Two observations on the tales of
The contendings of Horus and Seth
and Truth and Falsehood

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The Contendings of Horus and Seth (Papyrus Chester Beatty I) and The Blinding of Truth by Falsehood (Papyrus Chester Beatty II) –which can be numbered among the most significant texts of the ancient Egyptian literature of the New Kingdom– show a recognized set of common characteristics. Two topics concerning the remarkable similarity between these texts are considered here. On the one hand, the plot of both texts can be clearly linked to the main episodes of the myth that unites the gods Osiris, Isis, Seth and Horus, and the gap between these different literary “realizations” of the myth can be related to the différences de degré recognized by Claude Levi-Strauss in his analysis of the relations between myth (mythe) and tale (conte). On the other hand, a specific feature of the content of both texts is taken into consideration: the quest of judicial solutions for the conflicts in which the main characters engage. In this sense, it is suggested that two different kinds of judicial procedures are present in both The Contendings and Truth and Falsehood, which can be related to the importance of kinship and state “logics” in the internal organization of these texts as well as in the structure of Ancient Egyptian society.

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Within the range of what is usually considered to be ancient Egyptian literature and, more specifically, within the texts belonging to the New Kingdom, there is a considerably extended theme: a dispute between two main protagonists, which can takes the form of a discussion or open antagonism, including several kinds of conflict. The identities of the adversaries, certainly, may vary radically: in fact, disputes may be caused by gods (The Contendings of Horus and Seth), kings (The Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenen-re), characters with human features (The Tale of Two Brothers), trees (The Dispute between the Orchard Trees), body parts (The Dispute between the Body and the Head), and even “personified abstract concepts” (The Blinding of Truth by Falsehood). Beyond the common theme that all these texts have in common, the first and the last of them seem to share a wider range of characteristics. In this article, I would like to consider, briefly, two topics of different