THE OATH

• “I swear by Apollo the healer, by Asclepius, by Health, by Panacea and by all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses that I will carry out to the best of my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant (horkos kai syngraphe) ...”
THE OATH

• “I will hold my teacher in this art equal to my parents…..”
• “I will use treatments for the benefit of the sick….and abstain from doing harm…”
• “I will not give poison to anyone ….similarly I will not give to a woman an abortifacient .”
• “I will not use the knife….”
• “I will abstain from all voluntary wrongdoing and harm, and especially from sexual contacts….”
• “I will keep silent about whatever I might see or hear in the course of my treatment…”
HIPPOCRATES

• “I will neither give a deadly drug (*pharmakon thanasimon*) to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly, I will not give to a woman an abortifacient (*pessōn phthorion*).”

(Hipp. *The Oath*)
THE ANCIENT CONTEXT

• ABORTION AND EXPOSURE
• OEDIPUS, DIONYSUS, et al.
• “And of course, if it is a girl... expose it.”
• TERENCE: CHREMES ON THE RISKS OF ADOPTION
• INDEPENDENCE OF CITY-STATES
• LEGAL REMEDIES
HIPPOCRATES

• “Although the art of healing is the most noble of the arts.....it has at this time fallen into the least repute of them all. The chief cause for this seems to me to be that it is the only science for which states have laid down no penalties for malpractice.”

  (Hipp. Law)
ARISTOTLE

• “The philosopher should begin with medicine; the physician should end with philosophy.”
PLATO

• “...that ever better offspring may spring from good sires and from fathers helpful to the state sons more helpful still.”

(Republic, V.461a)
ARISTOTLE

• “The proper thing to do is to limit the size of each family, and if children are then conceived in excess of the limit so fixed, to have miscarriage induced before sense and life have begun in the embryo.”

(Politics, 1335b)
ARISTOTLE

- NUTRITIVE SOUL (*PSYCHE*)
  (plants, animals, man)
- SENSITIVE SOUL
  (animals, man)
- RATIONAL SOUL
  (man)
STOICS

• LIFE BEGINS WITH THE FIRST BREATH (THE VITAL PNEUMA)

• “We destroy monstrous births, and we also drown our children if they are born weakly and unnaturally formed.”

  (Seneca)
PYTHAGOREANS

• THE IMMORTAL SOUL OF GOD
• MATHEMATICAL HARMONY
• REINCARNATION AND LIFE
• VEGETARIANISM
• PROHIBITION AGAINST KILLING
HIPPOCRATES

- “Concerning abnormal pregnancies in which excision is to be practiced is as follows. First, lay a sheet on the woman…”

(Excision of the Fetus, 1)
HIPPOCRATES

• “A kinswoman of mine owned a very valuable dancer, whom she employed as a prostitute. It was important that this girl not become pregnant and thereby lose her value.....I told her to jump up and down, touching her buttocks with her heels at each leap. After she had done this no more than seven times...the seed fell out on the ground.” (Nature of the Child, 15)
EURIPIDES

• “What they say of us is that we have a peaceful time living at home, while they do the fighting in war. How wrong they are! I would very much rather stand three times in the front of battle than bear one child.”

(Euripides, *Medea*, 248ff)
HIPPOCRATES

• “A woman from the household of Pantimides took a fever the first day after a miscarriage.....

......seventh day: Died”

(Hipp. Epidemics, III.x)
“Another case of miscarriage about the fifth month resulted in Hicetas’ wife taking a fever...

.........seventh day: Death.”

(Hipp. Epidemics, III.xi)
HIPPOCRATES

- “A woman who lay near the Liars’ Market, having given birth to a first-born male child after a difficult labor, took a fever…. fourteenth day: Epistaxis. Death….age about seventeen.”

(Hipp. Epidemics, III.xii)
HIPPOCRATES

• “Practice two things in your dealings with disease: Either help, or do not harm the patient.”  
  (Epidemics, I.11)

• PRIMUM NON NOCERE
Nurse: “If you are sick and it is some secret sickness, here are women standing at your side to help. But if your troubles may be told to men, speak, that a doctor may pronounce upon it.”

(Hippolytus, 296ff)
PLATO

• “Midwives had the ability at an early stage to cause a miscarriage if they so decided.”

(Theaetetus, 149D)
SORANUS

• “The ideal midwife must not be greedy for money, lest she give an abortive wickedly for payment.”
THE OATH

• “Similarly, I shall not give to a woman (phthorion pesson) a pessary to cause abortion.”
“In Larissa, the servant of Dyseris, when she was young, whenever she had sexual intercourse suffered much pain....and she never conceived. When she was sixty she had pain from midday, like strong labor.....When pain seized her...she stood up and felt something rough at the mouth of her womb...
“Then, when she had already fainted, another woman, inserting her hand, pressed out a stone like a spindle top, rough. She was immediately and thenceforth healthy.”

(Hipp. *Epidemics*, I)
THE OATH

• AUTHORSHIP AND ALTERATIONS
• AGAINST MIDWIVES?
• ABORTIFACIENT v. ABORTION
• WOMEN’S (LACK OF?) RIGHTS
CONCLUSIONS

• “Life is short, The art of medicine is long; opportunity is elusive, experiment is dangerous, judgment is difficult.”
  (Hippocrates, Aphorism I.1)

• “All that exists is just and unjust and equally justified in both.”
  (Nietsche on Aeschylus)
“The wish to give a lecture for love of a crowded audience is not a laudable desire; at least avoid citations from the poets, for laborious citation reveals a lack of ability.”

(Hippocrates. *Precepts*, 12)