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DO NO HARM: PHANOSTRATE'S MIDWIFERY PRACTICE

LAURENCE TOTELIN*

ABSTRACT: The funerary monument of Phanostrate is the earliest known monument commemorating a woman who was a midwife (*maia*) and physician (*iatros*); it dates to the mid-fourth century B.C. In this paper, I examine Phanostrate's assertion that she 'caused pain to no-one' in the context of medical ethics found in the *Hippocratic Corpus*. This statement is reminiscent of one of the clauses of the Hippocratic *Oath*, where the student of medicine swears to keep patients from 'harm and injustice'. It also brings to mind the famous 'do no harm' principle, which is expressed in the Hippocratic *Epidemics*. The phrasing of Phanostrate's stele, however, is somewhat unusual. She claims that she has been *lupēra*, painful to no-one. The adjective *lupēros* is not used frequently in the *Hippocratic Corpus*, but it does appear in the opening section of *On Winds*, where the author states that the art of medicine can be painful to those who practice it. I reflect on the nature of the 'pain' that medicine and its practitioners could cause and alleviate. I ask whether Phanostrate might have been responding to some of the principles outlined in the *Oath*, where the use of abortive pessaries is famously proscribed. I also present another inscription, from the sanctuary of Asclepius on the slope of the Athenian Acropolis, IG II3 4.700, which might also be honouring Phanostrate.

KEYWORDS: abortion, Asclepius, epigraphy, *Hippocratic Corpus*, medical ethics, midwives, pain, Phanostrate, physicians

1. PHANOSTRATE'S MONUMENT

The funerary stele of Phanostrate (fig. 1) is the earliest such monument commemorating a woman who identifies herself as a midwife (*maia*) and physician (*iatros*); it dates to the mid-fourth century B.C.¹ It was found in the village of Menidi, the ancient Attic deme of Acharnae.

* totelinlm@cardiff.ac.uk, Cardiff University

¹ Athens, National Archaeological Museum 993. The text of this inscription was established by DAUX 1972, no. 53, pp. 550-554 (with references to previous editions, which include IG II² 6873, where the date is given as 400-350 B.C.; CLAIRMONT 1970, pp. 130-131); SEG 33.214 (1983); see also HANSEN 1989, p. 65 (*CEG* 2.569) who suggests that the stele dates to after 350 B.C.; CLAIRMONT 1993, pp. 000; SAMAMA 2003, no. 2, pp. 109-110; LAES 2011, no. 1, pp. 158-159. For other ancient Greek monuments devoted to midwives, see FLEMMING 2000,

The inscription is in three parts: A and B above the relief, and C below the relief.

A. *At top of stele:*

Φανοσ[τράτη τοῦ δεῖνος]

Μελιτέως.

Phanostrate [- of -] of Melite

B. *Labelling figures in relief:*

Ἀντιφίλη Φανοστράτη

Antiphile Phanostrate

C. *Under relief panel :*

Μαῖα καὶ ἰατρὸς Φανοστράτη ἐνθάδε κεῖται

[ο]ὔθενι λυπη<ρ>ά, πᾶσιν δὲ θανοῦσα ποθεινή.

Midwife and doctor Phanostrate lies here,

She caused pain to no-one and, having died, is missed by all.²

[Insert fig. 1 nearby; caption: Stele of Phanostrate, midwife and doctor, fourth century B.C., Athens National Archaeological Museum 993]

At the top of the stele (A), the deceased is named as Phanostrate, who is the daughter, wife or slave of a man, whose name is lost, from the Athenian deme of Melite (in the city of Athens). It is unclear, then, whether Phanostrate was free born or enslaved.³

pp. 52-57, 384-391; LAES 2011; DASEN 2016 (with pp. 11-12 for Phanostrate). See also BERGER 1970, pp. 160-162; HILLERT 1990, pp. 77-79. On Midwives and female healers more generally in the Greek world, see e.g. KING 1986; FRENCH 1987; DEMAND 1994, pp. 63-70; DEMAND 1995; HANSON 1994; HANSON 1996; GAZZANIGA 1997; KING 1998, pp. 172-187; RETIEF AND CILLIERS 2005; FLEMMING 2007; LAES 2010; KÜNZL 2013. On Greek gravestones commemorating women and women's work; KOSMOPOULOU 2001 (pp. 299-300, 316-317 for Phanostrate); YOUNGER 2002 (p. 196 for Phanostrate); BURTON 2003 (pp. 33-34 for Phanostrate); BIELMAN SANCHEZ 2008 (pp. 175-176 for Phanostrate); TSASGALIS 2008, pp. 208-213 (p. 211 for Phanostrate). On women's work at Athens, see also BROCK 2004 (p. 340 for Phanostrate).

