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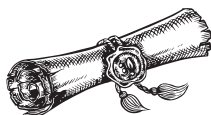
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PART I

THEORY



This section contains theoretical reflections on letter writing as a stylistic and rhetorical practice as well as practical guidance on how to write appropriate letters. The study of rhetoric, focused on oratory and often embracing literary style more broadly, was a highly developed intellectual pursuit in antiquity, going back to Plato, the sophists, and Aristotle. Letters are tangential to this enterprise, but often enter the discussion of style, which was generally divided into grand, plain, and middle, with letters exemplifying plain, or low, style. The first excerpt comes from a rhetorical treatise that survived under the name of Demetrius of Phaleron, a prominent Athenian philosopher and statesman (350–280 BCE), but it is likely as late as the first century CE, when the famous name would have given the work more authority. The section on letters is part of a discussion of plain style and is focused on making sure the letter appears natural. The second selection is also attributed to Demetrius, but it is quite

## PART I: THEORY

a different type of work: this is a practical manual to be used by personal secretaries or bureaucrats looking for guidance in writing letters appropriate to particular situations. It provides a taxonomy and templates. The fine-grained distinctions between different types of negative letters are noteworthy and indicative of the importance of finding the right tone based on the nature of the relationship between the sender and the addressee and the specific issue treated in the letter. The final excerpt, by the late Roman rhetorician Julius Victor (fourth century CE), treats letters in connection with a discussion of how to properly represent character in speech.

*De Elocutione*  
223–24; 227–32; 234–35

Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ ἐπιστολικὸς χαρακτήρ δεῖται ἰσχνότητος, καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ λέξομεν. Ἀρτέμων μὲν οὖν ὁ τὰς Ἀριστοτέλους ἀναγράφας ἐπιστολάς φησιν, ὅτι δεῖ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τρόπῳ διάλογόν τε γράφειν καὶ ἐπιστολάς· εἶναι γὰρ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν οἷον τὸ ἕτερον μέρος τοῦ διαλόγου. Καὶ λέγει μὲν τι ἴσως, οὐ μὴν ἅπαν· δεῖ γὰρ ὑποκατεσκευάσθαι πῶς μᾶλλον τοῦ διαλόγου τὴν ἐπιστολήν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ μιμεῖται αὐτοσχεδιάζοντα, ἡ δὲ γράφεται καὶ δῶρον πέμπεται τρόπον τινά....

Πλεῖστον δὲ ἐχέτω τὸ ἠθικὸν ἢ ἐπιστολή, ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ διάλογος· σχεδὸν γὰρ εἰκόνα ἕκαστος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς γράφει τὴν ἐπιστολήν. καὶ ἔστι μὲν καὶ ἐξ ἄλλου λόγου παντὸς ἰδεῖν τὸ ἦθος τοῦ γράφοντος, ἐξ οὐδενὸς δὲ οὕτως, ὥς ἐπιστολῆς.

Τὸ δὲ μέγεθος συνεστάθω τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, ὥσπερ καὶ ἡ λέξις. αἱ δὲ ἄγαν μακραὶ καὶ προσέτι κατὰ τὴν ἐρμηνείαν ὀγκωδέστεραι οὐ μὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐπιστολαὶ γένοιντο ἂν, ἀλλὰ συγγράμματα τὸ χαίρειν ἔχοντα προσγεγραμμένον, καθάπερ τῶν Πλάτωνος πολλαὶ

## ON STYLE

DEMETRIUS

Since the letter-writing style must also be plain, we will discuss it too. Artemon, who edited the letters of Aristotle, says that one must write letters in the same manner as dialogues: for a letter is just one side of a dialogue. And some of what he says is reasonable, but not all of it. A letter needs to be somewhat more deliberate than a dialogue: a dialogue represents extemporaneous utterances, but a letter is written and sent as a kind of gift. . . .

A letter should most of all represent the character of the writer, just like the dialogue; for it's almost as if in writing a letter each person represents his own soul. And it is also possible to see the character of the writer in all other genres of writing, but in none as much as in a letter.

The length of a letter should be restricted, just as much as its style. For the excessively long ones, and ones whose style is rather bloated, would not, in truth, be letters, but treatises that open with a personal greeting: such are many letters of Plato and

