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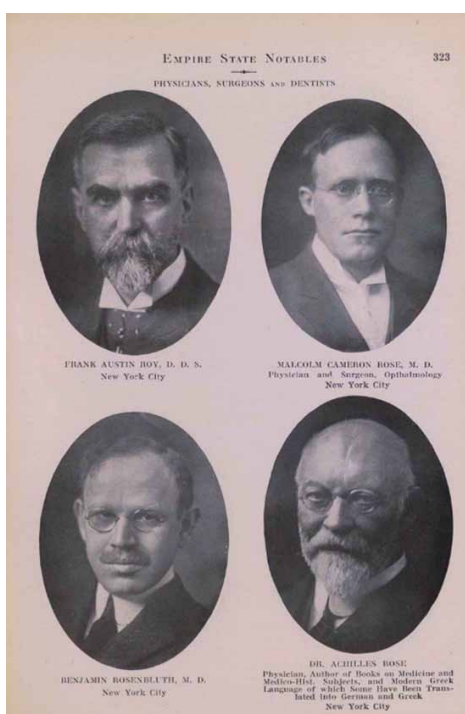
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# The German-American physician and philologist Achilles Rose (1839-1916), the grand Philhellene

Gregory Tsoucalas<sup>1</sup>, Lazaros Vladimiros<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1.** Early 20th-century publication of the State of New York with small biography portraits, including this of Achilles Rose (bottom right side).

## Abstract

Achilles Rose, a German-American physician of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, became famous for his persistent global struggle to promote the Hellenic language as the official language in medicine and science in general. Having studied in Zurich, Jena, and New York, he became a general practice physician. His most well-known medical treatise was “The Carbonic Acid in Medicine”, and he was the author of various works celebrating the Greeks and their vivid language. The Medical Society of Athens elected him as a member of a committee for such a purpose. Although Latin appeared to have won this linguistic battle, Hellenic terms eventually conquered international nomenclature. Greece must not forget this valiant Philhellene.

**Key Words:** *Hellenic language, carbonic acid, Columbia University.*

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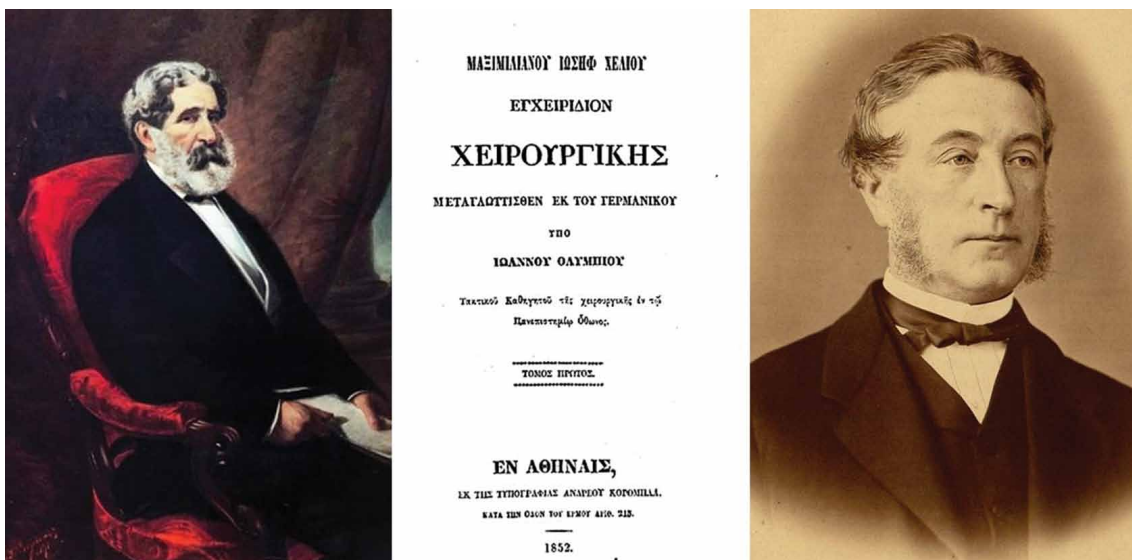
## Introduction