² Translation LAMBERT, TOTELIN 2017.

³ Interpretations have varied as to the status of Phanostrate, although on balance, she has been seen as a free woman, see e.g. BROCK 1994, p. 340 (who states that Phanostrate was a woman 'of considerable status'); KOSMOPOULOU 2001, pp. 299, 305 (who states that Phanostrate is "depicted in a characteristic lady-like pose and attire"); BIELMAN-SANCHEZ 2008, p. 177 (who suggests that Phanostrate might have been a widow); LAES

The relief shows six characters: two adult women and four children. The two women are identified by means of labels (B part of the inscription).⁴ Phanostrate is sat on a chair to the right of the stele.⁵ She holds the hand of the standing Antiphile, in a gesture known as *dexiosis*. The relation between the two women is unknown. Antiphile has been variably identified as the client, patient, or patron of Phanostrate, as an assistant of Phanostrate, or as a relative.⁶ Three little girls, as well as a baby under the chair, are also represented. The presence of children may be an allusion to Phanostrate's profession, a sign of her expertise.⁷

The commemorating inscription (C part of the inscription) is a verse epigram composed of two hexameters, in which every phrase is worthy of analysis. This epigram is best known for its juxtaposition of the titles *maia* (feminine) and *iatros* (masculine). Scholars generally consider the title *iatros* to be somewhat superior to that of *maia*. Vivian Nutton, for instance, writes that:

There is no doubt that Phanostrate's expertise as a 'doctor' (*iatros*, exactly the same word as for a male doctor) was seen by those who set up her monument as extending beyond that of a *maia* (although in what way remains unclear), and it is plausible to think that other women

2011, p. 156; DASEN 2016, p. 11. For the argument on a possible enslaved status, see Lambert in LAMBERT, TOTELIN 2017 (on the basis that on Attic inscriptions, slaves are sometimes identified by their name followed by the name of their owner in the genitive, albeit without a demotic, as is the case in the Phanostrate monument).

⁴ For art-historical descriptions of the relief, see e.g. KOSMOPOULOU 2001, pp. 316-317; DASEN 2016, pp. 10-11.

⁵ DEMAND (1994, p. 133; 1995, p. 287) believed that Phanostrate was the standing figure, because she was working on the edition that predates the work of DAUX (1972) and relied instead on the work of CLAIRMONT (1970).

⁶ See CLAIRMONT 1970, p. 131 ('mistress'); KOSMOPOULOU 2011, p. 300 ('wealthy patroness who ordered the erection of the stele'); SAMAMA 2003, p. 110 n. 5 (relative); BIELMAN-SANCHEZ 2008, p. 176 (patient); LAES 2011, p. 159 ("Antiphile was probably a metic and wealthy patroness who erected Phanostrate's gravestone"); LAMBERT, TOTELIN 2017 (tentatively suggest that she might have been an assistant). DAUX (1972, p. 554) concludes, probably wisely, that we know nothing about Antiphile and the children shown on the stele.

⁷ Some scholars have suggested that the children might be those of Antiphile, whom Phanostrate helped to birth: KOSMOPOULOU 2001, p. 300; LAES 2011, p. 159; DASEN 2016, p. 11 (who also suggests another possible interpretation: that the children might be Phanostrate's own, showing her to be a good mother and thereby well qualified to be a midwife). For the children as Phanostrate's own, see also BERGER 1970, p. 160. Some scholars have interpreted the presence of children on the stele as a sign that Phanostrate exercised as paediatrician: BERGER 1970, p. 160; CLAIRMONT 1970, p. 131; BIELMAN-SANCHEZ 2008, p. 176.

who are said to be ‘doctoring’ patients did more than just attend to births, perhaps dealing with a wide range of complaints of women and children.⁸

