, as reading the thirteen epistles confirms, this did not mean Plato gave up on his ambition to see his philosophy produce political change in the world. These letters are concerned with one or other of his three visits in 387, 367 and in 362-361 BCE to Sicily, Syracuse in particular; and they discuss his attempts to influence the tyrant Dionysius, his friendship with Dion including in the period Dion ruled Syracuse, and his advice to Dion's associates after this man's assassination. The scent of a possible convert in Dionysius was in Plato's nostrils. The well-known seventh epistle, for instance, is largely concerned with how to produce a philosopher-king, what proofs were needed to demonstrate that the conduct of the king did indeed embody the standards of Platonian philosophy, and how to pinpoint things preventing this. And indeed, the other letters also touch on such matters and include within the fold of the correspondence numbers of men who were important players in the Athenian and Sicilian political arena.

## 4. First reading the letters

4.1 Epistle I, to Dionysius. There is no formal opening or dating, indeed there is no dating in any of the epistles, it plunges into an 'I' that questions a 'you' over 'your' behaviour. Apart from the named man who is to be the bearer of the letter, 'I' and 'you' are the only people mentioned. It has a winding down but not a definite closing. Its content is not so much accusatory as upfront critical. 'I' dominates. And although Dionysius is alluded to as a tyrant and a kind of employer or patron of Plato, there is no sense of deference, Plato writes as on a par.

4.2 Epistle II, to Dionysius. There is no opening, it plunges straight into an interlocutory set of things. Various other people are mentioned including Dion and others in the opening sentences, so a named 'they' appears earlier on in it. Who these men are is taken for granted and not explained. There is no winding down or discernible closing, conveying a heterotopic small world aspect. The tone of this letter is one of questioning, but is not upfront critical in the way the first letter was about Dionysius's personal conduct. It is fairly long. It discusses the context in which people misrepresent things, and proposes using letters between them to check what are the real facts before reacting. It discusses their past meetings and comments, 'If you are contented with my doctrines, then you should hold me also in special honour' (page 4). This epistle is primarily about doctrines and standards of behaviour in particular in the political sphere and it has the names of other men in it.

4.3 Epistle III, to Dionysius. This epistle has an opening salutation. It then immediately and in detail questions this and other modes of epistolary address and the work they do. What he is urging Dion to do as well as Dionysius is enact a (second-best) replacement of tyranny with monarchy. The discussion is also concerned with changes in Plato's political actions and why this occurred regarding Dionysius. There are many details about this and why Plato left Syracuse, because nothing positive was resulting. Plato had asked whether Dionysius's behaviour is what he had advised and got laughed at mockingly. This letter is about the details of their relationship and how Plato sees the failures and the way his advice is ignored or overturned. There is no winding down or formal ending, it finishes in the midst of things.

4.4 Epistle IV, to Dion. There is no formal beginning. The content immediately plunges into Plato's activities and wanting to see them completed. It is all about his ideas and views given the political context. This context is that Dionysius has

been overthrown, and so what will happen to Plato's political initiatives. The epistle is rather short and there is a perfunctory closing.

4.5 Epistle V, to Perdiccas. There is no formal opening. This letter starts with the messages exchanged between them and Plato's advice about how Perdiccas should conduct himself. The writer constructs 'Plato' as a character within the text, on the first page (15) of this epistle. There is a short and perfunctory closing and this is a short letter.

4.6 Epistle VI, to Hermeias, Erastus and Coriscus. There is no opening, this epistle plunges into the writer giving advice which he hopes they will accept with grace. He gives suggestions about what they should do, and he adds Erastus to the other two. All three of them should read his letter and reach agreed conclusions as to their conduct. There is no closing.

4.7 Epistle VII, to associates of Dion after his assassination. This is the best known of the epistles, it is extremely long and considered to be important. It defends Plato's political activities in Syracuse as well as being concerned with the nature of philosophy and pure forms. There is a formal opening. In the opening passages there is more of 'you' and less of 'I', and this is a composite 'you' with the particular men concerned not named. It is written in a more general and narratively descriptive way than the previous letters. It covers what he had advised Dion to do and the results of Plato's different voyages to advise both Dion and Dionysius. It is self-justificatory. It is very detailed and reads like he is clearing his mind and setting out a justified position for the rightness of what he did. There is a winding down, but there is just a mention of the account given being rational and supplying sufficient excuse, and there is no formal ending.