Physician Achilles Rose was born on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1839 in the mountain village Ruchla (ca 450 meters altitude) in the state of Thuringia in central Germany<sup>1-2</sup>. Ruchla was founded in the early era of the Renaissance by miners who appreciated the beautiful mountainous and wooded landscape. Gradually, due to their permanent settlement, they became involved in metallurgy, focusing mainly on the exploitation of iron ores and the production of weapons of the time. The area also gained recognition for breeding finches (*Fringilla coelebs*)<sup>3</sup>. Records of death certificates demonstrate that his parents, Gustave Rose and Anna Muller Rose of German origin, lived and died in Ruchla, while Achilles at the age of 22 immigrated to the United States of America<sup>4</sup>. Some sources indicate that Achilles was born in Ohrdruf, near Gotha in the forest of Thuringia<sup>5</sup>.

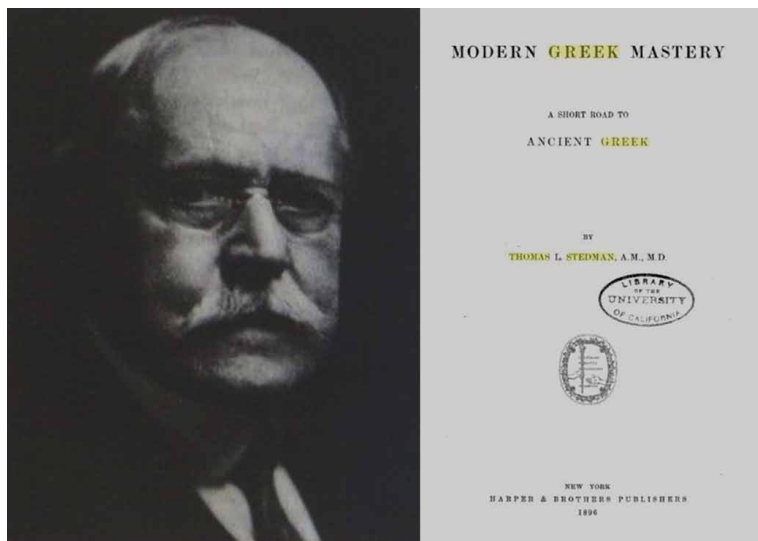
The 19th century, marked by two great revolutions in France and the New World, as well as two industrial revolutions, was a period of rapid technological change and huge shifts in scientific understanding and medical progress. As medical knowledge increased, the prospect of a specialized language of medicine underwent a period of nationalization among the biggest countries in Europe, with varying effects on different national languages and the progressive emergence of new terms. Latin ceased to be the dominant language of global communication among physicians. However, Latin persisted to exist, and a systemic unification of medical

terminology occurred in 1895, with the publication of the *Basiliensa Nomina Anatomica*. This publication included Latin terms alongside their equivalent terms in English. It was the first step towards English domination in medical terminology around the globe<sup>6</sup>. In the newly formed Kingdom of Greece, in the Othonion University of Athens, Ioannis Olympios (1802-1869), professor of Surgery, Pathology, and Ophthalmology published the “Textbook in Surgery” in 1852. It was a translated four-volume epitome of surgery by the German surgeon and ophthalmologist Maximilian Joseph von Chelius (1794-1876) [Figure 2]. With this masterly work, Olympios significantly influenced the Hellenic Medical Nomenclature, as he had introduced, if not invented, new genius terms in surgery, anatomy, and medicine in general<sup>7-8</sup>. American physician Thomas Lathrop Stedman (1853-1938) was among the pioneers who had proposed Hellenic language. In his 1896 work “Modern Greek Mastery, A Short Road to Ancient Greek”, he suggested that this choice would wound the pride of any European nation. By proposing the adoption of Greek, a vivid language which had been already accepted by François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire, 1694-1778) and Scottish Professor of Humanity John Stuart Blackie (1809-1895), inaugurated an international debate [Figure 3]<sup>9</sup>.