Lesley Dean-Jones suggests that the title *iatros* might have connoted trained physicians, including female ones.⁹ She argues that a clause of the Hippocratic *Oath*, which reads “I will consider the offspring (*genos*) [of my teacher] as equal to my male siblings”, might indicate that women (*genos* is not a gendered term) were swearing the *Oath*.¹⁰ While it seems to me that the *Oath* implies a male swearer, it is possible that women, as Phanostrate did, ‘masculinised’ themselves to access medical training and swore a medical *Oath*.¹¹ She did, however, keep the title of *maia* (midwife), a role which, as argued by Nancy Demand, was undergoing a process of professionalisation in the fourth century. A job, which had traditionally been in the hands of kinswomen and neighbours, was now becoming a more formal one, worthy of commemoration on funerary monuments. That change had, paradoxically, been brought on by the masculinisation of women’s medicine – by the fact that male doctors had started to treat women’s ailments.¹² As these male physicians asserted their control over this field of medicine, not the least by means of writing, they required the help of assistants whom female patients would trust. In the *Hippocratic Corpus*, we get glimpses of shadowy female attendants: the *omphalētōmos* (cord cutter), the *akestris* (midwife), and the *iētreousa* (healing woman). They have specialised knowledge of pregnancy and attend women in childbirth, whether the gestation had reached its full term or not, but could make dangerous mistakes, such as cutting the cord too quickly.¹³ In turn, some of these women,

⁸ NUTTON 2013, p. 101. See also e.g. KOSMOPOULOU 2001, p. 300 (“*maia*... denoting a midwife with relatively limited knowledge and duties, as opposed to *iatros*, a trained professional who could also be a gynaecologist”).

⁹ DEAN-JONES 1994, pp. 31-32. See also DASEN 2016, p. 10. See below for more connections between the stele and the Hippocratic *Oath*.

¹⁰ *Iusj*.1b: καὶ γένος τὸ ἐξ αὐτέου ἀδελφεοῖς ἴσον ἐπικρινέειν ἄρρεσι (4.628-630 Littré = 3 Jouanna).

¹¹ The person who swears the *Oath* asks the gods to make him his witnesses, using the masculine participle ποιούμενος (in the phrase ἵστορας ποιούμενος), but admittedly the masculine might have been used here in an inclusive manner. Also note further in the *Oath* the reference to sexual acts with both female and male patients, which I would read as a man swearing to refrain from intercourse with patients of both genders, but which would also make sense if a woman took the *Oath*.

¹² DEMAND 1994, pp. 63-70; 1995.

¹³ *Mul*. 1.46 (8.108 Littré = 11.108-110 Potter): ἤν γυναικὶ τὸ χορίον ἐλλειφθῆ ἐν τῇ μήτρῃ, τοῦτο δὲ γίνεται ὧδε, ἤν ῥαγῆ βίη ὁ ὀμφαλὸς ἢ ἀμαθίη ὑποτάμη ἢ ὀμφαλητόμος τὸν ὀμφαλὸν τοῦ παιδίου πρόσθεν ἢ τὸ χορίον ἐξέειναι ἐκ τῶν μητρώων... “If the afterbirth remains in the woman’s womb: this happens when the umbilical

would claim for themselves the title of *iatros*, first in the masculine as in the case of Phanostrate, and later in feminine forms such as *iatrinē* or *iatromaia*.¹⁴

The use of the masculine *iatros* is not the only way in which Phanostrate masculinised herself. Epigraphers have noted that the phrase *pasin potheinē* (missed by all) is not otherwise used in epitaphs for women; it suggests an influence that goes beyond the familial circle.¹⁵

In the remainder of this paper, I would like to focus on the last significant phrase of the Phanostrate epigram, *outheni lupēra* (she caused pain to no-one). Angeliki Kosmopoulou aptly noted that this expression may be an allusion both ‘to her character and to her professional ability’.¹⁶ Here, I will uncover some links between this phrase and passages of the *Hippocratic Corpus*, in particular in the treatises *On Winds*, *Epidemics 1*, and the *Oath*.

2. SHE CAUSED PAIN TO NO-ONE

Phanostrate was *lupēra* (causing pain) to no-one; she did not inflict *lupē* (pain) on anyone. The Greek noun *lupē* refers to a pain that pertains either to the body or to the mind, or indeed to both.¹⁷ While this noun appears relatively frequently in the *Hippocratic Corpus* (eleven

