

## [H. North. Sôphrosune. Chapter VII - suite]

**Auteur : Foucault, Michel**

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560) exhorting the passer-by to stop and look at the tomb of one whom envy, not time, led down to Hades. To her Cypris granted possession of the first place in beauty and Athena the pleasant works of *sophrosynē*, while the Muse gave her both wisdom and the lyre. . . . Even though the tomb hides your young beauty, Cleopatra, and the dust possesses your vanished body, still the goodness of your life remains for ever with the living, disclosing the glorious *sophrosyne* of your soul.<sup>25</sup>

*Sophrosyne* is the primary virtue of women in Greek inscriptions, often the only one mentioned, or the only moral virtue amid a list of physical qualities, social attributes, and domestic accomplishments. An example is an inscription in Rome whereon the dead woman, Messia by name, is praised for her youth, beauty, intelligence, accomplishments, and *sophrosyne* (Kaibel 682). Similarly an epitaph to a woman of Cotiae named Theodora describes her as famous for her beauty, stature, and especially her *sophrosyne* (Kaibel 368).<sup>26</sup>

But *sophrosyne* is by no means limited to women, even in the period of the Empire, when its archaic position as a masculine civic virtue had long since been forgotten. A physician of Tricca in the first century before or after Christ is said to have guarded the pure (*καθαρά*) virtue of *sophrosyne* (Kaibel 506). A certain Artemidorus of Cyprus is praised for living a holy life (*σεμνὸς βίος*) and is bidden to rejoice even among the dead by reason of his *sophrosyne* (Kaibel 288a). In these two epitaphs, *sophrosyne* unquestionably implies moral purity or continence (as the association with *katharotēs* and *semetēs* shows), but in many inscriptions down to the end of antiquity there is no clue to its precise meaning, especially when it stands alone. Since courage largely disappeared from epitaphs after the classical period of the city-state, and opportunities to display justice became rare when democracy died out, while wisdom ceased to be felt as a moral virtue, *sophrosyne* alone of the traditional canon seemed universally applicable.

A small number of late inscriptions refer to a personified *Sophrosyne* with cult worship in a few places in the Near East, Asia Minor in particular. Mentioned but rarely in Greek literature and never clearly delineated, she is alluded to on one Attic epitaph of the fourth century B.C.—

<sup>25</sup> Metrical requirements in the pentameter dictate the use of the archaic and the classical spellings in vv. 4 and 12, respectively.

<sup>26</sup> *Exempla* are often mentioned: thus a woman of Naxos is compared to Alcestis and Penelope because of her *sophrosyne* (Kaibel 277), and a Spartan woman is compared to Penelope (Kaibel 874). See Richmond Lattimore (*Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* [Urbana, 1962], 290–301, 335 ff.) for the virtues referred to in pagan and Christian epitaphs and for the principal themes in epitaphs for women.

