

The influence of Plato in Plutarch's *Dion* and its companion *Brutus* is unmistakable. Plutarch himself advertises the book's Platonic foundation in his opening sentence, where he writes that both heroes "set out from a single *palaistra* to participate in the greatest contests." He then supports his claim by reporting that Dion was a student of Plato and Brutus was "brought up" on his teachings at the Academy (*Dion* 1.1-2). The biographies themselves narrate the great contests: Dion's struggle with Dionysius II, tyrant of Syracuse, and Brutus' famous opposition to Julius Caesar's dictatorship.

With regard to Dion, Plutarch has a precedent for choosing this thematic focus for the *Life*. Plato's *Seventh Epistle* documents the philosopher's hopes for instructing the ethically lazy leadership of Syracuse, his contentious interaction with Dionysius I and II, and his close relationship with Dion. Even those who view the letter as spurious acknowledge that it might contain some reliable historical information (cf. Irwin 1992, 78 n. 4), and regardless of its true authorship, Plutarch considered it to be genuine (cf. *Dion* 4.6, 20.4). At several points in the *Life*, he refers to this and other letters, as when, for example, he relates Dionysius' plan to marry Dion's wife to another man (*Dion* 21, *Epistle* 13). However, when narrating Plato's falling out with Dionysius during the philosopher's third visit to Syracuse, Plutarch admits that his version of the incident differs from Plato's (20.4). Why would Plutarch in this instance not follow a trusted historical source that provided an eyewitness account, and why would he note but not bother to defend his deviation?

I argue that Plutarch is actually following two Platonic sources and at times is forced to choose one over the other. One source is the historical and autobiographical *Epistles*, and the other is Plato's general teaching on the nature of the soul, which Plutarch has used to characterize Dionysius II. Plutarch presents the young tyrant as having an untamed soul, wherein his passion resists the guidance of his reason in a manner similar to that depicted in the *Phaedrus*. This characterization, I suggest, forces Plutarch to deviate at times from his historical source. So, for example, when he describes Plato's first visit to Syracuse (4.3-5), he follows the *Seventh Epistle* quite closely (esp. 326e-327b) and even cites it. However, when he describes Dionysius' interaction with Plato during the philosopher's second visit, he prefers the philosophical characterization and depicts a Dionysius who has conceived an unbridled and misdirected *eros* for Plato (11.1, 16.1-3). This characterization goes beyond that of the *Epistle*, where Plato writes that Dionysius was merely "fondly attached" to him (330a). Thus when Plutarch comes to describing their falling out during Plato's third visit (20), he must deviate from the *Epistle's* matter-of-fact account (350a-b) and instead describe a break that reflects the strong erotic feelings of the tyrant. In tracing Plutarch's use of his Platonic sources, I will also show that his choices in constructing this particular biographical narrative reflect his general willingness to forgo historical accuracy in favor of original and instructive characterization (cf. Pelling 2002, 107-08 and 257-61; Beneker, *GRBS* 2002/2003).