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

καὶ ἡ Θουκυδίδου. Τάξει μέντοι λελύσθω μᾶλλον· γελοῖον γὰρ περιοδεύειν, ὥσπερ οὐκ ἐπιστολήν, ἀλλὰ δίκην γράφοντα· καὶ οὐδὲ γελοῖον μόνον, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ φιλικόν (τὸ γὰρ δὴ κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν τὰ σῦκα σῦκα λεγόμενον) ἐπιστολαῖς ταῦτα ἐπιτηδεύειν. Εἰδέναι δὲ χρή, ὅτι οὐχ ἐρμηνεία μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πράγματά τινα ἐπιστολικά ἐστιν. Ἀριστοτέλης γοῦν, ὃς μάλιστα ἐπιτετευχέναι δοκεῖ τοῦ ἐπιστολικοῦ, τοῦτο δὲ οὐ γράφω σοι· φησὶν· οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἐπιστολικόν. Εἰ γάρ τις ἐν ἐπιστολῇ σοφίσματα γράφοι καὶ φυσιολογίας, γράφει μέν, οὐ μὴν ἐπιστολήν γράφει. Φιλοφρόνησις γάρ τις βούλεται εἶναι ἢ ἐπιστολὴ σύντομος, καὶ περὶ ἀπλοῦ πράγματος ἔκθεσις καὶ ἐν ὀνόμασιν ἀπλοῖς. Κάλλος μέντοι αὐτῆς αἶ τε φιλικαὶ φιλοφρονήσεις καὶ πυκναὶ παροιμίαι ἐνοῦσαι· καὶ τοῦτο γὰρ μόνον ἐνέστω αὐτῇ σοφόν, διότι δημοτικόν τί ἐστιν ἢ παροιμία καὶ κοινόν, ὃ δὲ γνωμολογῶν καὶ προτρεπόμενος οὐ δι’ ἐπιστολῆς ἔτι λαλοῦντι ἔοικεν, ἀλλὰ μηχανῆς...

Ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ πόλεσιν ποτε καὶ βασιλεῦσιν γράφομεν, ἔστωσαν τοιαῦται αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ <οἷαι> μικρὸν ἐξηρμέναι πῶς. Στοχαστέον γὰρ καὶ τοῦ προσώπου ὧ γράφεται· ἐξηρμένη μέντοι [καὶ] οὐχ ὥστε σύγγραμμα

## PART I: THEORY

Thucydides. But the organization of a letter should be somewhat loose: for it is ridiculous to write elaborate sentences, as if writing a court speech, not a letter; and to use such sentences in letters is not only ridiculous, but goes against their connection to friendship (which, according to the proverb, in fact, calls a spade a spade). We must also realize that letters require not only a particular style, but also appropriate subject matter. Aristotle, at any rate, who seems to have gotten the epistolary mode just right, says: “But about this I am not writing to you, for it was not suitable to a letter.” For if someone should write arguments and scientific investigations in a letter, he is writing something, but that writing is not a letter. A letter is supposed to be a concise expression of good will, and a presentation of a single subject in plain language. However, it can have embellishment in the form of friendly good wishes and frequent use of proverbs. Proverbs are the only type of wisdom that should be introduced, since a proverb is wisdom of the people and is widely shared, while speaking in aphorisms and being didactic is not like chatting in a letter but like speaking from a pulpit....

But since we also write letters to cities and to kings, such letters must be somewhat elevated. For we must calibrate the tone of the letter to the person to whom it is written. But elevated not so as to be

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

εἶναι ἀντ' ἐπιστολῆς, ὥσπερ αἱ Ἀριστοτέλους πρὸς Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ πρὸς τοὺς Δίωνος οἰκεῖους ἢ Πλάτωνος. Καθόλου δὲ μεμίχθω ἢ ἐπιστολὴ κατὰ τὴν ἐρμηνείαν ἐκ δυοῖν χαρακτήρῳιν τούτοιιν, τοῦ τε χαρίεντος καὶ τοῦ ἰσχυοῦ. καὶ περὶ ἐπιστολῆς μὲν τοσαῦτα, καὶ ἅμα περὶ τοῦ χαρακτῆρος τοῦ ἰσχυοῦ.

### Τύποι Επιστολικοί

Τῶν ἐπιστολικῶν τύπων, ὧ Ἡρακλείδῃ, ἐχόντων τὴν θεωρίαν τοῦ συνεστάναι μὲν ἀπὸ πλειόνων εἰδῶν, ἀναβάλλεσθαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν ἀεὶ πρὸς τὸ παρὸν ἀρμοζόντων, καὶ καθηκόντων μὲν ὡς τεχνικώτατα γράφεσθαι, γραφομένων δ' ὡς ἔτυχεν ὑπὸ τῶν τὰς τοιαύτας τοῖς ἐπὶ πραγμάτων ταττομένοις ὑπουργίας ἀναδεχομένων, θεωρῶν σε φιλοτίμως ἔχοντα πρὸς φιλομάθειαν ἐπραγματευσάμην διὰ τινων συστήσειν ἰδεῶν καὶ πόσας καὶ ἅς ἔχουσι διαφοράς, καὶ καθάπερ δεῖγμα τῆς ἐκάστου γένους τάξεως ὑποδέδειχα προσεκθέμενος μερικῶς τὸν περὶ ἐκάστου λόγον.