Despite the global medical society already having chosen Latin and English nomenclature, Achilles Rose, following in the footsteps of Stedman, became the crusader advocating the re-birth of Hellenic-based



**Figure 2.** Ioannis Olympios, oil painting portrait, University of Athens (left side). Olympios’ “Textbook in Surgery”, a translated four volume epitome of surgery originally written by the German surgeon and ophthalmologist Maximilian Joseph von Chelius (centre). German surgeon and ophthalmologist Maximilian Joseph von Chelius (right side).

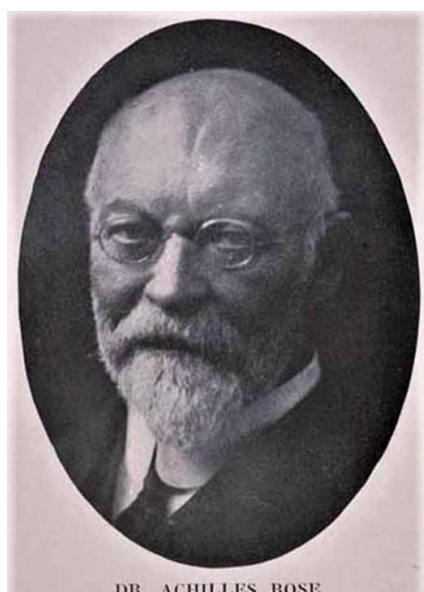


**Figure 3.** Thomas Lathrop Stedman (left side) and his work “Modern Greek Mastery, A Short Road to Ancient Greek”, 1896 (right side).

terminology, stating that the language of the Greeks was the most accurate to describe anything and everything. This historical review aims to re-create the portrait of this intellectual figure in medicine - an esteemed representative of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Philhellenism, the German-American physician and philologist Achilles Rose [Figure 4].

### Life and work

Soon after graduating from the high school of Ruchla, Achilles Rose studied medicine, first at the



**Figure 4.** Achilles Rose, portrait, early 20th century publication of Empire States Notables, New York.

University of Zurich and then at the University of Jena, from 1860-1863, where he attended the lectures of the newly appointed German professor of Internal Pathology Carl Jakob Adolf Christian Gerhardt (1833-1902)<sup>10-15</sup>. At the age of 22 (years 1863 and 1864 are mentioned in various sources), he immigrated to New York USA, to enter Columbia University (New York College of Physicians and Surgeons), where he became a student in the Faculty of Medicine at the College of Physicians and Surgeons<sup>1-2,16</sup>. He successfully completed his studies in 1872<sup>14</sup>. He then settled in a house on 173 Lexington Avenue<sup>15</sup> and practiced medicine in his private office on 2nd Boulevard of New York n. 8 to 9<sup>16</sup>, where he worked for several decades<sup>17</sup>. At the beginning of the 20th century in Constantinople (now Istanbul), most probably in 1910, the scientific journal Hippocrates, the first in the Hellenic language in Turkey, celebrated his inauguration issue. Achilles Rose was mentioned among its editors<sup>18</sup>. His important work and skills led him to the position of Adjunct Professor of Medicine at New York University<sup>19</sup>, becoming an Instructor in Diseases of the Stomach, as evidenced by his signature in various texts and journals of the era<sup>20</sup>. He eventually became the Editor of a new journal called the International Surgical Record along with E.J. Schreurtz<sup>21</sup>. Throughout his life, Achilles composed a prolific body of scientific work, both in medicine and philology, with an emphasis on Hellenic antiquity and the modern Hellenic state [Table 1] [Figure 5]. He gave a series of speeches and wrote a plethora of works to project the Hellenic language as the official language of medical science globally. He received international recognition for his works,