4.8 Epistle VIII, to associates of Dion. This epistle is addressed to the companions of Dion and seems to have been written after letter VII and before Dion's assassin had been driven out. There is no opening, it plunges straight into matters of policy and securing the well-being of the men he is addressing. There is more of 'you' and general sentence construction and less of a presence of 'I'. Its contents advise the compromise position of a monarchy limited by laws that are agreed. It is quite long and there is no formal ending. It winds down with plans which the writer hopes will produce a good result.

4.9 Epistle IX, to Archytas. This epistle is very short and there is no formal opening. Its content takes the form of relaying news – two men and a group

have arrived bringing the letter from this addressee, so Plato is writing back saying what he is doing. There is no winding down or ending. It is more a kind of note acknowledging receipt than it is a letter.

4.10 Epistle X, to Aristodorus. This epistle is extremely short and it is a statement that Plato believes that his is a genuine philosophy, and other approaches he calls parlour tricks. There is a brief formal ending, 'so farewell and continue in the same disposition' (page 52).

4.11 Epistle XI, to Leodamas. There is no opening. Plato had written to him before, that what he says is of great importance and he should come to Athens. The next best thing is that Plato or Socrates should go to him, but Socrates is ill. There is a winding down and an ending, 'Good fortune attend you!' (page 53).

4.12 Epistle XII, to Archytas. This epistle has no formal opening. It mentions being pleased with something sent. There is no winding down or ending. It is a note rather than a letter. Has it been edited to be like this, or is this how it was originally written?

4.13 Epistle XIII, to Dionysius. This is out of chronological order. There is a kind of formal start to the letter in its opening statement, 'let this greeting not only commence my letter but serve at the same time as a token that it is from me' (page 55). It is quite chatty, remembering a feast they were both at, and has some reported conversation. There is more 'you' and less 'I' than in some other letters. This one is in part concerned with Dionysius's studies of philosophy. Plato also comments about Dion and that he will write about it when he gets letters which will bring him up-to-date. There is a sign or code which Plato says he uses to indicate which of his letters are serious and which are not (god at the head of the serious, and gods at the head of the less so), and Dionysius should give attention to the serious ones (with the conundrum here that none of the thirteen letters have either of these at the start of them). In this particular letter, there is a kind of winding down comment about Dionysius preserving this letter or a précis of it, but no formal ending.

## **5. General thoughts from the first reading:**

5.1. Some, most, of the epistles are dominated by 'I'. The letter-writer is very much the protagonist in all of them and comes across as insistently so in some. This is so regardless of the relative social standing of the men concerned. Plato as the letter-writer is pursuing his own trains of thought, ideas regarding right



ways to behave, and putting across his own political strategies and recommendations. This prevalence of 'I' is linked to the instructional role 'Plato' takes up with regard to his addressee, but it also comes across as stronger than this, that Dionysius is a bad pupil, and Dion has faults too.

5.2. The epistles read as edited versions, whether done by Plato or more likely an unknown hand. Given that some of them have an opening formal address, and he comments on his typical one, the likelihood is that most/all will have had such but these have been removed. Similarly so with the winding down of content at the end and providing a final ending. Some of the epistles also appear to have had content removed in addition to openings and closings, although at least one seems to have been written as a note rather than a letter. Tentatively, the indications are that someone started collecting together letters which showcased the important matter of Plato's practical involvement in political life and strategising in Syracuse, but, at some point in the past before the Greek versions were translated into Latin, the intention to produce a collection was abandoned. Perhaps this involved one or other of the two men mentioned earlier, or perhaps someone else.