... Γένῃ μὲν οὖν ἐστίν, οἷς ἐντετυχήκαμεν, ἐν καὶ εἴκοσι. τάχα δ' ἂν ἐνέγκοι πολλαπλάσια τούτων ὁ χρόνος. εὐφυῆς γὰρ εὐρετὴς καὶ τεχνῶν καὶ θεωρημάτων οὗτος. ἄλλος δὲ τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς οὐδεὶς ἐπὶ καιρὸς εἰς ἐπιστολικὸν τρόπον ἀνήκων τύπος. ἐπονομάζεται δ' ἕκαστος αὐτῶν ἀφ' ἧς ἐστίν ἰδέας οὕτως· φιλικός,

## PART I: THEORY

a treatise instead of a letter, like Aristotle's letters to Alexander and Plato's letter to the associates of Dion. So overall, in regard to style, a letter should be a blend of the following two types: the graceful and the plain. And that's all regarding the letter, and also regarding the plain style.

### LETTER TYPES

PSEUDO-DEMETRIUS

The theory of letter types, Heracleides, is that letters can take many different shapes, but are to follow models suited to the present circumstances. And while they should be composed with great skill, those whose job it is to write letters for men in official positions write letters without proper method. Since I notice that you are ambitious in your love of learning I have taken the trouble to put together some of these styles, how much and in what ways they differ from each other, and I have produced a kind of model of organization of each type of letter, explaining individually the reasoning behind each one....

There are twenty-one types with which I am familiar. Time might bring many more of them—it is by nature an inventor of skills and theories. But in my view, at the moment there is no other type that belongs to the epistolary mode. Each type

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

συστατικός, μεμπτικός, ὀνειδιστικός, παραμυθητικός, ἐπιτιμητικός, νουθετητικός, ἀπειλητικός, ψεκτικός, ἐπαινετικός, συμβουλευτικός, ἀξιωματικός, ἐρωτηματικός, ἀποφαντικός, ἀλληγορικός, αἰτιολογικός, κατηγορικός, ἀπολογητικός, συγχαρητικός, εἰρωνικός, ἀπευχαριστικός.

1. Ὁ μὲν οὖν φιλικὸς ἐστὶν ὁ δοκῶν ὑπὸ φίλου γράφεσθαι πρὸς φίλον. γράφουσι δὲ οὐχ οἱ πάντως φίλοι. πολλάκις γὰρ ἐν ὑπάρχοις κείμενοι πρὸς ὑποδεεστέρους ὑπὸ τινων ἀξιοῦνται φιλικὰ γράψαι καὶ πρὸς ἄλλους ἴσους, στρατηγούς, ἐπιστρατήγους, διοικητάς. ἔστιν ὅτε καὶ προσγράφουσι τούτους ἀγνοοῦντες. οὐ γὰρ διὰ τὸ συγκεκρᾶσθαι καὶ μίαν ἔχειν αἵρεσιν τοῦτο πράττουσιν, ἀλλ' οὐδένα νομίζοντες ἀντερεῖν αὐτοῖς φιλικὰ γράφουσιν, ἀλλ' ὑπομενεῖν καὶ ποιήσιν περὶ ὧν γράφουσιν. ὁ μέντοι τύπος καλεῖται τῆς ἐπιστολῆς φιλικὸς ὡς πρὸς φίλον γραφόμενος. ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος·

Εἰ καὶ πολὺ σου διάστημα τυγχάνω  
κεχωρισμένος, τῷ σώματι μόνον πάσχω τοῦτο.

## PART I: THEORY

is named after its style: friendly, commendatory, blaming, reproachful, consoling, reprimanding, admonishing, threatening, vituperative, praising, advisory, supplicatory, inquiring, responding, allegorical, accounting, accusing, apologetic, congratulatory, ironic, thankful.

1. The friendly type, then, is one that appears to be written by a friend to a friend. But it's not exclusively friends who write such letters. For often men in positions of power are expected to write in a friendly way to their subordinates and to their equals, such as generals, governors, and other administrators. There are times when they write to them even though they don't know them. They write in a friendly manner not because of their frequent association and it being their only option, but because they think no one will deny them if they write as friends but will submit and do what they write about. But this type of letter is called friendly, as if written to a friend. This is what it's like:

“Even though I have been separated from you by a great distance, it is only in body that I

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οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδέποτε δυνατόν ἐπιλαθέσθαι με σοῦ οὐδὲ τῆς γεγονυίας ἡμῖν ἐκ παίδων ἀνεγκλήτου συνανατροφῆς. εἰδὼς δὲ ἑμαυτὸν τὰ πρὸς σὲ γνησίως διακείμενον καὶ πάνυ τὸ σοὶ συμφέρον ἀπροφασίστως ὑπηρετήσαντα τὴν αὐτὴν ὑπείληφα καὶ σὲ περὶ ἐμοῦ γνώμην ἔχοντα κατὰ μηδὲν ἀντερεῖν πρὸς με. καλῶς οὖν ποιήσεις πυκνότερον ἐπισκοπῶν τοὺς ἐν οἴκῳ μὴ τινος ἔχῃσι χρεῖαν καὶ συμπαριστάμενος ἐν οἷς ἂν δέωνται καὶ γράφων ἡμῖν περὶ ὧν αἵρη.