**Table 1.** Achilles Rose's work.

N/A	Work title, Publisher, City, Year	Type of work	Language
1	Carbonic Acid Gas as a Local Application to Chronically Inflamed Mucous Surfaces, Annals of Anatomy and Surgery, 1883	Book	English
2	Greichisch als allgemeine Sprache der Aerzte und Gelerhten uberhanpt. Za Rudolph Virchow's Rectorastrede: Lernen und Forschen. Gustav Stechert, New York & Leipzig & London & Paris 1893.	Book	German
3	Greek as the International language of physicians and scholars in general (March 15th, 1894). The New York Medical Academy 1894;(11):189-227.	Speech-Lecture printed	English
4	Living Greek, the Language of Physicians and Scholars. International Record of Medicine and General Practice Clinics 1894;(62):9-11.	Paper	English
5	The question of an international language. Medical Record 1895;(48):287.	Paper	English
6	What is the significance of the splashing sound of the stomach? New York Medical Journal 1895;1:5.	Paper	English
7	Hot Water and Ulcer of the Stomach. The Omaha Clinic 1895;8:265.	Paper	English
8	The Proper Pronunciation of Greek, Lecture, Academy of Medicine, Hosack Hall, New York, March 1894, June 5. Education 1896.	Speech-Lecture printed	English
9	Concerning the most civilized races. The Post Graduate 1896;(11)6:461	Letter to the Editor	English
10	The Oedema of the Larynx. The Post Graduate 1896;(11)6:221	Speech printed Lecture	English
11	Some new methods of diagnosis and treatment of diseases of the stomach demonstrated in a case of Achylia Gastrica. The Post Graduate 1896;(11)4:144-150.	Paper	English
12	Greek Anthropology, D. Appleton, 1897, New York	Book	English
13	Christian Greece and Living Greek, Peri Hellados Publications, New York, 1898	Book	English
14	Η χριστιανική Ελλάς και η ζώσα ελληνική γλώσσα (Μετάφραση στην Ελληνική υπό Μιχαήλ Κωνσταντινίδου Πρώην Καθηγητού των ελληνικών γραμμάτων εν Λονδίω), Τυπογραφείο Νεολόγου, Κωνσταντινούπολη, 1898	Book	Hellenic
15	Die Griechen und ihre Sprache: seit der Zeit Konstantins des Grossen, Wilhelm Friedrich, Berlin, 1899	Book	German
16	The progress of women in modern Greece. The American Journal of Nursing 1900;(11)11:779-785 J.	Paper	English
17	Gastroptosis in Dominion Medical Monthly. The Canada Lancet and Practitioner 1900;1:161	Speech printed Lecture	English
18	Dilatation of the Esophagus without Anatomical stricture, XIIIe Congrès International de Médecine, Masson et cie, Paris, 1900-1901	Conference paper	English
19	Methylene bleu and methyl bleu, Post Graduate 1901;16(8):831-834	Paper	English
20	Methylene blue in malarial disease and the substitution of methyl bleu for methylene blue. New York Medical Journal 1901;74(9):902-903	Paper	English
21	Atonia Gastrica und eine neue Methode der Behandlung derselben. Deutsche Prax Munchen 1901;8:15.	Paper	German
22	Floating kidney idoltry; A polemie. Medical Standard Chicago 1902;12:8.	Paper	English
23	Methylene blue and quinine in the treatment of malarial fever. New York Medical News 1903;82(1):39-40	Paper	English
24	Physician vs Bacteriologist, Professor O. Rosenbach. Translated by Achilles Rose The Post Graduate 1904;19:1294.	Paper	English
25	Quinine and methylene blue in malarial infection. Therapy Gazette of Detroid 1904;28(3):216	Paper	English
26	Prehistoric Trephining. American Medicine 1904;2nd January, volume 81	Paper	English
27	Atonia Gastrica, Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1905	Book	English
28	Onomatologia gastrologica, Saint Louis Medical Review, 1905	Paper	English