cord is torn by force, or when the woman who cuts the cord, *by ignorance*, cuts the cord of the infant before the afterbirth has come out of the womb.” *Carn.* 19 (8.614 Littré = 8.164 Potter): θαυμάσειε δ’ ἄν τις καὶ τοῦτο ὅστις ἄπειρος ἦ, εἰ ἐπτάμηνον γίνεται παιδίον· ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν αὐτὸς ὄπωπα καὶ συχνά· εἰ δέ τις βούλεται καὶ τοῦτο ἐλέγξει, ῥηϊδίον· πρὸς τὰς ἀκεστρίδας αἱ πάρεισι τῆσι τικτούσησιν ἐλθὼν πυθέσθω. “Someone *who lacks experience* in this matter might wonder whether a child can truly be born at seven months. But I have seen it myself – often. If anyone wants proof of this, it is easy. Let them go and ask the midwives who attend women in labour.” *Mul.* 1.68 (8.142-144 Littré = 11.148-150 Potter): ὅσα τρωσμῶν γινομένων μὴ δύναται ἀπαλλάσσεσθαι ... τὴν δὲ ἰητρεύουσιν τὰ στόματα μαλακῶς ἐξανοίγειν, καὶ ἡρέμα τοῦτο δρᾶν, ὁμαλὸν δὲ συνεφέλκεσθαι τὸ ἔμβρυον. “When, in cases of miscarriages/abortions, the deliverance does not occur... The healing woman shall open the mouth [of the uterus] gently, and doing this carefully, evenly draw out the foetus.” See HANSON 1996, p. 173; KING 1998, pp. 177-178.

¹⁴ See footnote 1 for bibliography.

¹⁵ BIELMAN 2003, pp. 85-86 (who rather speculatively suggests that Phanostrate “avait une clientèle, voire qu’elle tenait une sorte de cabinet médical dans un quartier d’Athènes”). See also BURTON 2003, p. 34 n. 18; DASEN 2016, p. 10.

¹⁶ KOSMOPOULOU 2001, p. 300.

¹⁷ On the meaning of the Greek *lupē*, see GRAVER 2002, p. 155; WILSON 2013, p. 132.

occurrences),¹⁸ as does the verb *lupeō* (forty-five occurrences),¹⁹ the adjective *lupēros* is much rarer: it only occurs only three times. Two of those occurrences, one in the *Letters*, one in *On Affections*, are not particularly relevant.²⁰ The third occurrence, in the opening section of *On Winds*, on the other hand, is especially interesting for our purpose. There, the author states that the art of medicine can cause pain to those who practice it:

εἰσὶ τινες τῶν τεχνέων αἱ τοῖσι μὲν κεκτημένοισιν εἰσιν ἐπίπονοι, τοῖσι δὲ χρεωμένοισιν ὀνήϊστοι, καὶ τοῖσι μὲν δημότησιν ξυὸν ἀγαθὸν, τοῖσι δὲ μεταχειριζομένοισι σφας λυπηραί. There are some arts (*techneōn*) which, while laborious (*epiponoi*) to acquire, are helpful to those who use them, and a common good for laypeople, but painful (*lupērai*) to those who pursue them.²¹

Thus, here it is an art – rather than a person – that brings pain to people, namely those who practice it. The art in question, of course, is that of medicine. The author continues:

τῶν δὲ δὴ τοιούτων ἐστὶν τεχνέων καὶ ἦν οἱ Ἕλληνας καλέουσιν ἰητρικὴν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἰητρὸς ὀρεῖ τε δεινὰ, θιγγάνει τε ἀηδέων, ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίησί τε συμφορῆσιν ἰδίας καρποῦται λύπας· οἱ δὲ νοσέοντες ἀποτρέπονται διὰ τὴν τέχνην τῶν μεγίστων κακῶν, νόσων, λύπης, πόνων, θανάτου·

Among such arts is that which the Greeks call medicine. Indeed, the physician sees terrible things, touches unpleasant things, and through the misfortunes (*sumphorēsīn*) of others, he

¹⁸ *Flat.* 1 (two occurrences, see below); *Acut. [Sp.]* 16 (2.476 Littré); *Epid.* 3.3.17 (3.134 Littré, two occurrences); *Hum.* 9 (5.488-490 Littré, two occurrences); *Morb. Sacr.* 14 (6.386 Littré); *Vict.* 1.18 (6.492 Littré); *Praec.* 14 (9.272 Littré); *Epist.* 14 (9.338 Littré).

