ODYSSEUS IN ROME. ON PLUTARCH’S INTRODUCTION TO DE COHIBENDA IRA
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Abstract

In the past, Plutarch’s De cohibenda ira attracted attention from Quellenforscher, but was also studied for the information it gives us about the Chareonean’s psychotherapy (Ingenkamp). In this paper, some aspects of a ‘forgotten’ chapter of that dialogue, nl. the introduction in § 1, are brought to the fore. More specifically, it is shown how the pivotal concept of praotes is brought up through a cluster of parallels (De virt. Mor. 442C = De prof. in virt. 83A = De coh. Ira 453C-E).

Introduction

Scholarly investigations on Plutarch’s De cohibenda ira seem to confirm the saddening intuition of any reader skimming through that dialogue: what on earth had Plutarch hoped to contribute to the elaboration of a theme which had been treated many times before him, in the Greek world as well as in the Roman, and from various philosophical perspectives (see, e.g., Laurenti - Indelli, 1988, pp.7-18)?

The results of modern research are indeed mostly negative. This comes as no surprise, since that research was undertaken within the framework of the positivistic paradigm of the Quellenforschung, which believed to explain Plutarch by reducing him to almost exclusively literary antecedents. The inevitable conclusion was that, as far as inventio is concerned, Plutarch lacked originality and was ‘eclectic’ (Dumortier - Defradas, 1975, p.54), pasting together excerpts from the Peripatetic Hieronymus of Rhodus (Pöhlenz, 1896), or from some Stoic source(s) (Schlemm, 1903), more specifically from Posidonius (Rabbow, 1914) and Sotion (Ringeltaube, 1913, pp. 68-69). His personal contribution was supposed to be limited to the insertion of ‘Beispielreihen’ (Ziegler, 1952, col. 774) into other people’s thoughts. Nor was Plutarch’s dispositio of the material considered a success: we are supposed to deal with one of the