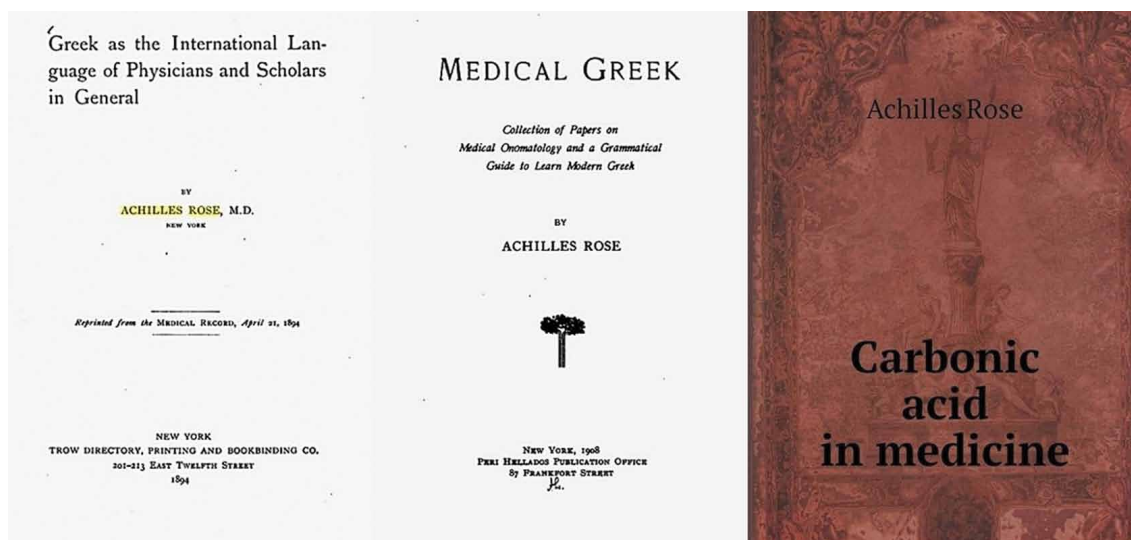


**Table 1.** Achilles Rose’s work (continued).

N/A	Work title, Publisher, City, Year	Type of work	Language
29	Onomatologia gastrological. Transactions American Gastro-Enterology Association 1905;12:14.	Paper	English
30	Is nervous dyspepsia a disease sui generis? New York Medical Journal 1906;12:3.	Paper	English
31	International tasks of the University. Medical Reviews of New York 1906;12:12.	Paper	English
32	Modern methods in the medical treatment of gastric disease. New York Medical Journal 1907;8:8.	Paper	English
33	Denkschrift uberarztliche Kunstsprache, den in Marburg atn 30. Juli 1907 zuzammenkommenden Rectores magnifici aller deutschen Iniversitaten zur Beradung vorgelegt. German Academy of New York 1907.	Speech-Lecture printed	German
34	Memorandum of medical language, presented to the Rectorius magnificis of all German universities, meeting in Marburg on July 30, 1907, for consideration. Medical Briefs of Saint Louis, 1907.	Speech-Lecture printed	English
35	Barbarism in medical language, A.R. Elliott, New York Medical Journal 1907;8:7.	Paper	English
36	Aetiology, pathology and therapy of medical slang. American Medical Compend 1907	Paper	English
37	Malaria in Greece. New York Medical Journal 1908;87(15):680-682	Paper	English
38	Medical Greek; Collection of Papers on Medical Onomatology and a Grammatical Guide to Learn Modern Greek. Peri Hellados Publication Office, Athens, 1908	Book	Hellenic
39	The Nomenclature of the American Dermatological Association. The Journal of Cutaneous Diseases Including Syphilis 1908;(26):175.	Paper	English
40	Ancient Greek Medicine. New York Medical Journal 1908;8:4.	Paper	English
41	Μακαρονική Γλώσσα και Υποκρισία εν τη Ιατρική, New York, 1900-1909 (Royal College of Surgeons of England ?)	Paper	Hellenic
42	Napoleon's Campaign in Russia, Anno 1812; The author, New York, 1913	Book	English

including “Carbonic Acid”, a treatise on medicine, and “Napoleon’s Campaign in Russia”, a historical-medical study of the campaign<sup>1-2</sup>.

