

## Crafts and Conversion: Using *technai* to define Human Nature in *Regimen I*

*Regimen I* is a Hippocratic treatise that explores knowledge of human nature as the key to treating disease. The author approaches this topic by presenting his natural philosophy (everything is made of fire and water, nothing is created or destroyed) and ends with a description of the behavior of different kinds of bodies and souls according to one's diet and exercise routines. This approach is reasonable enough, but in the middle of this treatise, the author includes a lengthy detour into a list of *technai* the author claims to be metaphors for human nature. This detour does not, at first glance at least, appear to advance the author's argument, as Hippocratic scholars such as Craik (2015) have noted (pg. 271). In my paper, I nevertheless argue that it is in fact a crucial component of the argument because it highlights what precisely the author has in mind when he considers the human nature he purports to protect with his dietary advice. Some scholars have indeed noticed the value of this digression. Joly (1984), for example, defends them from Bollack, who calls them "[l]'embarras des commentateurs du Régime" (pg. 243), but doesn't offer his own interpretation of them. Hynek Bartos (2014) devotes a section to them in his article on *mimēsis* in the *Regimen* treatises, but does so to enrich his interpretation of the concept of imitation in the treatises, not to provide a detailed reason for the author's inclusion of them (pp. 550-3). My interpretation will argue that the author's digression into the *technai* shows that he has something very specific in mind when he conceives of human nature: it is a convertor of differing materials into wholes, and this function applies to human activity from the base level of converting food into growth and waste to higher order processes such as cognition and social behavior. To demonstrate this, I discuss in the paper a selection of these *technai* and the author's own interpretation of them. For example, the author draws attention to carpenters, whose conversion of wood into various items, he shows, imitates the conversion of food in the body. Similarly, he includes sculptors who convert various moist and dry materials into sculptures, analogously to how humans grow through the nourishment from their diet. Included in the list of metaphors are types of perception such as taste and hearing. Like the carpenters and sculptors, the

author highlights how these modes of perception convert various things, such as varying flavors and musical tones, into harmonious wholes. Writing belongs to this category as well: it is a synthesis of forms that represent different vocal sounds. The author extends the category of human activities even wider at the end of the digression when he draws attention to various human behaviors such as lying and acting: the idea is that these behaviors are products of words and gestures that individually do not correspond with the objects their syntheses claim to represent. My detailed discussions of these examples will show that the author of *Regimen I* makes this digression not merely to offer descriptions of human nature, but to provide a specific definition of what it means to be human by showing what all human behavior has in common: converting parts into wholes, or *prima materia* into final products. Only by understanding how a human fundamentally operates can the author proceed to make suggestions about how to maintain human health.

#### Works Cited

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