

[Musonius Rufus - suite]

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MUSONIUS RUFUS

95

union with each other is evident. One could find no other association more necessary nor more pleasant than that of men and women. For what man is so devoted to his friend as a loving wife is to her husband? What brother to a brother? What son to his parents? Who is so longed for when absent as a husband by his wife, or a wife by her husband? Whose presence would do more to lighten grief or increase joy or remedy misfortune? To whom is everything judged to be common, body, soul, and possessions, except man and wife? For these reasons all men consider the love of man and wife to be the highest form of love; and no reasonable mother or father would expect to entertain a deeper love for his own child than for the one joined to him in marriage. Indeed how much the love of a wife for her husband surpasses the love of parents for their children is clearly illustrated by the familiar story of how Admetus, receiving from the gods the privilege of living twice the time allotted to him if he could get someone else to die in his place, found his parents unwilling to die for him although they were old, but his wedded wife Alcestis, though still very young, readily accepted death in her husband's place.

How great and worthy an estate is marriage is plain from this also, that gods watch over it, great gods, too, in the estimation of men; first Hera (and for this reason we address her as the patroness of wedlock), then Eros, then Aphrodite, for we assume that all of these perform the function of bringing together man and woman for the procreation of children. Where, indeed, does Eros more properly belong than in the lawful union of man and wife? Where Hera? Where Aphrodite? When would one more appropriately pray to these divinities than when entering into marriage? What should we more properly call the work of Aphrodite than the joining of wife and husband? Why, then, should anyone say that such great divinities watch over and guard marriage and the procreation of children, unless these things are the proper concern of man? Why should one say that they are the proper concern of man but not the concern of the philosopher? Can it be because the philosopher is worse than other men? Certainly he ought not to be worse, but better and more just and more truly good. Or could one say that the man who does not take an interest in his city is not worse and more unjust than the man who does, the man who looks out only for his own interests is not worse than the one who looks out for the common good? Or can it be that the man who chooses the single life is more patriotic, more a friend and partner of his fellow-man, than the man who maintains a home and rears

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