Achilles became a distinguished member of various societies, including the New York Academy of Medicine, the American Academy of Medicine, and



**Figure 5.** Achilles Rose’s treatises, Greek as the international Language of Physicians and Scholars in general (left side), Medical Greek (centre) and Carbonic acid in medicine (right side).

the German Medical Academy of New York<sup>2</sup>. In Greece on April 14, 1907, during the works of the Medical Society of Athens under the presidency of Professor Spyridon Magginas (1839-1920) [Figure 6A], a committee was formed with the initial order to promote the application of the classical Hellenic language in the nomenclature of science, especially in medicine. To honour Achilles Rose for his work regarding his international proposal for the adoption of the Hellenic language as the global language of science, the committee had proposed that Achilles become a member, during a solemn session under its newly elected president, Professor Marinus Geroulanos (1867-1960) [Figure 6B]<sup>22-23</sup>. Meanwhile, Achilles joined the Medical Society of Athens as an honorary member<sup>22</sup>. In 1899, as a grand Philhellene, Achilles was honoured by His Majesty the King of the Hellenes, George I, with the Silver Cross of the Greek Order of the Savior (The Order of the Redeemer, Greek: Τάγμα του Σωτήρος), the oldest and highest decoration to be awarded to civilians by the modern Greek state<sup>23-24</sup>.

Achilles died of pneumonia on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1916, in a private hospital in the Borough of Manhattan, New York<sup>25</sup>. His daughter, Maria Rose, was closely associated with the Orthodox Christian faith and is mentioned within the autobiography of Meletios Golden (1868 - 1934) [Figure 6C], the founder of the Greek-American-Christian Association<sup>26</sup>. The use of liquefied carbonic acid as a local anaesthetic, as suggested by Rose, was implemented in modern Hellenic medicine at the beginning of the 20th century by professor of the University of Athens obstetrician-gynaecologist Konstantinos Louros (1863-1957) [Figure 7A]. Louros,

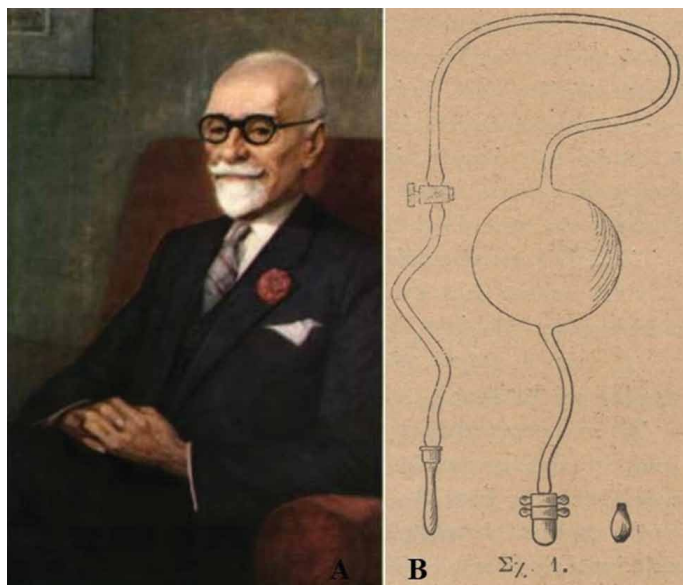
who was then an adjunct professor (Greek: υφηγητής) of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, announced in 1903, during a medical conference, the satisfactory results he had encountered after the use of carbonic acid in a series of gynecological cases as well as in ten difficult birth deliveries. In his announcement, Louros mentioned that he had personally met Professor Rose in 1900 in Athens when the American Philhellene had visited Greece to admire some places with antiquities and to enroll his daughter in the Arsakeion Lyceum, for her to properly learn the Greek language. Louros had asked Rose to send him from the States a sufficient quantity of liquefied carbonic acid, along with the apparatus for its administration. He used the apparatus for a period of two years, 1901-1903, demonstrating promising results. In the conference proceedings, Louros presented a schematic depiction of Rose's device [Figure 7B]<sup>27</sup>.