¹⁹ *VM* 14 (1.602 Littré, two occurrences); 16 (1.606-608 Littré, three occurrences); 19 (1.616 Littré); *Acut. [Sp.]* 4 (2.404 Littré); 5 (2.408 Littré); *Fract.* 7 (3.438 Littré); 25 (2.510 Littré); *Epid.* 6.8.7 (5.344-346 Littré, two occurrences); *Art.* 10 (6.18 Littré); *Flat.* 1 (see below); *Aff.* 52 (6.262 Littré); *Loc. Hom.* 32 (6.324 Littré); *Vict.* 1.15 (6.490 Littré); 1.35 (6.518 Littré, two occurrences); 4.86 (6.640 Littré); *Morb.* 2.40 (7.56 Littré); *Int.* 20 (7.216 Littré); 35 (7.252 Littré); *Nat. Mul.* 41 (7.384 Littré); *Morb.* 4.45 (7.570 Littré); 4.46 (7.572 and 574 Littré, two occurrences); 4.49 (7.578 Littré); 4.52 (7.592 Littré, two occurrences); 4.55 (7.600 Littré); *Mul.* 1.8 (8.36 Littré); 1.31 (8.74 Littré); 2.154 (8.328 Littré); 2.188 (8.368 Littré); *Gland.* 7 (8.562 Littré); *Prorrh.* 2.31 (9.64 Littré); *Medic.* 2 (9.206 Littré); 5 (9.210 Littré); 7 (9.212-214, two occurrences); *Praec.* 14 (9.272 Littré); *Epist.* 17 (9.366 Littré).

²⁰ *Epist.* 17 (9.372 Littré); *Aff.* 61 (6.268 Littré, but note 5.88 Potter, where the opposite, ἀλυπότερα, is given).

²¹ *Flat.* 1 (6.90 Littré = 102-103 Jouanna).

harvests pains (*lupas*) that are his own. Sick people, on the other hand, escape the worst of ills thanks to the art: diseases, pain (*lupēs*), physical pains, and death.

The presence of *lupē* in this short paragraph is very conspicuous: the noun appears twice, the adjective once. Medicine, then, brings grief to physicians but alleviates it in patients. As scholars have argued since at least the eleventh century (when the commentator Eustathius was active), the message and form of this paragraph is reminiscent of the passage in book twenty of the *Iliad*, where Aeneas is said to suffer because of the grief of others.²² The opening paragraph of *On Winds* has a poetic quality to it, and as Jacques Jouanna has noted, and even includes a iambic trimeter (ὄρεϊ τε δεινὰ, θιγγάνει τε ἀηδέων, if one elides τε).²³

A similar idea to that of the opening paragraph of *On Winds* is expressed in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (first produced in 428 B.C.), in a passage where Phaedra's nurse claims that it is worse to nurse than it is to be sick. Here again, the noun *lupē* appears:

κρεῖσσον δὲ νοσεῖν ἢ θεραπεύειν:

τὸ μὲν ἔστιν ἀπλοῦν, τῷ δὲ συνάπτει

λύπη τε φρενῶν χερσίν τε πόνοσ

But it is better to be sick than to treat the sick.

The former is a single thing, while the later joins together

Pain (*lupē*) of heart to toil of hands.²⁴

In 1891, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff established the parallel between the opening of the Hippocratic *On Winds* and these lines of *Hippolytus*. To my knowledge, however, nobody has pointed to the links between those two sources and Phanostrate's epigram. Here we have a woman treating other women, as Phaedra's nurse did, who expressed herself in verse to claim that she caused pain to no-one. I would suggest that the author of *On Winds*, Euripides, and Phanostrate were all participating in a debate on the nature of the medical art, and the place of *lupē* within it. I am not suggesting that Phanostrate had read those texts

²² *Il.* 20.297-8: ἀλλὰ τί ἢ νῦν οὗτος ἀναίτιος ἄλγεα πάσχει / μὰν ἔνεκ' ἄλλοτρίων ἀχέων

"But wherefore should he [Aeneas], a guiltless man, suffer woes vainly by reason of sorrows that are not his own?" (translation: A.T. Murray), on which see Eustathius, *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem* (4.410 van der Valk). See JOUANNA 1988, pp. 127-128.

²³ JOUANNA 1988, p. 24.

²⁴ Eur. *Hipp.* 186-188.

(although that is not entirely impossible), but rather that she was aware of debates that might have taken both oral and written forms.

Phanostrate's claim is, however, different from that of Euripides and that of the author of *On Winds* in a small but important respect. Phanostrate did not state that she had brought on grief to herself while dealing with patients' pains. Rather, she suggested that she had caused pain to no-one, perhaps even including herself, as a healer, in that assertion.

Phanostrate's claim goes much further than stating that she has alleviated pains, as could well be expected from a midwife who attends women in labour.²⁵ The fact that the emphasis is not on alleviating distress, but rather on not causing any suffering (a wider claim, but cast in the negative) is significant, for it calls to mind two very important passages of the *Hippocratic Corpus* that deal with medical ethics.