2. Ὁ δὲ συστατικός, ὃν ὑπὲρ ἄλλου πρὸς ἄλλον γράφομεν ἔπαινον συγκαταπλέκοντες ἅμα καὶ τοὺς πρότερον ἡγνοημένους λέγοντες ὥς ἐγνωσμένους. οὕτως·

Τὸν δεῖνα τὸν παρακομίζοντά σοι τὴν ἐπιστολὴν καὶ ἡμῖν κεκριμένον καὶ δι' ἣν ἔχει πίστιν ἀγαπώμενον καλῶς ποιήσεις ἀποδοχῆς ἀξιώσας καὶ δι' ἐμὲ καὶ δι' αὐτόν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ διὰ σαυτόν. οὐ μεταμελήσῃ γὰρ ἐν οἷς θέλεις εἶτε λόγον ἀπόρρητον εἶτε πρᾶξιν εἰπεῖν. ἀλλὰ καὶ σὺ πρὸς ἐτέρους ἐπαινέσεις αὐτόν

## PART I: THEORY

suffer this separation: for it is in no way possible for me to forget you or our upbringing, growing up together in harmony since childhood. Since I know that I am genuinely well disposed toward your affairs and have, with no hesitation, performed anything that is beneficial to you, I assume that you have the same attitude toward me, and will not deny me in any matter. You will do well, therefore, if you look out with close attention for those in my household so that they are not in need of anything and help them if they are lacking something and write to us about whatever you prefer.”

2. The commendatory type, which we write to one person about another weaving in praise and speaking of people previously unknown to each other as though they are getting acquainted. In this way:

“So-and-so, who is delivering this letter to you, has been tried and tested by me and on account of his loyalty is beloved. You will do well to consider him worthy of a good welcome both on my account and on his own, and further still, also on yours. For you will not regret, in any matters of your choosing,

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

αἰσθόμενος ἦν ἐν παντὶ δυνατός ἐστι χρεῖαν  
παρασχεῖσθαι.

3. Μεμπτικὸς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ μὴ νομίζεσθαι βαρεῖν  
προσδεχόμενος. οἷον·

Εἰ μὴ παραδέδωκέ σοι μηδέπω ὁ καιρὸς ὧν εὖ  
πέπονθας ἐκτίσαι χάριτας, οὐδὲ αὐτὸ τοῦτό γε  
καλῶς ἔχειν ὑπέιληφα τὸ μὴ μνημονεύειν ὧν  
ἔπαθες. σὺ δὲ καὶ δυσχερεῖς καθ' ἡμῶν λόγους  
προστίθεις. σὲ μὲν οὖν μεμφόμεθα τρόπον  
ἔχοντα τοιοῦτον, αὐτοὺς δέ, ὅτι σὲ τοιοῦτον  
ὄντα ἡγνοοῦμεν.

4. Ὀνειδιστικὸς δὲ ἐστὶν, ὅταν αὖ τὸν ὑφ'  
αὐτῶν προευεργετημένον ἐφ' οἷς ἔπραξε μετ'  
ἐγκλημάτων ὀνειδίζωμεν.

Ἦδει σὲ τὸ γνῶθι σαυτὸν μαθόντα τότε ἑτέροις  
προσφέρεσθαι δυσκόλως. νῦν δ' ἀκμὴν ὑφ' ἡμῶν  
τρεφόμενος καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς ἔχων τὸ πνεῦμα μεῖζον  
φρονεῖς τοῦ δέοντος. ἡμεῖς δὲ τούτου αἵτιοι. σὲ  
γὰρ ἔδει μὴ τυχεῖν ἐλευθέρου σχήματος. καίπερ

## PART I: THEORY

speaking to him of secret words and actions. Furthermore, you will praise him to others, once you realize that he can provide what you need in every situation.”

3. The blaming type is one that attempts not to come across as severe, such as:

“Since a right moment has not yet presented itself to you to repay the benefits you reaped thanks to me, I thought that this in itself—not mentioning what you received from me—was not proper. But you also express irritation toward me. Therefore, I blame you for having this kind of attitude and myself for not realizing what you were like.”

4. The reproachful type is when, once again, we reproach a person we performed a service for, based on what he has done, with accusations:

“When you learned the saying ‘know thyself,’ it was inevitable that you would reveal yourself as irritating to others. But now, reared by me to the prime of youth, alive thanks to me, you have a greater opinion of yourself than

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

οὐδὲ νῦν ἐλεύθερος γέγονας σχῆμα κεκτημένος  
δουλοπρεπές.

