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Commentary on the first issue of the “New” Deltos Journal

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Commentary on the first issue of the “New” *Deltos* Journal

Athanasios Diamandopoulos¹

Editor in Chief

This first issue of *Deltos*' new life was planned as a statement for the Journal's future direction, with hopes of achieving its objectives to some extent. As a newcomer among the international community of Medical History Journals, the English version of *Deltos* aimed to distinguish itself by incorporating unique features that would captivate its specialised readership without compromising its scientific excellence. Consequently, our primary goal was to cultivate an artistic profile, not as a mere indulgence but rather as an extension of the longstanding connection between medical professionals and the world of art. From the Dioscorides' *Codex vindobonensis med. Gr. 1* to Ibn Sina's poetic *Cannon* and to the great French neurologist's Jean Martin Charcot and his 1888 publication of “*Nouvelle Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*” there is strong historical evidence for a link between the two fields.

However, in modern times, science rules free while art is disparaged. Summarising this notion concisely, it can be said that: “*Art lost its forum, science lost its limits. In Larissa, we attempted to give a little forum to Art and put a small limit to Science. If we succeeded, the readers of this volume will judge*”¹. Accordingly, the articles in this issue were accompanied by pertinent illustrations, highlighting their main points. If our readers appreciate this novelty, we will continue the practice. Another notable feature was the grouping of papers with similar topics, resulting in cohesive sections that complemented each other, albeit with some overlap.

The first section features reviews, including Professor Laurence Totelin's paper on the use of wax in medicine, exploring it both as a means of prescribing recipes and as a medicinal substance itself. The con-

nection between this topic and the title “*Deltos*” is explained in the Editorial of this issue. The second review delves into bioethical matters, examining their historical context and interconnections. This review presents Professor Stephanos Geroulanos' verbatim Inaugural Lecture, which he delivered upon receiving the Honorary Doctorate Diploma for the History of Medicine from the Medical School of Ioannina University. The third paper in this section is a collaborative effort by Professors Elias Valiakos, Marios Marselos, and Athanasios Diamandopoulos, providing a historical review highlighting the vital importance of posology in describing medications. This detailed work primarily focuses on the writings of Greek authors from the Classic era to the end of the Byzantine Empire. The last review paper, authored by Professor Dana Baran, offers an extensive examination of the historical development of geriatrics in Romania. Regrettably, scientific works from non-Western or to a lesser extent, Southern European countries continue to be disregarded. As a result, we fail to tap into a vast wealth of research conducted in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as other continents. Baran's paper serves to highlight Romania's innovative contributions to the field of geriatrics.

The second section includes presentations of recently published books. It was decided to ask the contributors of the books themselves to speak about the works. The first is an excellent 2022 facsimile edition of the *De la Crus-Badiano Codex*, presented by Professors Carlos Viesca and Mariablanca Ramos R. de Viesca. The original was written in 1552 by Martin de la Cruz, an Aztec physician responsible for the healthcare of indigenous children of noble families, at the Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco and translated into Latin

¹Louros Foundation for the History of Medicine, Athens, Greece

by Juan Badiano. After a tumultuous journey across Mexico, Spain, and Italy, the hand-painted book now rests once more in Mexico. In addition to its remarkable aesthetic worth, it serves as a valuable repository of information on Aztec herbals. The second book is an extended biography of the late Anastasios Damvergis (1857-1920), professor of Medicinal Chemistry at the University of Athens. He took up Greece's "Pharmacy as an art and turned it into a flourishing science". His scientific, writing, and administrative work was enormous. Foteini Karamaloudi, the author of the book, and a well known historian of Medicine, offers an overview of Damvergis' rich accomplishments as a chemist, pharmacist, entrepreneur, author, as well as on his heirs' achievements. The third book is by Dr. Agamemnon Tselikas, philologist/paleographer, and former Director of the Educational Institute of the National Bank of Greece. He presents his meticulous compilation of medical terms encountered in post-Byzantine four-language manuscript dictionaries (in ancient Greek, Koine or Roman (modern Greek), Frankish (Italian or Latin) and Turkish), into a single corpus. Each documented term is accompanied by an exponent denoting the manuscript number from which it was drawn. Frankish and Turkish words are preceded by brackets containing their corresponding spelling in Italian, Latin, Turkish (in the old Osmanic script in keeping with Arabic) and Arabic. An asterisk in brackets denotes a foreign word whose original form was impossible to locate in any of the various dictionaries. This Four-Language Dictionary will be a very useful aid for researchers in post-Byzantine iatrosophia.