The first of these passages is to be found at the beginning of *Epidemics* 1, where a definition of the medical *technē* is given, and where the role of the physician is summarised as 'to help, or at least, to do no harm':

ἀσκέειν, περὶ τὰ νοσήματα, δύο, ὠφελέειν, ἢ μὴ βλάπτειν. ἡ τέχνη διὰ τριῶν, τὸ νόσημα, ὁ νοσέων, καὶ ὁ ἰητρός· ὁ ἰητρός, ὑπηρέτης τῆς τέχνης· ὑπεναντιοῦσθαι τῷ νοσήματι τὸν νοσεῦντα μετὰ τοῦ ἰητροῦ χρή.

With regards to diseases, [the physician] must pay attention to two things, namely, to help, and at least to do no harm. The art involves three things: the disease, the patient, and the physician. The physician is the servant of the art, and the sick must fight the disease with the physician.²⁶

Healers can hope to relieve pain, but they must above all ensure that they cause no harm. The second passage to examine is of course the Hippocratic *Oath*, a text I approach with some trepidation.²⁷ Those who swore the *Oath* stated that they would keep their patients from harm and injustice (ἐπι δὲ καὶ ἀδικίῃ εἶρξεν), before outlining acts they would not engage in:

²⁵ For the claim that Phanostrate alleviated the pains of childbirth, see BREUER 1995, p. 56; TSAGALIS 2008, p. 212. On the Greek vocabulary pain in the *Hippocratic Corpus*, see KING 1998, pp. 118-126.

²⁶ *Epidemics* 1.2.5 (2.634-636 Littré = 1.164 Jones). On the history of 'do no harm' (*primum non nocere*) in medicine, see SMITH 2005.

²⁷ The bibliography on the *Oath* is immense; as a starting point, see recently TORRANCE 2014.

2. διαιτήμασί τε πᾶσι χρήσομαι ἐπ' ὠφελείῃ καμνόντων κατὰ δύναμιν καὶ κρίσιν ἐμήν· ἐπὶ δηλήσει δὲ καὶ ἀδίκῃ εἶρξεν κατὰ γνώμην ἐμήν.
3. οὐ δώσω δὲ οὐδὲ φάρμακον οὐδενὶ αἰτηθεὶς θανάσιμον, οὐδὲ ὑφηγήσομαι ζυμβουλὴν τοιήνδε· ὁμοίως δὲ οὐδὲ γυναικὶ πεσσὸν φθόριον δώσω.
4. ἀγνῶς δὲ καὶ ὁσίως διατηρήσω βίον ἐμὸν καὶ τέχνην ἐμήν.
5. οὐ τεμέω δὲ οὐδὲ μὴν λιθιῶντας, ἐκχωρήσω δὲ ἐργάτησιν ἀνδράσι πρήξιος τῆσδε...
8. ὄρκον μὲν οὖν μοι τόνδε ἐπιτελέα ποιέοντι, καὶ μὴ ξυγγέοντι, εἴη ἐπαύρασθαι καὶ βίου καὶ τέχνης δοξαζομένῳ παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἐς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον, παραβαίνοντι δὲ καὶ ἐπιορκέοντι, τάναντία τούτων.
- I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgement; but never with a view to their injury and detriment. I will not administer a drug to cause death, even if asked to do so; and I will not secretly advocate use of such drugs. Similarly, I will not give a woman a pessary to cause abortion. I will keep pure and holy both my life and my art. I will not use the knife, even on sufferers from stone; in this I shall yield place to experts....
- Now if I carry out this oath and do not break it, may I enjoy a good reputation for my life and my art for all time; but if I break it and transgress, may the opposite happen to me.²⁸

There has been much debate over the interpretation of the three prohibitions of the *Oath* (deadly drugs; abortive drugs; using the knife), and in particular whether they are to be read as absolute or not.²⁹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these prohibitions in detail, but I am interested in the mention of experts, who happen to be identified as male (*andrasi prēxios tēsde*), in relation to operations for the stone.³⁰ The author of the *Oath* did not mention experts in relation to deadly drugs and destructive pessaries, but such experts might have been found in the *pharmakopōlai* (drug sellers) and *rhizotomoi* (root cutters), for the deadly plants, and the *maiai* (midwives) for the abortive pessaries.³¹ The clearest classical source referring to midwives causing abortions is in Plato's *Theaetetus*, where Socrates, the son of the midwife Phaenarete, asks:

²⁸ *Iusj.* 2-8 (4.630-632 Littré = 3-5 Jouanna). Translation: CRAIK 2015, p. 145.