5. Παραμυθητικὸς δέ ἐστιν ὁ γραφόμενος τοῖς  
ἐπὶ λύπης καθεστηκόσι δυσχεροῦς τινος  
γεγονότος. ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος·

Ἀκούσας τὰ δεινὰ τῆς ἀχαρίστου σου τύχης  
ἀπηντημένα καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἤλγησα νομίσας  
οὐ σοὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐμοὶ συμβεβηκέναι τὸ  
γεγονός. ἐκείνην μὲν οὖν τὴν ἡμέραν ἅπαντα  
ιδὼν τὰ πρὸς τὸν βίον ἐστῶτα συνεφόραζον,  
ἐννοηθεῖς δὲ ὅτι τὰ τοιαῦτα πᾶσιν ἐστιν  
ὑποκείμενα τῆς φύσεως οὔτε χρόνον οὔτε  
ἡλικίαν ὑφισταμένης, καθ' ἣν δεῖ τι πάσχειν,  
ἀλλ' ἀδήλως μετὰ σκαιότητος οὐκ ἀξίως  
πολλάκις ἀπαντώσης, ἐπεὶ μὴ παρὼν τετύχηκα  
παρακαλεῖν σε, δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἔκρινα τοῦτο  
ποιῆσαι. φέρε γοῦν τὸ γεγονὸς ὡς δύνῃ  
κουφότατα καὶ καθὼς ἄλλῳ παρήγεσας,  
σαυτῷ παραίνεσον. ἐπίστασαι γὰρ ὅτι τὸ  
μέλλον χρόνῳ κουφιεῖν σε τοῦτο ὁ λόγος  
εὐμαρέστερον ποιήσει.

## PART I: THEORY

you should. It's my fault. It was inevitable that you would not arrive at a character of a free person. And yet even now you are not a free person; the character you've come to possess is slavish."

5. The consoling type is written to people in a state of grief, because something unpleasant has happened. It goes like this:

"Upon hearing of the terrible things you encountered because of ungrateful fate, I suffered greatly, considering that what had happened affected me as much as you. That entire day I considered the circumstances of life, and I lamented, but then reflected that such things befall all men, and nature appoints no time or age when it is necessary to suffer a particular thing, but often moves on us in a stealthy and underhanded way, when we don't deserve it. Since I happened not to be there in person to console you, I decided to do it over letter. At any rate, bear what happened as easily as you can, and give yourself advice you would give another. Understand that reason will make it easier for you to be relieved by time in the future."

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

6. Ἐπιτιμητικὸς δέ ἐστιν ὁ ἐφ' ἀμαρτήμασι  
προγεγονόσι μετ' ἐπιπλήξεως γραφόμενος.  
οὕτως·

Τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων τὰ μὲν ἐκουσίως γίνεται,  
τὰ δὲ ἀκουσίως, καὶ τὰ μὲν μεγάλα κατέστηκε,  
τὰ δὲ μικρά, καὶ τὰ μὲν μόνοις βλαβερὰ τοῖς  
ἀμαρτάνουσι, τὰ δὲ ἑτέροις. σοὶ δὲ καθάπερ  
ἐπιτήδευμα συμβέβηκεν ὄντα· καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἄκων  
μεγάλα καὶ πολλοῖς βλαβερὰ διαπέπραξαι.  
προσῆκει μὲν οὖν σε μείζονος ἐπιτυχεῖν  
ἐπιπλήξεως, εἰ δὴ κατὰ τὸ παρὸν συντετύχηκε  
καὶ ἐπὶ ἑτέρων τῶν ἀδικηθέντων. ἀλλ' ἔτι γε  
δυνατὸν ἐστὶν ἰάσεως τυχεῖν <τὸ> γεγονὸς  
πλημμέλημα. πρὸς διόρθωσιν γὰρ ἀγαγὼν  
αὐτὸς αἷτιος γενήσῃ τοῦ μὴ γεγονέναι καθάπερ  
ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ γεγονέναι.

7. Νουθετητικὸς δέ ἐστιν, ὅς καὶ διὰ τῆς  
ὀνομασίας ὁποῖός ἐστι δηλοῖ τὸ γὰρ νουθετεῖν  
ἐστὶ νοῦν ἐντιθέναι τῷ νουθετουμένῳ καὶ  
διδάσκειν τί πρακτέον καὶ μή. οὕτως·

## PART I: THEORY

6. The reprimanding type is one written based on errors committed previously, and contains rebukes. Like this:

“Some errors are committed voluntarily, some involuntarily; some that happen are grave, others small; some are harmful only to those who make the error, some to others. But for you they’ve turned into habits. For you have committed, not unwillingly, grave errors, harmful to many. It is therefore appropriate that you receive greater rebuke, if indeed in the present circumstances others have suffered injury. And yet it is still possible for the trespass that has occurred to achieve healing. For if you are moving toward redress, you will yourself be responsible for it not happening as before you were responsible for what happened.”

