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Philosophy of Medicine in Aesara of Lucania (4th or 3rd century BC)

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Aesara of Lucania's *On Human Nature* hints at her philosophy of medicine. She claims that we may discover the nature of "the human dwelling place," the body, through an examination of human nature. "Human nature seems to me to provide a standard of law and justice both for the home and for the city" (Waithe, 20). Her analysis suggests that there are interrelated principles of medicine and psychiatry to be inferred about the physiology and psychology of the human being. Those principles operate under a meta-principle, the "divinely-ordained" *principle of appropriate proportionality* of the parts of mind and body.

Which part of the soul (reason, high-spiritedness, desire) ought to dominate any given medical or psychological principle, depends upon what "needs to be done." Her teleological philosophy of medicine yields an understanding of human physical and psychological functioning. Health and vigor are defined as the proper interaction of the appropriate bodily organs in the execution of their proper function. Disease and debilitation are defined as the disproportionate working of some one or more bodily parts. In psychology, health and vigor are defined as the proper interaction of the parts of the soul: reason, high-spiritedness and desire. The disproportionate dominance of any of these parts (considered according to "what is to be done") is mental defect or dysfunction.

Thus principles of medicine and psychology are derived from her general theory of human nature, that proper function and interactions of bodily organs and the parts of the mind constitute health and their improper function constitutes illness or debility.

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