The 3rd section is devoted to linguistics and overlaps with parts of the Reviews' Books' sections. The De la Cruz-Badiano Codex including the Aztec Herbarium as translated into Latin and then into Spanish and later into English, the Four-Language Lexicon of iatrosophia, and part of the Posology paper elaborating on various names of units of volume and weight in Greek and other languages of countries and ethnic groups surrounding Greece are fine examples of the necessity of translation work to assist the historical transnationalism of medical knowledge².

The last section comprises six research papers. Firstly, there is Professor Garabed Eknayan's work on the reappraisal of Giorgio Armeno Baglivi, a seventeenth-century physician scientist. Although Armeno (1668 - 1707) may not be considered a towering figure in the field of science, his training, studies, concepts, and contributions were significant enough to warrant his appointment as the Papal physician to Pope Innocent XII. Additionally, he served as a professor of Anatomy at the papal university of Sapienza in Rome and was a member of the Royal Society of Medicine in London. Armeno belonged to a group of scientists who either preceded or succeeded the great luminaries, and through their contributions, furthered the progress of science. Eknayan's original drawings successfully summarised Armeno's career. The second and third papers, by Dr. Attila Varga, revisit the dutifully forgotten appeal of eugenics in interwar Europe, particularly in Romania. Due to its Nazi exploitation, the topic is not politically correct to address. However, Dr. Varga objectively examines the connection between eugenics and Freemasonry, as exemplified by lectures and films aiming to prevent the spread of syphilis. The fourth paper in the section, by Prof. Gregory Tsoukalas and Dr. Lazaros Vladimirov, discusses the typical story in Greece of a 19th century elixir. During that era, people across societal strata in Europe and America were eager to sample any purported "elixir" that promised longevity, beauty and health. This fervour, similar to today's obsession with "healthy" foods and supplements, led Stamatios Krinos, who established one of the earliest pharmacies in Athens around 1836, and his son Athanasios to develop an elixir called Krinos Cola Wine. This elixir was intended to address various ailments such as neurasthenia, chlorosis, anaemia, indigestion, gastralgia, chronic diarrhoea, cardiopathies, weakness and infertility. Thanks to unrestricted market practices and to certain real benefits offered by the cola nut when mixed with wine from Malaka, Spain, the enterprise achieved tremendous success.

41. Ἀκόνιτον / Δωρόνικον – Aconitum / Doronicum	
E:	ἀκόνιον ⁵ / ἀκόνιτον ^{1 2 5 6 7 8 10 12 15} / γομφίτης ¹⁰ / δωρόνικον ^{10 13} / ντορόνικον ⁸
K:	ἀκόνιτον ¹⁰ / ἀπόκνονον ¹⁰ / ἴρις ἀγρία ¹⁰ / κάλαμος ἀρωματικῆς ⁴ / κουρνοβότανον ¹⁰ / κυνόκτονον ¹⁰ / σκυλοφάρμακο ¹² / στριγγλοβότανον ⁸ / στριγλοβότανον ^{6 7 12} / στριγλουβότανον ¹⁰ / στρουγλοβότανον ² / στριβλοβότανον ⁸ / στρουγχογλοβότανον ¹
Φ:	[aconito] ακόνιτον ⁸ [aconito napello] ακόνιτον ναπέλο ¹⁴ / ακόνιτον νάπελον ¹³ [doronic] δωρόνικο ⁶ / δωρόνικον ^{1 2 7 8 10}
T:	[اوغل اوتى] αγουλού στού ^{5 15} / ογουλού στού ⁵ [قارغه بوكن] καργαπικέν ¹³ [مپلنتریتز اوتى] μπιλντιρίτζ στού ⁵ / μιλντιρίτζ στού ^{5 15} / μπελλντιρίτζ στού ⁵ [درونك / درونج] νταρονέντζ ⁷ / νταρουνέντζ ⁸ / ντουρουνέντζ ⁸ / τουρουνέντζ ^{8 13} [[ننب العرقب] (درونك) νταρουνέντζ εκρέπ ² / ντορονίτζι ακρέπ ⁶ / ντουρουνέντζι ακρέπ ¹ / τουρουνέντζι ακρέπ ¹⁰ [*] σέμ χιλαχίλ

Figure 1. A sample of an entry. Aconitum / Doronicum.