7. The admonishing type is one that makes clear through its very name what sort it is. For to admonish is to put some sense into one who is being admonished and to teach him what should be done and what not. In this way:

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

Κακῶς ἐποίησας οὕτω χρησάμενος ἀνδρὶ καλῶς  
ἀνεστραμμένῳ καὶ κατὰ λόγον βεβιωκότι  
καὶ τὸ ὅλον μηδὲν ἄτοπον εἰς σὲ πεποιηκότι.  
παραιτήσεως οὖν ἀξιώσον τὸ πρᾶγμα. καὶ γὰρ  
σὺ πάλιν ὑπ' ἄλλου παθὼν ῥαδίως ἂν ἤνεγκας  
τόδε ἐπὶ σαυτὸν δικαίων. μὴ δόκει οὖν μήτε  
γονέων μήτε ἀγωγῆς τετυχηκέναι μήτε τὸ  
πᾶν ἔσχατον συγγενῇ τινα ἢ φίλον ἔχειν τὸν  
ἐπιτιμήσοντα τοῖς ἁμαρτήμασιν.

8. Ἀπειλητικὸς δέ ἐστιν, ὅταν μετ' ἐπιτάσεως  
φόβον τισὶν ἐμποιῶμεν ἐπὶ πεπραγμένοις ἢ  
πραχθησομένοις. οὕτως·

Εἰ μὲν ὑπολαμβάνεις μηδεμίαν ὑφέξειν δίκην  
ἐφ' οἷς διαπέπραξαι, πρᾶττε. εἴση δὲ ἀκριβῶς  
ὥς οὔτε ἀναπτησόμενος οὔτε καταδυσόμενος  
οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ χρόνον ἐπισπᾷ κενόν. ὁδὸν γὰρ  
οὐκ ἂν εὐροῖς δι' ἧς ἀποφύγοις ἃ σε δεῖ παθεῖν.

9. Ψεκτικὸς δέ ἐστιν, ὅταν τρόπου κακίαν  
ἢ δυσχέρειαν πράξεως κατὰ τινος  
ἐξαγγέλλωμεν. οὕτως·

## PART I: THEORY

“You behaved badly mistreating a man who conducted himself well and lived sensibly and did you no wrong. Therefore, your action demands an apology. For also, if you suffered so at the hands of another, you would scarcely have endured it and would have demanded justice. Don’t think, then, that someone who objected to your mistreatment has no parents, has not received proper education, and last of all, has no relative or friend.”

8. The threatening type is when we forcefully instill fear in someone based on what they’ve done or plan to do. So:

“If you assume that you will suffer no penalty for the things you have done, do them. But you will see precisely that neither by rushing upward nor plunging down will you in any way gain a postponement. You would not find a path by which you could escape what you must suffer.”

9. The vituperative type is when we castigate someone for the vices of his character and express disgust at his actions. So:

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Ὁ δεῖνα ὥς κέχρηται τοῖς ἐγκεχειρισμένοις ἀνελευθέρως καὶ τῆς προαιρέσεως ἀναξίως, καὶ ἐγὼ σιωπῶ, παρ' ἄλλων ἀκούσῃ· γράφειν γὰρ προσήκει περὶ ὧν ἂν μὴ τινες ἐπιστῶνται· περὶ δὲ τῶν ἅπασι φανερῶν καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῆς τῆς φήμης ἀναγγελλομένων περισσόν τι καὶ τὸ μηνύειν ἂ δι' αὐτῶν ἐλέγχεται σιωπωμένων.

10. Ἐπαινετικὸς δέ ἐστιν, ὅταν ἐφ' οἷς ἔπραξέ τις ἢ προεῖλετο, παρακαλῶμεν ἀποδεχόμενοι τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον·

Ἐγὼ καὶ πρότερον εἰ ἔγραψας γράμμασι μετειλήφειν τῆς σῆς φιλοκαλίας καὶ νῦν ἐφ' οἷς πέπραχας ἀποδέχομαί τε καὶ παρακαλῶ. συνοίσει γὰρ ἡμῖν ἀμφοτέροις.

11. Συμβουλευτικὸς δέ ἐστιν, ὅταν τὴν ἰδίαν γνώμην προφερόμενοι προτρέπωμεν ἐπὶ τι ἢ ἀποτρέπωμεν ἀπὸ τινος. οἷον οὕτως·

## PART I: THEORY

“Even if I stay silent, you’ll hear from others how so-and-so has treated men entrusted with authority—illiberally and taking no account of their position. For it is appropriate to write about matters that some people are not paying attention to. But about things known to all and announced by rumor itself, it is superfluous to write, just as there is no need to disclose that which is revealed by the same means by which it is kept silent.”

10. The praising type is when we encourage someone based on things he did or planned to do, showing approval in this way:

“Even earlier, if you wrote to me, I was able to partake in your love of excellence through your letters, and now I welcome and encourage the things you’ve accomplished. For they will benefit both of us.”

