Foreword

The study of Greek manuscripts of medical content has seen a significant, though not exclusive, investigation by Alain Touwaide, whose life of scholar has been entirely devoted to the knowledge and valorization of the medical traditions of the Mediterranean world with a particular reference to the history of ancient and medieval Greek medicine.

The revisions and updates of the catalogues of Greek medical manuscripts compiled in the early 20th century by an équipe of philologists, guided by the distinguished historian of ancient Greek philosophy and medicine Hermann Diels (Die Handschriften der antiken Ärzte), are a cornerstone of Touwaide’s scientific research on medical manuscripts, the further developments of which already include plans for a detailed catalogue of all surviving witnesses according to the norms of modern catalogography.

Four years after his 2016 voluminous Census of Greek Medical Manuscripts, the publication of this new and substantial reference work constitutes a further step, complementary to the previous one, of his programme that will ultimately allow for the critical edition of a series of Greek medical texts in a way reminiscent of the Corpus Medicorum conceived by Diels over a century ago as the natural outcome of the catalogues of manuscripts that he coordinated.

If Alain Touwaide embarked on an arduous task with his Census and the compilation of an updated list of Greek manuscripts with medical contents—many of which were not listed in Diels’ early 20th-century catalogues—the completion of a renewed Diels is a no less demanding endeavour. Diels’ catalogues, which have been the reference for over a century for any scholar interested in the study of late antique and medieval Greek medicine from any perspective, are known, indeed, to suffer several limitations—besides the incompleteness of their inventory of manuscripts (well highlighted by the numerous complements provided in the Census)—that can be traced to the difficulty in identifying manuscripts generated by Diels’ use of shelfmarks which have been made obsolete since by changes in the name of libraries or collections, in ownership, or in the location of collections. To further make research laborious, the printing of Diels’ original edition is rather unclear.

Alain Touwaide has chosen to exactly reproduce the substance of Diels’ work, even though he significantly intervened with great acumen on the structure, citation format, and presentation of the text, to make its contents more immediately usable and its consultation easier. An innovative organization of data in five tomes (in which
the reproduction of Diels’ original text in a decidedly more readable form is followed by two different methods of accessing the information, by type of contents—in tomes two through four—and by manuscript—in the fifth and final tome—is accompanied by an articulated system of indices designed to combine the need to reproduce Diels’ original text *ad litteram* and the scientific imperative to update and standardize the method of referencing the manuscripts, and also to multiply the keys for searching the texts. In this view, Touwaide’s decision to split the list of authors and works is revealing as it allows for the identification of texts by both their Greek and Latin title (albeit following the form, which is not always consistent, of the titles in Diels’ original version), thus providing a first effort for a future standardization. Equally inspired by a justifiable need for clarity and simplification is the choice of accompanying the index of the original shelfmarks of manuscripts with a list of the English names of the cities and libraries. Finally, the layout of this renewed Diels clearly improves on the original edition, structuring its presentation in a much clearer and more effective way through different levels of indentation.

Those who are acquainted with Alain Touwaide know that only his visionary and tenacious spirit, supported by an unshakable patience and a truly extraordinary work capacity, could have pushed him to embark alone on the revision of the catalogues that Diels conceived and could complete thanks to the collaboration of a team of no fewer than thirty scholars. Touwaide’s revision required many long years of meticulous work, with a sheer quantity of doublechecks, corrections, and identifications of new locations and shelfmarks, as well as *in situ* autoptic inspection of many manuscripts and sometimes even of entire collections.

Though constantly making explicit its connection with Diels’ original work through its coherent and functional system of cross-references, the present revision of Diels will ultimately make it unnecessary to refer to the old Diels and make it possible, instead, to work only with updated lists of manuscripts. Furthermore, the multiple indices extremely well designed by Touwaide and the cross-referencing they make possible pave the way to a future, highly desirable transfer of data from a printed form to an open database, much of the necessary material of which is contained in the present work, in addition to the new data already provided by the *Census*. It can be expected that such a database will be constantly expanded and updated by integrating the results of the new developments and research that the catalogue that we have here will undoubtedly contribute to, promote, and generate.

The renewed Diels that we have here deserves to be hailed as an invaluable reference for both the niche of scholars scrutinizing Greek medical manuscripts and texts, and the wider circle of the historians of medicine, pharmacy, and ancient and medieval science, in a way that faithfully reflects the cross-disciplinary approach to the
study of medical traditions that Alain Touwaide has convincingly advocated for for years in the name of a fruitful alliance of sciences and the humanities.

We now wish that, as a further contribution to the knowledge of the ancient Greek medical tradition, he will publish a much needed catalogue of Greek medical manuscripts and texts, not only those listed in Diels, but also the many new ones of which he has revealed the existence thanks to his unwavering energy, his devotion to research, and the passion for Greek medicine that has constantly distinguished his life.

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Rome, August 2, 2020