²⁹ See, among many others, MURRAY 1991; RÜTTEN, VON REPERT-BISMARCK 1996 (for the case of abortion); FLEMMING 2005 (for the case of euthanasia). See also the very useful summary in CRAIK 2015, p. 148.

³⁰ See e.g. MILES 2005, pp. 109-110.

³¹ See in particular Thphr. *Hist. pl.* 9.16.8, where the *pharmakopōlēs* Thrasyas of Mantinea is said to have discovered a drug that brings on a painless death. On *pharmakopōlai* and *rhizotomoi*, see SCARBOROUGH 1991; SAMAMA 2006; TOTELIN 2016.

καὶ μὴν καὶ διδοῦσαι γε αἱ μαῖαι φαρμάκια καὶ ἐπάδουσαι δύνανται ἐγείρειν τε τὰς ὠδῖνας καὶ μαλθακώτερας, ἂν βούλωνται, ποιεῖν, καὶ τίκτειν τε δὴ τὰς δυστοκούσας, καὶ ἐὰν ἴνεν ὄντ' δόξη ἀμβλίσκειν, ἀμβλίσκουσιν;

Are midwives not able to provoke the pains of birth by means of the remedies they provide and of chants, or to alleviate them if they so wish, and to assist those women who are having difficult labours, and if it seems good to cause a miscarriage, to provoke miscarriages?³²

While Plato's Socrates was asking a rhetorical question, there is no reason to doubt that he was referring to actual women's practice.³³

As Elizabeth Craik notes in relation to the *Oath's* prohibition of abortion "it is possible that practices allowed to midwives [sc. applying abortive pessaries] were not allowed to the true doctor".³⁴ While Craik is not particularly in favour of this interpretation, I would argue that it has merit when the 'abortion clause' is seen less in terms of 'being allowed' and more in terms of expertise, of *technē*. I would suggest that administering abortives was not within the *technē* of the *iatros* who swore the *Oath*. Such a dangerous procedure was best left in the hands of experts, most likely *maiai*, such as Phaenarete (and perhaps Phanostrate). In other words, I argue that the author of the *Oath*, when he mentioned abortive pessaries (and deadly drugs), was outlining the limits of his *technē*, which he desired

³² Pl. *Tht* 149d. On abortion in antiquity, see e.g. RIDDLE 1992; 1997. For a mention of abortives in relation to Phanostrate, see BERGER 1970, p. 161.

³³ The *Hippocratic Corpus* also mentions women's knowledge in relation to abortion at *Carn.* 19 (8.610 Littré = 8.160 Potter), where the author tells the story of prostitutes who know how 'to destroy' a foetus. A similar story is told at *Nat. Pue.* 13 (7.490 Littré = 10.34-36 Potter), although there it is the physician who tells the girl, an *auletris*, how to bring on the abortion by jumping up and down, a story which to use Craik's word (2015, p. 148) is 'rather fanciful'. A reference to women bringing on abortions might possibly also be found at *Mul.* 1.67 (8.140 Littré = 11.146 Potter): ἦν δὲ γυνὴ ἐκ τρωσμοῦ τρωμα λάβη μέγα, ἢ προσθέτοισι δριμέσιν ἐλκωθῆ τὰς μήτρας, οἷα πολλὰ γυναῖκες ἀεὶ δρωσί τε καὶ ἰητρεύονται, καὶ τὸ ἔμβρυον φθαρῆ, καὶ μὴ καθαίρηται ἡ γυνή... "If a woman suffers from a great wound after a miscarriage/abortion, or if her womb is ulcerated because of sharp pessaries – such many things women always do when *they treat themselves* – and if the foetus is destroyed and the woman has not experienced the lochial purge..." In this last passage the middle form *iētreuontai* seems to point to an act of self-medication, which was frowned upon by the Hippocratic author; see HANSON 1996, p. 173.

³⁴ CRAIK 2015, p. 148. See also MURRAY (1991, p. 297) who notes that, when JONES (1924, p. 39) translated the *Oath's* abortion clause as "I shall not myself *personally* apply an abortive pessary", he might have been alluding to the fact that "a midwife or nurse was to stand in his [the doctor's] place-presumably to avoid insult to the dignity of the patient, or to her house".

to guard ‘in a pure and holy way’.³⁵ My suggestion is not incompatible with the view that the author of the *Oath* might have found abortion objectionable on the grounds that it destroys human life, although that might have been an unusual opinion in the classical period.