Tsoukalas and Vladimiros expertly navigate us through the science and business aspects integral to this endeavor. The fifth paper, by Dr. Alexandra Leivaditou, belongs to a remarkable recent group of research that aims to uncover any genuine pharmacological benefits hidden within ancient and medieval manuscripts that were often dismissed as mere superstitions. Leivaditi diligently examines the medicinal properties of the substances in a 17th-century iatrosophion written by Nikolaos Ieropais, from a medical standpoint. The next paper, by Dr. Marios Papadakis, focuses on ancient surgical instruments. Although this topic has been extensively studied in the past, Dr. Papadakis, a renown plastic surgeon, explores their significance in the field of plastic surgery. This innovative approach, backed by a thorough bibliography, reinforces the argument that papers on the History of Medicine should occasionally narrow their scope to delve deeper into their subject matter. The same applies to the final research paper, written by the author of this commentary. It deals with the metaphors and similarities used in letters by the 13th century bishop Apocaukos of Naupactus. The use of fragments of Classical and Biblical literature by the Byzantines is also a well-known and repeatedly studied topic. The present paper’s novelty concerns their use by an educated clergyman in describing his diseases.

Lastly, a historian endowed with patience and insight, can discern another social connection among the personalities discussed in the papers of this *Deltos* issue. The wealthy Krinos pharmacist and entrepreneurs presented in Tsoukalas’ and Vladimiros’ paper faced the closure of their company following the death of the last active member of the family. However, through certain maneuvers, a solution was found and Prof. Anastasios Damvergis, the subject of Karmaloudi’s paper, came to rescue. He was appointed, albeit nominally, as overseer of the pharmacy until a legitimate heir could undertake the business. Nevertheless, an audacious legal dispute arose against this solution, instigated by the unscrupulous pharmacist Aristeidis Louros.³ He was a first-degree uncle of the late prof. Nikolaos Louros, the founder of the homonymous Foundation for the History of Medicine and co-holder of “*Deltos*”. In this Foundation the beautiful crystal pharmaceutical bottles from Damvergis’ pharmacy are now stored. Evidently, in the last quarter of the 19th century and the first of the 20th, pharmacists, medical doctors, entrepreneurs were a “happy family”. It was during the process of the final editing of *Deltos* that today, (04/07/2023), two documents which verify the notion of the “happy family” were traced,

while classifying the Louros’ Archives. The first is a letter of four handwritten pages sent by Constantinos Damvergis to N. Louros on the 08 Dec. 1963 (Fig. 2). Therein, he recalls sentimental moments between Louros’ father Constantinos and his father Anastasios. The latter was trying to console Louros senior – an ardent royalist- on the event of the semi-anti royalist military revolution of 1909. The son –N. Louros - answers politely next day with a typed letter (Fig. 3), and between others recalls that the families are close for four generations – the fourth to appear on the 13th Dec. 1963 delivered by Louros. Via personal inquires it was documented that the newborn was Evangelos Kalyvas, son of Eugenia Damvergi. Evangelos grew up to be a pilot in the Olympic and then the Aegean Airlines. This last minute insertion, on face value, isn’t of any interest to non-Greek readers. However, we hope that it underlines the tendency of highly educated individuals all over Europe to establish through social, commercial, teaching and intra marital bonds a genre of aristocracy of Knowledge trying to secure a place between the aristocracy of Land and the aristocracy of Wealth. This bond persisted internationally throughout the rest of the 20th century. Varga’s papers explore the concept of eugenics, which found strong

