

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

Auteur : Foucault, Michel

Présentation de la fiche

Coteb028_f0766

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

One further consequence of the Stoic doctrine of the identity of virtue may be mentioned, since it leads Musonius to comment on the moral virtues manifested by God and incidentally reveals the way in which Stoics of the Empire interpreted the *telos* of the Old Stoa (life in accordance with nature) and accommodated it to the doctrine of the imitation of God. Musonius observes that man will live in accordance with nature when he realizes that his nature is to be virtuous. Man is an imitation of God (*μίμημα θεοῦ*), and we think of nothing in connection with the gods more than wisdom, justice, courage, and sophrosyne. God is *sôphrôn* in that he is not overcome by pleasure or self-seeking (*pleonexia*) and is superior to appetite and envy (XVII, p. 90). If man will imitate God in this respect (*ὁμολως ἔχειν*), he will be truly happy.

OTHER PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOLS

There is no need to catalogue the allusions to sophrosyne in the treatises produced by the Academy, the Middle Platonists, the Peripatetics, and the Neopythagoreans of the Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman periods, for they rarely achieve originality. Eclecticism is the mark of all these schools; not until the coming of Neoplatonism did sophrosyne undergo further significant development. It will suffice to note the chief tendencies of the other schools, as expressed by one or two of their more notable spokesmen.

The eclecticism of the Academy shortly after the death of Plato is already evident in the *Definitions* ascribed to Speusippus, the second head of the Academy. Sophrosyne is defined variously as a mean state of the soul in regard to natural pleasures and desires, as a harmony and order of the soul in respect to pleasures and fears, as an agreement in the soul with regard to ruling and being ruled, as doing one's own work (*autopraxia*) according to nature, as a reasonable agreement of the soul concerning Good and Evil, and as a disposition according to which the possessor chooses and rejects what he ought.⁹⁹ The first of these

form the core of his ethical code. Marcus Aurelius also takes sophrosyne for granted as a virtue that should be sought (3. 2, 3. 6, 4. 49, 5. 12, 8. 1, 12. 27), but he does not speculate about its nature, and he accepts the current definition as restraint of appetite (3. 2). He himself is praised by Dio for his *sôphrôn* and *enkratês* rule of the soldiery (71. 3. 3) and by Herodian for his *sôphrôn bios* (1. 2. 4).

⁹⁹ Speusippus, Frag. 24 Mullach. Interest in sophrosyne and the other moral virtues remained strong in the generation just after Plato. Xenocrates wrote a treatise *On Sophrosyne*, and Diogenes Laertius tells an edifying story about his powers of persuasion. Polemo, who was *akolastos* in his youth, became drunk and broke into Xenocrates' lecture room when the philosopher was discussing sophrosyne. Polemo was inspired to become a student, adopted a life of austerity, and ultimately became head of the Academy (4. 12, 16).



