

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

Auteur : Foucault, Michel

Présentation de la fiche

Coteb028_f0763

SourceBoite_028-11-chem | Sophrosunè.

LangueFrançais

TypeFicheLecture

RelationNumérisation d'un manuscrit original consultable à la BnF, département des Manuscrits, cote NAF 28730

Références éditoriales

Éditeuréquipe FFL (projet ANR *Fiches de lecture de Michel Foucault*) ; projet EMAN (Thalim, CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne nouvelle).

Droits

- Image : Avec l'autorisation des ayants droit de Michel Foucault. Tous droits réservés pour la réutilisation des images.
- Notice : équipe FFL ; projet EMAN (Thalim, CNRS-ENS-Sorbonne nouvelle).
Licence Creative Commons Attribution - Partage à l'Identique 3.0 (CC BY-SA 3.0 FR).

Notice créée par [équipe FFL](#) Notice créée le 22/03/2021 Dernière modification le 23/04/2021

Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius—abandoned any pretence of an interest in the theoretical aspects of *aretê*. Without exception these philosophers were concerned with the practical applications of Stoic philosophy; as a result it is often hard to distinguish their Stoicism from the equally practical morality of Platonic or Cynic philosophers in the first centuries of the Empire. Stoics like Musonius and Epictetus, Platonists like Maximus of Tyre, Cynics like Dio of Prusa, even rhetors like Libanius and Themistius, preached essentially the same ethical doctrine. One of the concepts they share is the definition of sophrosyne as the restraint of the appetites.

Musonius will serve to exemplify the treatment of sophrosyne by these later Stoics;⁹³ although neither as harsh nor as extreme as some contemporary Cynics, he adopted the Cynic-Stoic approach to morality, with its emphasis on *ponos* ("labor") and *askêsis* ("discipline") in attaining virtue. Those traces of the theoretical approach to ethics that remain in Musonius' treatises are mere commonplaces and had no effect on his rules of behavior. He says, for example, that we philosophize with only a small part of the soul, the intellect (*dianoia* [XVI, p. 87 Hense]); yet to Musonius, as to most of his contemporaries, philosophy was not concerned primarily with the intellect. Philosophy was a matter of correct living—of being just, useful, *sôphrôn*, and good (III, p. 9; XVI, p. 87). When he says that virtue is both theoretical and practical (VI, p. 22), he means only that we must know what is right and do it. If forced to choose between *logos* and *êthos*, Musonius says, he would prefer the second, because it is better to *be* self-controlled and *sôphrôn* than to speak correctly about the virtues (V, p. 21).

Sophrosyne in such a context is bound to show affinities with the Cynic conception of the virtue; and in fact for Musonius it is closer to frugality (*euteleia*) and self-control (*enkrateia*) than to any other qualities, and manifests itself above all in a love of simplicity. The beginning and the climax of sophrosyne are found in self-control with respect to food and drink (XVIII A, p. 94). Frugality is to be preferred because it is more conducive to sophrosyne and more fitting for the good man (XVIII B, p. 104). This precept is applied, not only to food and drink; but also to shelter, adornment, and all other departments of human life.

Sophrosyne (together with the other qualities that conduce to simplicity) receives more frequent and prolonged praise from Musonius than

⁹³ Some contributions of Seneca to the history of sophrosyne will be considered in Chap. VIII.