5.3. The tone of the epistles is assured and indeed instructional or commanding as well as advisory. They are written by someone certain of their position and standing in relation to their correspondents. In this they add up to the representation of a persona of the philosopher as political strategist and advisor. The point at which the writer self-reflexively refers to himself by name reinforces this. This textual Plato rejects views ascribed to him by others in a commanding way, as the source of true knowledge.

4.4. Although various of the epistles are focused on particular events and the role of the person to whom the particular epistle is addressed, they also invoke letter-writing as a shared communicative medium involving exchanges between large numbers of men when away from their political base in Athens. In them, for instance, the textual Plato comments on having received letters, writing letters, waiting for letters to arrive, invoking someone who bears letters to other people, also reflecting on the capacity of letters to convey privy information, and letters with signs or codes that signal true opinions and facts distinguished from others.

5.5. The content of the thirteen episodes assumes a high degree of shared knowledge of people and events. They have an elliptical character, conveying the sense of a small world in which people know each other and the trajectory

of events and their consequences. This feature gives support to the 'they are genuine' argument, that whoever wrote them must have known what Plato knew.

5.6. The content of the epistles is particularly concerned with political strategies, manoeuvring, and providing advice on ways to behave and courses of action as political life and change unfolds in relation to the philosophical ideas which underpin all this. It is therefore curious that when Plato's political writings are discussed in scholarly accounts, usually *The Epistles* are not mentioned. However, they are a key place where he is discussing practical political action in the world and its outcomes in relation to his philosophical perspective and understandings. It is not clear in the published literature why this silence might be so, but there is perhaps an assumption that letters are too trivial a form to be taken seriously, or that the provenance of these particular letters is such that they are not seen as genuine.

5.7. The reader always comes late and this is particularly so regarding letters from antiquity which have such a complicated history as these by Plato, or rather by the represented textual 'Plato'. The intended reader comes late, because the letter-writer has produced a version of what he wanted to convey, and this has travelled across time and space before the reader ever sets eyes on it let alone reads it. And always and forever the events and times the recipient reads about have gone by, the moment of writing has gone, it is the past tense although usually written in the present tense. The reader is also always late because not part of the immediate action being narrated. There are three aspects of this worth noting. The first is how immersed in a small world these letters are, in which the intended reader can be relied upon to know enough of everything in the letter not to be puzzled and want to seek out biographical or historical information in order to comprehend it. The present-day reader is not situated like this, there are always puzzles and mysteries. The second is that a curious ontological shift occurs, because the later reader reads the words written by the letter-writer and in doing so puts themselves in the subject-position of that writer as the written words resonate in the reading mind. The later reader is also a writer in this sense. And the third is that with such letters from antiquity there is always another writer, usually a set of other writers. There are the scribes or others who helped write the originals, there is the person whose name claims authorship, there are the unknown hands that saved and collected, there are the translators and transcribers, there are the editors and publishers, and all these stand between us, we later readers, and 'Plato's epistles'.

## 6. Pronouns, the elusive we and epistolary ethics

6.1 A number of the letters are, as noted earlier, focused around the letter-writer providing counsel, guidance and instruction; and, not surprisingly, in these 'I' predominates. This is particularly notable in Epistles I and II to Dionysius. In others, while 'I' remains focal, a variety of people who are the direct and indirect addressees have textual presence and are referred to directly or indirectly, sometimes using proper names, at others pronouns. The result is that the epistles as a set represent a peopled world, with the most powerful figures in worldly terms, Dionysius and Dion, being the centre of attention and with the fount of this coming from the letter-writer, who is the philosophically and politically most powerful presence and whose multiple letter-writings and references associate a large number of other people with this.

6.2 As letters, the epistles are all directed 'to you', with 'you' being a variety of people. At the same time, the 'I' of the letter-writer is central to all, in some cases with the entire letter being focused on 'I' expounding a particular viewpoint, in other cases with this tempered by additional matters. This 'I' is the textual 'Plato' as instructor, as teacher, as the fount of political wisdom. The 'philosopher-king' comes across as more being the letter-writer than his addressees, including when, and in a way particularly so when, this is Dionysius. At one point (in Epistle V) the textual Plato invokes 'Plato' as seen by some critics, with this done to rebut their view and to reinforce that his ideas and approach are the right ones. This makes clear that there is the rank order with Plato at the apex, followed by Dionysius and Dion, followed by the other addressees.