11. The advisory type is when we provide our own opinion and urge something or discourage someone from doing something. Like this:

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

Ἐξ ὧν εὐδοκίμησα διὰ τῶν ἀρχομένων κεφαλαιωδῶς ὑποδέδειχά σοι. γινώσκω μὲν οὖν ὅτι καὶ σὺ τῷ τρόπῳ δυνατὸς εἶ τὴν παρὰ τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων εὐνοίαν περιποιεῖσθαι τῶν ὑπηκόων, ἔτι δὲ φίλους πλείστους μὲν οὐ ποιεῖν, πρὸς ἅπαντας δὲ μετρίως ἔχειν καὶ φιλανθρώπως. τοιοῦτος γὰρ ὢν παρὰ τῶν ὄχλων τὴν εὐφημίαν καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀσάλευτον ἔξεις.

12. Ὁ δὲ ἀξιωματικὸς ἐστὶν ἐν δεήσει κείμενος καὶ ταῖς λιταῖς καὶ ταῖς καλουμέναις λιτανείαις. κεῖται δὲ μετὰ παραιτήσεως ἐνίστε. οὕτως·

Ἐπιτετίμηκα τῷ δεῖνι περὶ ὧν ἔφης αὐτὸν εἰς σὲ διαπεπρᾶχθαι καὶ πικρότερον ἢ προσῆκεν αὐτῷ διηγέσθην καὶ σχεδὸν ἥπερ σὺ ὑπὲρ σεαυτοῦ. ἐμοὶ οὖν τὴν ἀδικίαν ἀνάθες καὶ εἰς τὸ πάλιν. σὲ γὰρ οἶδα καὶ χρηστὸν καὶ τοῖς φίλοις χαριζόμενον. δάμασον τοίνυν καθ' Ὅμηρον θυμὸν μέγαν, οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ νηλεὲς ἦτορ ἔχειν. στρεπτοὶ δέ τε καὶ θεοὶ αὐτοί.

## PART I: THEORY

“I have indicated to you in brief on what basis I have gained popularity with the people I rule. So I recognize that you also can in this manner acquire the good will of your subjects and make them obedient, and, if not make most men your friends, then, at any rate, be reasonable and humane to all. If you behave this way, you will have praise from the masses and unassailable power.”

12. The supplicatory type consists of requests and prayers and what's called entreaties. Sometimes it contains a petition. So:

“I rebuked so-and-so about the things you said he did to you, and I attacked him more bitterly than was appropriate and almost more than you would on your own behalf. Once again, then, for my sake, pardon this injustice. For I know you are kind and indulgent to your friends. ‘Control’ then, as Homer says, ‘your great spirit; it is not necessary at all for you to have a merciless heart; even the gods themselves can be placated.’”<sup>1</sup>

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

13. Ἐρωτηματικός, ὅταν περί τινος πυνθανόμενοι παρακαλῶμεν ἡμῖν ἀντιφωνῆσαι. οἶον·

Ἀκούω τὸν δεῖνα ἐπιδεδημηκέναι πρὸς σέ.  
Διασάφησον οὖν μοι πότερον ἔτι πάρεστιν ἢ  
κεχώρισται.

14. Ἀποφαντικός ἐστὶ τὸ πρὸς τὸν πυνθανόμενον ἀποφαίνεσθαι. οἶον·

Ἐγραψάς μοι πυνθανόμενος εἰ παρ' ἡμῖν ὁ  
δεῖνα. πάρεστιν οὖν ἔτι καὶ σὲ προσδεχόμενος  
ἐπιμενεῖν φησιν.

15. Ἀλληγορικός, ὅταν πρὸς ὃν γράφομεν αὐτὸν  
βουλώμεθα μόνον εἰδέναι καὶ δι' ἑτέρου  
πράγματος ἕτερον σημαίνωμεν. οἶον·

Ἀκούω τὸν πρὸς σέ ἀγωνισόμενον ἀθλητὴν  
γυμνὸν ἔξω τῶν πυλῶν ἐν σκοτεινῷ κατοικεῖν  
οἰκῆματι. συνήδομαι οὖν, ἀκονιτὶ γὰρ κρατήσεις.—  
οὐ γὰρ σεσήμαγκεν ὅτι ὑπέιληφεν αὐτοῦ τὸν  
ἀντίδικον ἀπολωλέναι;

## PART I: THEORY

13. The inquiring type is when, wanting to learn about something, we urge someone to respond to us, like this:

“I hear that so-and-so has been staying with you. Then let me know whether he is still there or has departed.”

14. The responding type answers someone who wants to learn something, like this:

“You wrote to me wanting to know if so-and-so is at my house. He is still here and says that he will stay and wait for you.”

15. The allegorical type is when we want only the one to whom we are writing to understand, and indicate one thing through another, like this:

“I hear that the nude athlete who will compete with you lives outside the city gates in a dark house. Therefore, I share in your joy, for you will triumph without much struggle.”—For did he not signal that he assumed that the opponent of his addressee had lost?

