An Unnoticed Quotation from Isocrates in Isidore of Pelusium

It has been observed that Isidore of Pelusium (c. 360/370-c. 435/440) knew and quoted in his Letters ancient Greek authors and particularly Athenian prose writers of the 5th and 4th century BC, including the Attic orators: “Parmi les prosateurs, les orateurs occupent évidemment la première place: Isocrate, Eschine, mais surtout Démosthène, le rhéteur par excellence, qu’il a pris pour modèle. Isidore l’a tellement assimilé que non seulement il le cite de mémoire, mais émaille ses lettres de phrases entièrement tirées des discours du célèbre athénien”.

As far as Isocrates is concerned, he is mentioned by name at least nine times in Isidore’s published Letters. A hundred years ago, Leo Bayer was able to collect ten quotations from Isocrates’ works, nine of them from the widely-read hortatory speech Ad Demonicum and one from Epist. VI (Ad Iasonis liberos). He concluded that Isidore’s knowledge of the orator was not extensive, pointing out in addition that the Ad Demonicum circulated widely in florilegia during late Antiquity. However, Isidore’s Letters seem to contain traces suggesting a broader use of Isocrates’ corpus (e.g. of Ad Nicoclem, Panegyricus and Archidamus) and new surveys could yield more results. One more instance can be presented here.

---

1 Évieux 1995, 318. For a general overview of Isidore and his Letters see also Treu 1998. The critical (ongoing?) edition of the Letters, with current numeration, is the one by Évieux 1997 and Évieux 2000; for the other letters see Migne 1864. On Isidore’s knowledge of classical literature cf. Capo 1901; Bayer 1915; Treu 1998, 992-994.
2 Epist. 2.128.6 Migne; 2.146.28 and 38 M.; 3.84.29 M.; 5.528.2 M.; 1275.10 Évieux [4.162 M.] (styling Isidore’s addressee Ophelius as an admirer of Isocrates); 1470.76 É. [5.186 M.]; 1697.11 and 16 É. [4.91.13 and 19] (features of Isocrates’ style).
3 Cf. Bayer 1915, 15-18, esp. 18. For Isidore’s knowledge of Isocrates, see also Capo 1901, 345-346; Treu 1998, 993.
4 Quotations and imitations from these speeches were detected by Fruechtel 1938, 62.
5 So also Évieux 1995, 318.
Letter 1638 Évieux [4.50 Migne] was addressed to the deacon Eutonios.\(^6\) It starts with the following lines:

> ἵσθι δ’ ὅτι οἱ μὲν γινώσκοντές σε οὐκ ἐξενίσθησαν ἐφ’ ὦς ἀνακηρύττη, οἱ δὲ ἄγνοοντες ἔγνωσαν, οἱ δὲ φθονοῦντες ἔτι μᾶλλον ύπὸ τῆς νόσου κατεδαπανήθησαν, καὶ δίκην ἔδοσαν ὡς μείζω οὐκ ὃν δύναιο παρ’ αὐτῶν λαβεῖν.

Be aware that those who are acquainted with you were not amazed by the fact that you were called to ordination, that those who are not acquainted with you have come to know it, that the envious were still more consumed by this disease and that a greater revenge upon them than this you could not hope to obtain.

This polemical opening, alluding to shared hostility in the religious environment to which both the writer and the addressee belonged, conceals in fact a refined quotation that, as far as I know, has not been hitherto recognised. It comes from Isocrates’ longest and most ‘experimental’ work, the *Antidosis*. At § 13, at the end of the interestingly unusual preface to this speech, Isocrates invited his readers to pay attention to the fictitious apology that he had devised, so that he could offer a correct image of himself to his fellow citizens:

> ἤδη δ’ ἀναγιγνώσκετε τὴν ἀπολογίαν τὴν προσποιουμένην μὲν περὶ κρίσεως γεγράφθαι, βουλομένην δὲ περὶ ἐμοῦ δηλῶσαι τὴν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἄγνοοντας εἰδέναι ποιῆσαι, τοὺς δὲ φθονοῦντας ἔτι μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τῆς νόσου ταύτης λυπεῖσθαι· μείζω γὰρ δίκην οὐκ ὃν δυναίμην λαβεῖν παρ’ αὐτῶν.

I beg you now to read my defence, which purports to have been written for a trial, but whose real purpose is to show the truth about myself, to make those who are ignorant about me know the sort of man I am and the envious suffer a still more painful attack of this disease; for a greater revenge upon them than this I could not hope to obtain.\(^7\)

The imitation of the second part of this passage of the *Antidosis* is clear. Isocrates’ words were skilfully inserted by Isidore at the beginning of his letter with only one significant change: the more common λυπεῖσθαι was turned into

---

\(^6\) Eutonios is one of the most recurrent addressees in Isidore’s *Letters*, see e.g. Évieux 1997 and Évieux 2000 nos. 1274, 1287, 1317, 1327, 1340, 1354, 1427, 1430, 1508, 1540, 1622, 1626, 1655, 1691.

\(^7\) Translation by Norlin 1929, 193 with slight changes.