6.3 This raises the interesting question of 'we' in the epistles and the extent to which collective forms of reference are used. In fact, this is very limited. The collective forms used include a few references to 'we' as a kind of universal for all (male) Athenians or for all (male) people (see for example Epistle IX, although there are various others). But only once is it used in a way that can be linked to Plato acting in concert with a specific other or others. This is with Dionysius in Epistle VII and does not signify a unity in the usual way: it rather appears as part of Plato picking his way across the different difficulties involved in their association. In addition to this, there are just a handful of rather tantalising references to a 'we' that might indicate something more grounded and

personalised. Epistle XII is a good example, opening with 'We have been wonderfully pleased' (page 54), with the 'we' here not unpacked in this short letter that is more a note.

6.4 While there are a small number of other examples like this, the overall effect is that the textual 'Plato' remains central and singular, dispensing ideas and wisdom and explanations, and acting in connection with some named other men, but not in a discernible way being part of a collectivity. It is difficult, indeed it is not possible, to know whether this is an artefact of the way that some letters but not others were collected and preserved, or is a reflection of what existed on the ground regarding connections between Plato and other men in his network or circle.

6.5 In summary, the composition of the heterotopic world of these thirteen epistles involves an 'I', the textual Plato, writing to two key others, Dionysus and Dion, and also sending and receiving letters with a small group of other named men. Beyond this, there is a 'we' that is all (male) Athenians or perhaps all (male) Greeks. In a much more shadowy way, there is also the hint of a 'we' that might be Plato and his household, might be Plato and his closest friends and associates, or might be just the more general 'we' that is a generalising pronoun.

6.6 What does this convey about epistolary ethics? As already noted, there are many points at which the textual 'Plato' invokes letters, letter-writing, exchanges of letters, letters sent and received, letters replied to. In context, the 'how' of all this activity is an important part of understanding the form and content of these epistles and the ethics governing them.

6.7 It was usual that letters would have a brief formalised beginning with opening salutation, and also a formalised winding down and ending. Plato comments in Epistles III and XIII on this. And as mentioned previously, it is likely that many or even all of the epistles would have had such features, but the likelihood is that when the 'originals' were copied these were not included because formulaic and extraneous to the purpose of such a collection.

6.8 Clearly in general such things were part of observing the conventions, but also and more importantly were a means of conveying that the writer was giving the addressee due acknowledgement and importance. Indeed, by emphasising what his usual opening address consisted of, the textual Plato conveys that he did use one. The deliberate absence of such things would

presume a degree of informality that would be unlikely to characterise correspondence between such well-placed men, and should be taken to result from the transcribing, copying and editing activities of an array of people at different points in historical time.

6.9 Letters in Plato's time were often, usually, written in a literal sense by a scribe and perhaps signed off and addressed by the person authorising the letter, now usually referred to as the letter-writer, although often they did not actually write them in the literal sense. This placed what were guidelines for or even restraints on what was written and how it was phrased. It also raises the question of the relationship between scribes and the men they worked for or, if they were slaves, owned by. With some other early letters (those of Cicero come to mind), it is known that this relationship could be a close one and involve a large measure of trust. And undoubtedly given the probabilities, there would also have been instances when the scribe acted as a kind of spy in the household and reported on letter-content to third parties.

6.10 Other important conventions shaped the travels that letters took once they were written and before they were read by their intended addressees. In the absence of regular postal services (although some kings and other rulers set up their own for official correspondence), known and trusted travellers going in the right direction might be asked to take letters; and sometimes, especially among the elite, a particular bearer was used by the letter-writer (in the sense of the person authorising it) and given this task, and they would also often return with a reply. One such man for instance is named in Epistle I. The role of these bearers did not end with this, however, for part of the convention, and an important aspect of the ethics involved, was that a more personal verbal message should be delivered at the same time as the written one. A written document alone would have been seen as an incomplete letter, and rather rude.