### The Global Hellenic Language-Rose's legacy

Among the great men who introduce a global idea and persist in bringing it to our attention, is this physician, Achilles Rose, a native of the German Empire, a visitor and student among the Hellenes, and finally a resident and scholar of New York City<sup>28</sup>. In 1893, Achilles gave his first public speech on the use of the Hellenic language to the German-speaking Americans of the German Medical Academy of New York, speaking about a language with the longest history among all, a language that wasn't recognized as an official language like Spanish, Portuguese, and French by the USA. This fact was recorded among German-Americans<sup>29</sup>. A year later he delivered the



**Figure 6.** Portraits of Spyridon Magginas (left side), Marinus Geroulanos (centre) and Meletios Golden (right side)



**Figure 7.** Portrait of Konstantinos Louros, University of Athens (left side) and Achilles Rose’s apparatus for Carbonic acid as presented by Louros in 1903 (right side).

regal speech “The Proper Pronunciation of Greek” to the members of the New York Academy of Medicine in Hosack Hall, with the presence of N. Botassi, Consul General of Greece<sup>30</sup>. In the same year, he held a lecture, later published under the title “Living Greek, the Language of Physicians and Scholars”<sup>31</sup>. In 1908 he published his work “Medical Greek, Collection of Papers on Medical Onomatology and a Grammatical Guide to Learn Modern Greek”, another imposing treatise to heighten the Hellenic language<sup>32</sup>.

In 1906, in the *Panathinaia Journal* (Greek: Παναθήναια) his words were noted: “as the first who introduced the truism of Hellenic language, I had published in German Journals a study on scientific nomenclature. It was ten years ago, when I indicated the false practice and the foolishness of many men, to create scientific terms even though they do not comprehend the Hellenic language” (Greek: ὅστις πρῶτος ἐνησχολήθη εἰς τὸ ζήτημα τοῦτο. Πρὸ ὀλίγου ἐδημοσίευσα ἐν τῷ Γερμανικῷ Ἰατρικῷ Τύπῳ μελέτην περὶ ἐπιστημονικῆς ἱατρικῆς ὀνοματολογίας ... Πρὸ δέκα ἐτῶν ἤδη κατέδειξα τὸ ἐσφαλμένον καὶ ἐνίστε γελοῖον πολλῶν λέξεων τῆς ἱατρικῆς ὀνοματολογίας ἐσχηματισμένων ὑπὸ ἀνδρῶν ἀγνοούντων τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν)<sup>33</sup>. In another speech in New York, noted as “The Barbarism in Medical Language”, he stated “that starting from the era of Émile Maximilien Paul Littré (1801-1881) [Figure 8A], medical language since its first composition is almost entirely Greek and has not ceased to fall back on this source when the inevitable necessity presents itself of coining new terms”<sup>34</sup>. The

opposers challenged Hellenic language, supporting the idea of a new international language or persisted in the languages of the “big powerful” countries of the era. Achilles had borrowed the words of Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier (1743-1794) [Figure 8B], “the onomatology furnishes the real instruments for the operation of the mind; these instruments must be of the best kind and it is indeed working in the interest of science, for the progress of science, when we exert ourselves to improve our onomatology”, and what better means of exertion if not the Hellenic language<sup>35</sup>. Achilles was the leading figure, a passionate advocate for Hellenic onomatology. Dr Achilles Rose’s proposal of elevating the Hellenic language into the official language of medical nomenclature and terminology dominated world press and scientific debates. Initially, negative opinions emerged, noting that English speakers might struggle to learn additional terms. However, those negative perspectives only scratched the surface of the proposed issue, as an urgent need for more terms arose in the scientific field of medicine. Numerous literature and language experts, both in medical and non-medical papers and journals, supported the Hellenic language, stating that it is a rich, vivid, theatrical, accurate, and to-the-point mother language capable of authoritatively describing all of medicine’s requirements. Among Achilles Rose’s supporters, was the man who started all, Thomas Lathrop Stedman, who in his 1909 “Practical Medical Dictionary” once more noted that scientific language was based mainly in Greek and