As for Phanostrate, unfortunately, we cannot determine the type of medicine she practised; we cannot assert whether she helped women procure abortions or not, but it is significant that she claimed to have hurt no-one (*outheni lupēra*), thereby placing herself in a similar tradition to that of *Epidemics* 1 and the *Oath*, where harming patients is to be prevented at all costs. I would argue that, like the Hippocratic authors, Phanostrate considered preventing pain, harm, or injustice as one of the ethical principles of her *technē*. And while some ancient authors had asserted that the medical art could bring pain, *lupē*, to its practitioners, Phanostrate brought pain to no-one; she enjoyed the benefits of her life and *technē*.

3. PHANOSTRATE AND ASCLEPIUS

The similarities between Phanostrate and Hippocratic practitioners may not stop here. Like physicians of the time, she might have felt a special devotion towards the god of healing Asclepius.³⁶

Here it is opportune briefly to discuss a further Athenian inscription naming someone called Phanostrate:

Φανόστρατη [— — —].
Δηλοφάνης ἀνέθηκε Χο[λαργεὺς εἰκόνα τήνδε],
τῆς αὐτοῦ θυγατρὸς Δ[—ΥΥ εὐξαμένης].
Λυσιμάχηι γὰρ μητρὶ Υ—ΥΥ—ΥΥ—Υ
χεῖρα μέγας σωτήρ —ΥΥ—ΥΥ—
ἐπὶ Πατ[αίκου ἱερέως].
Phanostrate
Delophanes of Cholargos dedicated [this likeness]
His own daughter D- [having vowed it]
For on [her?] mother Lysimache
[You laid your?] hand, great saviour.

³⁵ On the meaning of this phrase, see VON STADEN 1996.

³⁶ On the links between medicine and religion in the classical period, see NUTTON 2013, pp. 104-115, with bibliography; see in particular GORRINI 2005 for doctors making offerings to healing gods in Attica.

In the priesthood of Pat[aikos].³⁷

This inscription is a verse dedication of a statue to Asclepius in his Athenian sanctuary on the south slope of the Acropolis. The statue (now lost) was dedicated during the priesthood of Pataikos, which Sara Aleshire dated to before 343/2 B.C.³⁸ The name of the person represented had previously been read as Phanostratos, but Jaime Curbera corrected this to Phanostrate in 2017 in his edition for *IG II*³. It is quite plausible that this Phanostrate is the same as the midwife-physician Phanostrate.

The inscription is fragmentary, but we can establish that Phanostrate is here celebrated for having helped Lysimache, the wife of Delophanes of Cholargos and the mother of a daughter whose name starts with a delta. The ultimate healer of Lysimache, however, is the great saviour Asclepius, whose healing hand is mentioned in line five of the inscription. In this inscription, it is then recognised that the healing power of Phanostrate, while great, is subordinate to that of the god.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have discussed links between the famous stele of Phanostrate and various passages of the *Hippocratic Corpus* and other contemporary texts. Phanostrate was commemorated in death with a verse epigram that calls to mind the *Iliad*, Euripides' *Hippolytus*, and the opening passage of the Hippocratic treatise *On Winds*. I have suggested that Phanostrate was taking part in current debates on the nature of the medical *technē*, its limits, its deontological principles, and more tentatively its relationship to divine healing. It is not impossible that she was able to read, although she may simply have heard these ideas.

Scholars tend to consider Phanostrate's title of *iatros* as superior to that of *maia*, but that is a little dismissive of the considerable skills involved in managing pregnancy and childbirth, and at times abortion, whether natural or induced. Phanostrate (or the person who set up her memorial) could have chosen to be remembered solely as an *iatros*, but she did not: she was *iatros* and *maia*. With her claim to be an *iatros*, Phanostrate situated herself within the circle of male doctors who, in the late fifth and fourth centuries, were debating the risks

³⁷ *IG II*³ 4.700. Previous editions include *IG II*² 4368; HANSEN 1989, pp. 184-185 (*CEG* 2.772). See *SEG* 30.164. Translation: LAMBERT 2017. I wish to thank Stephen Lambert for bringing this inscription to my attention.

³⁸ ALESHIRE 1989, pp. 126, 170

of the medical art, and the grief it could bring to the doctors and to their patients. But it is her claim to be a *maia* that might have allowed Phanostrate to gain the trust of female patients, as it brought with it promises of drugs and techniques that male *iatroi* did not entirely master (and sometimes distrusted). Thanks to her skills as a *maia* and an *iatros*, Phanostrate enjoyed the benefits both of ‘her life and art’ and lives on for posterity as the woman who caused pain to no-one.

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