

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

**Auteur : Foucault, Michel**

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### Références éditoriales

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More peculiar to the Stoa, which was traditionally interested in feminine virtue as part of the doctrine that *aretê* is the same for all—men and women, human and Divine—are Musonius' two treatises entitled *Whether Women Should Study Philosophy* (III, IV) and the essay *On Sexual Indulgence* (XII). In all three, sophrosyne continues to denote the control of the appetites and passions, and it is clear that the primary function of philosophy is to instil this virtue. Since the gods give women the same faculties as men, including the impulse towards virtue, how is it right—Musonius asks—that they are denied the chance to study philosophy? All the qualities proper to a good woman may be learned from philosophy, and the first and most important of these is sophrosyne. Musonius analyzes the duties of a *sôphrôn* woman: to avoid unlawful loves and any kind of incontinence or appetite; to hate strife, extravagance, and ornamentation; to control anger and grief and every other passion (III, p. 10). All these actions are enjoined by philosophy, and all are equally necessary for men and women.<sup>97</sup>

In his discourse *On Sexual Indulgence* Musonius again treats the equality of the sexes, this time from a point of view that emphasizes their common moral responsibilities. He requires a single standard of sexual morality, denying to men any further indulgence of their appetites than is proper for women, and treating this rule as a precept of sophrosyne. It is just as incompatible with this virtue for a master to cohabit with a slave girl as for a mistress to do so with a male slave. The extent to which this precept was, if not practiced, at least preached by pagan moralists of the Empire is a sign of the common attack made by pagans and Christians on social and moral abuses of the day.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> As III and IV reflect the traditional Stoic concern for the education of women (consult Dryoff, *op. cit.*, 311 ff.), so XII reflects the special interest of this school in "conjugal philosophy." See Bickel, 191 ff. The position of sophrosyne as the excellence proper to the married state seems to have been established in such treatises, which profoundly influenced both the thought and the vocabulary of Patristic writers on this subject. In IV, Musonius reiterates the identity of the virtues for men and women and enumerates the Stoic tetrad. A new reason for cultivating *andreia* appears in his statement that this virtue is necessary for a woman to protect her chastity (sophrosyne) in the face of threats and torture (IV, p. 15). This topic appears in Patristic writings in connection with the theme of the virgin martyr, who unites sophrosyne with *andreia*.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Seneca *Ep.* 94. 26; Julian I. 46D; Plutarch *Mor.* 144B–145A. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius say nothing novel about sophrosyne. Epictetus assumes that the wise man will restrain his appetites in his effort to attain freedom, and a great many of his precepts refer to self-discipline and its rewards. Sophrosyne is opposed to *akolasia* and allied to *enkrateia* (*Discourses* 3. 1. 8; 4. 9. 17–18 Schenkl). Epictetus' standards of sexual morality are less lofty than those of Musonius (he does not advocate a single standard), but he frequently condemns adultery and has much to say about the immorality of Roman matrons. His motto ἀνέχου καὶ ἀπέχου ("bear and forbear" [Frag. X]) suggests that endurance and self-restraint

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