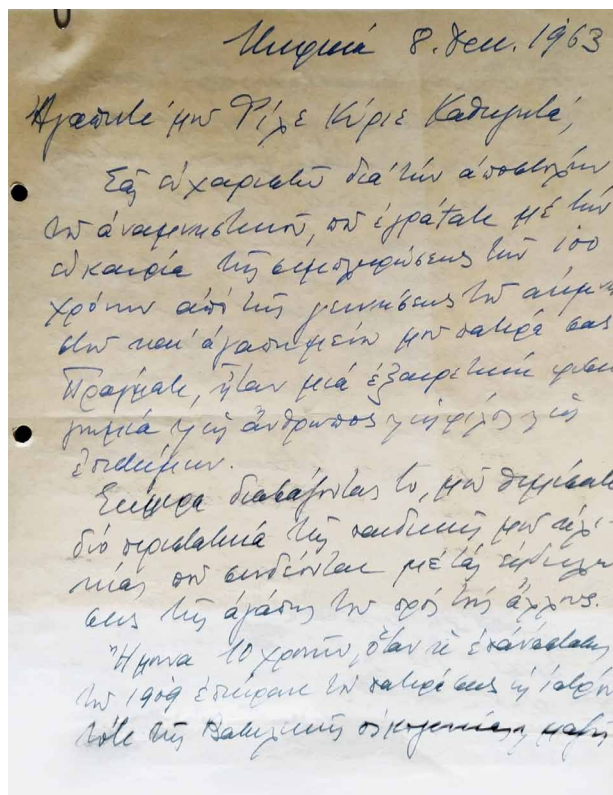


Figure 2

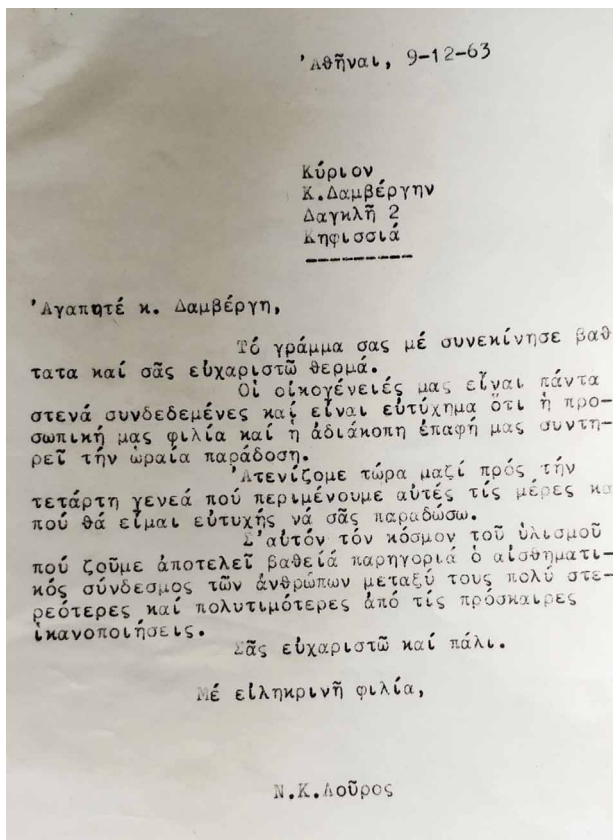


Figure 3

support in Greece in the person of Nikolaos Louros, the President of the Hellenic Society for Eugenics, who was a prominent advocate for eugenics policies in the country.⁴ His stamp on Deltos' English edition comes from his Ministerial directive on 30th October 1974 while he served as Minister of Education under the C. Karamanlis government, just four months after the junta was overthrown. In the chaos that succeeded the regime change, Louros found proper to introduce a

law mandating the teaching of two foreign languages in all Elementary Schools in Greece, reasoning that scientists who could not comprehend at least English should be considered uneducated.⁵

“Deltos” extends its gratitude to all authors from Cardiff (UK), Huston (USA), Mexico City (Mexico), Bucharest and Iasi (Romania), Athens, Patras, Ioannina, and Crete (Greece) for their valuable contributions towards achieving our vision of an International Journal with a touch of Greece. We eagerly await submissions for the second volume from around the globe, by 30 December 2023. Before concluding, I feel obliged to thank all the anonymous reviewers and the Members of the Editorial Board, in particular Professors Garabed Eknoyan, Marios Marselos, Katerina Gardica and Costas Tsiamis, as well as Dr. Marios Papadakis, for their devotion to the endeavour.

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5. *ibid*