## HOW TO WRITE A LETTER

Καὶ ἕτερος ἀπειλῶν ἔγραψεν· οὐ βούλεσθε παύσασθαι, ἕως ἂν ἴδητε τοὺς τέττιγας ἐπὶ τῶν βώλων ἄδοντας;—δι' ἄλλου γὰρ πράγματος ἄλλο ἐσήμανεν. βούλεται γὰρ εἰπεῖν ὅτι οὐ βούλεσθε παύσασθαι, ἕως ἂν ἴδητε τὴν χώραν ὑμῶν κατεσκαμμένην; οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἄλλως οἱ τέττιγες ἐπὶ τῶν βώλων ἄδοιεν, ἀλλ' εἰ μήτε δένδρα μήτε τοίχους ἔχοιεν.

16. Αἰτιολογικός ἐστίν, ὅταν τὰς αἰτίας δι' ἃς οὐ γέγονεν ἢ γενήσεται ὀτιδηποτοῦν, σημαίνωμεν. οἷον·

Ἔγραψάς μοι διὰ τάχους πρὸς σὲ ἔλθεῖν, κάμοι δὲ τοῦτο προέκειτο. πάντα δ' ἡμῖν τὰ πρὸς τὸν πλοῦν ἀντιπέπτωκεν. οὔτε γὰρ πλοῖόν ἐστιν εὐπορῆσαι πάντων εἰλκυσμένων πρὸς τὰς λειτουργίας, κἂν εὕρωμεν τῶν ἀνέμων ἐναντιουμένων ἀπρακτεῖν ἀνάγκη. ἐν τῷ μεταξὺ δὲ καὶ εἰς κρίσιν ἐμπέπλεγμαι. ἐὰν οὖν ἅπαντα μεταπέσῃ ταῦτα, ἐκδέχου με.

17. Κατηγορικός δέ ἐστίν ὁ ἐν καταιτιάσει τινῶν κείμενος παρὰ τὸ δέον ἐνηργημένων. οἷον·

## PART I: THEORY

Another wrote as a threat: “Are you not willing to stop until you see cicadas singing on broken ground?” He indicated one thing through another. For what he means to say is “Are you not willing to stop until you see your land utterly entirely destroyed?” For cicadas would not sing on the ground except if they had no trees and no house walls.

16. The accounting type is when we indicate reasons why some sort of thing has not happened or will not happen, like this:

“You wrote to me to come to you quickly, and that was in fact my plan. But all things have been going against us setting sail. For there is no ship to outfit because all the ships have been taken for public service, and if we could find one, we would have to sit around idly because the winds are contrary. In the meantime, I have become entangled in a court case. Therefore, expect me only if all these things change.”

17. The accusing type is one that consists in accusation of things conducted contrary to what is appropriate; like this:

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Οὐχ ἡδέως μὲν ἔφερον ἀκούων τὰ κατ' ἐμοῦ λεγόμενα, ἦν γὰρ οὐ τῆς ἀξίας ἀγωγῆς, κακῶς δὲ καὶ σὺ τῷ κατ' ἐμοῦ λέγοντι στυγερὸν ἐνεχείρισας καίτοι εἰδὼς αὐτὸν καὶ διάβολον καὶ ψευδολόγον. τὸ καθόλου δὲ λυπεῖς φίλον ἔχων, ὃν ἤδεις ἀπάντων ἐχθρόν, οὐδὲ τοῦτο δοκιμάσας, ὅτι τὸν ἄλλων κατηγοροῦντα πρὸς σὲ καὶ πρὸς ἄλλους εἰκὸς τοῦτο ποιεῖν κατὰ σοῦ. μέμφομαι οὖν ἐκείνῳ μὲν ὅτι ταῦτα πράττει, σοὶ δὲ ὅτι δοκῶν φρονεῖν οὐκ ἔχεις κρίσιν ὑπὲρ φίλων.

18. Ἀπολογητικὸς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ πρὸς τὰ κατηγορούμενα τοὺς ἐναντίους λόγους μετ' ἀποδείξεως εἰσφέρων. οἶον·

Καλῶς ἐποίησεν ἡ τύχη μεγάλα μοι πρὸς τὴν ἀπόδειξιν περιποιήσασα. κατὰ γὰρ οὓς χρόνους φασὶ τοῦτο πεποιηκέναι με, καταπλεύσας ἡμὴν εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, ὥστε οὔτε συνέβη μοι ἰδεῖν οὔτε συντυχεῖν τὸν περὶ οὗ κατηγοροῦμαι. ἄλογον δὲ καὶ τὸ μηδεμιᾶς γενομένης μοι πρὸς σὲ διαφορᾶς κατηγορεῖν σου τοῦ μηδὲν ἀδικοῦντος.

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