**Figure 8.** Portrait of Émile Littré by lithographer Jean-Baptiste Adolphe Lafosse (1810-1879), Musée des Beaux-arts du Canada, printed by Imprimerie Lemercier ca 1865 (left side) and Portrait of Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier, lithographie, Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia Leonardo Da Vinci, Milan (right side).

in lesser extent into Latin, considering other additions as barbaric by borrowing Rose's words from his 1907 paper "Barbarism in medical language"<sup>36</sup>. Rose's pen, the instrument of an enthusiastic physician-philologist to promote the Hellenic language as universal in the field of medicine, made him a martyr to his cause<sup>37</sup>. "Death of a Noted Philologist" was mentioned as the title in his obituary, not emphasising his medical authority, but instead his contribution in supporting Hellenic medical nomenclature<sup>38</sup>.

### Epilogue

Those of us who possess literary fastidiousness and who take pleasure in reflecting on the arduous hours spent mastering the rudiments of the Greek and Latin languages in the field of medicine, cannot help but

sympathise with the unyielding clash of Rose, standing alone against all odds. In light of the widespread abandonment of Latin in Europe's universities, the prospect of adopting Hellenic as the universal language of physicians initially appeared improbable. Yet, over time, Hellenic terms have gradually come to predominate in international medical terminology, vindicating Achilles's proposal decades after his death. Achilles Rose somehow neglected pure medical science to enoble a daring idea and for that, he was honoured by the Greeks. Regrettably, his name and contributions were overlooked as time passed in the tumultuous modern era of Greece. The history of medicine and Greece ought to recognise his enduring contribution to medical nomenclature and forever honour this valiant Philhellene.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

#### Ο Αμερικανο-Γερμανός ιατρός και φιλόλογος Achilles Rose (1839-1916), ο μέγας φιλέλληνας

Γρηγόριος Τσουκαλάς

Ο Αχιλλέας Ρόουζ (Achilles Rose), ένας Γερμανοαμερικανός ιατρός στα τέλη του 19ου αιώνα, έγινε διάσημος για τον επίμονο αγώνα του, σε παγκόσμιο επίπεδο, να προωθήσει την Ελληνική γλώσσα ως επίσημη στην ιατρική και την επιστήμη γενικότερα. Με σπουδές στη Ζυρίχη, την Ιένα και τη Νέα Υόρκη, απέκτησε την ειδικότητα του γενικού ιατρού. Η πιο γνωστή ιατρική του πραγματεία ήταν «Το Καρβολικό Οξύ στην Ιατρική», ενώ υπήρξε συγγραφέας διαφόρων έργων στα οποία προήγαγε τους Έλληνες και τη ζωντανή τους γλώσσα. Η Ιατρική Εταιρεία

Αθηνών τον εξέλεξε ως μέλος της Επιτροπής που είχε ακριβώς αυτόν το σκοπό. Αν και τα Λατινικά φαινόταν ότι κέρδισαν αυτή τη γλωσσική διαμάχη, οι Ελληνικοί όροι κατέκτησαν τελικά τη διεθνή ονοματολογία. Η Ελλάδα δεν θα πρέπει να λησμονήσει τον Ρόουζ για αυτό που υπήρξε, ένας σπουδαίος φιλέλληνας.

**Λέξεις Κλειδιά:** Ελληνική γλώσσα, καρβολικό οξύ, Πανεπιστήμιο Κολούμπια.

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