## **7. Correspondence, the collection, and who wrote Plato's epistles**

7.1 For the Athenian male elite, face-to-face interaction was an essential part of public and private life, in the same way it was later for a similar class of Roman men. A daily round of sociality in both public and private spaces existed, and the form that letter-exchanges took mirrors this for such Athenian men when elsewhere. This is because it combined a personalised form of verbal interaction involving the bearer articulating a personal message to the named recipient, and a written form signified as authentic both by content and by this verbal

message conveyed by the bearer. In this connection, it is clear from content that Plato did not just write letters, but received them, and he received replies to his own, as well as replying to those from others. Correspondence in this complicated combination of verbal and written forms consequently enabled the close sociality of the elite to continue in circumstances when people were apart from each other.

7.2 While signs of a well-honed set of expectations regarding correspondence are present in the Plato epistles, the actual correspondence referred to of course is not. If all the letters referred to were present, there would be upwards of eighty. And this number of letters would be but a one part of all of those that were ever written and replied to. Considered in epistolarium terms, the remaining traces of the letters of Plato and those who corresponded with him - the thirteen letters discussed here – are then but a small element and their relationship to the whole is also unknown and unknowable.

7.3 How was it that these particular letters survived out of the probably many hundreds that were written? Content and format provide clues. These letters all hang together in the sense that they are to or about important political figures who Plato had attempted to influence with his ideas about the philosopher-king and good forms of government, and they also evidence his practical political activities both in Syracuse and through letter sent from elsewhere, as well as his written analysis and advice in epistolary format. In addition, most of them show signs of having been edited, in particular with conventionalised openings and closings having been pruned. The format of what is now read is likely to have been only part of what was originally written. On grounds of selection and signs of editing, then, it seems likely that the reason for the survival of these letters is that they were intended for a collection of Plato letters with a political focus, but this was either abandoned before completion, or it was completed but its other elements have been lost.

7.4 In turn, this raises the question, who wrote the epistles by Plato that we now read? The answer is that everyone who has been involved in writing, translating, transcribing, editing, from the point at which the letters were originally crafted up to now is to be counted in this 'who'. Plato himself was (or was not, if one or more of them did not originate with him) involved in writing the originals, but even so this is likely to have also involved another person, in the shape of a scribe doing part or all of the actual writing. And anyway, there is no evidence that the manuscripts that were brought to Italy for translation into

Greek actually were originals in the literal sense, but are likely to be a version of them compiled for the purpose of constructing a collection of the political Plato.

7.5 'Thirteen letters' sounds diminutive. But considered in this way they signify something both large and immensely complex, for establishing provenance means tracing all these over time interconnections, a mammoth task.

### Useful reading

Brumbaugh, Robert S. and Rulon Wells (1968, eds.). *The Plato Manuscripts: A New Index*. New Haven, Yale University Press. What it says on the tin.

John Muir (2008) *Life and letters in the ancient Greek world*. London: Routledge. The introduction in particular is recommended reading.

Plato *The Epistles* (trans. Robert Gregg Bury). No place given: Aeterna Press. Quotations from the epistles in this working paper all come from this edition. For readers wanting a good introduction and discussion of issues in preparing the translations, the Loeb Classics edition has the same text by the same translator but also the benefit of an introduction and index et cetera. In addition, there is also a consideration of each of the epistles in terms of whether they are 'fake' or 'genuine'.

*Plato Research Guide*, Catholic University of America. This online resource is packed with useful goodies.

<https://guides.lib.cua.edu/c.php?g=590191&p=4079207>

Liz Stanley (2011) 'The epistolary gift: the editorial third party, counter-epistolaria: rethinking the epistolarium' *Life Writing* 8:3, pp.137-54. Looks at the idea of the epistolarium and the development of associated concepts.

Wohl, Veronica. (1998). Plato avant la lettre: authenticity in Plato's Epistles. *Ramus*, 27(1), 60-93. doi: 10.1017/S0048671X00001946. Opinionated and interesting.