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

Athanasios Diamandopoulos

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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

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 Apocaucos 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

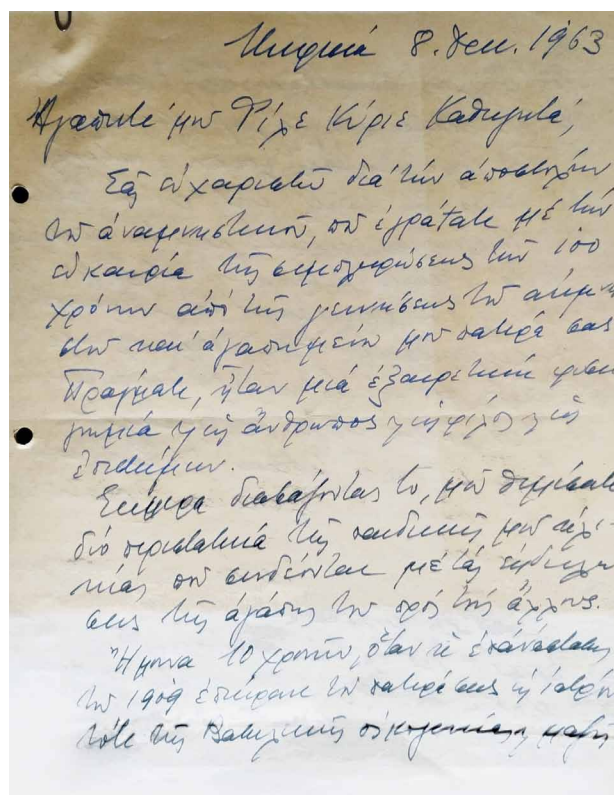


Figure 2

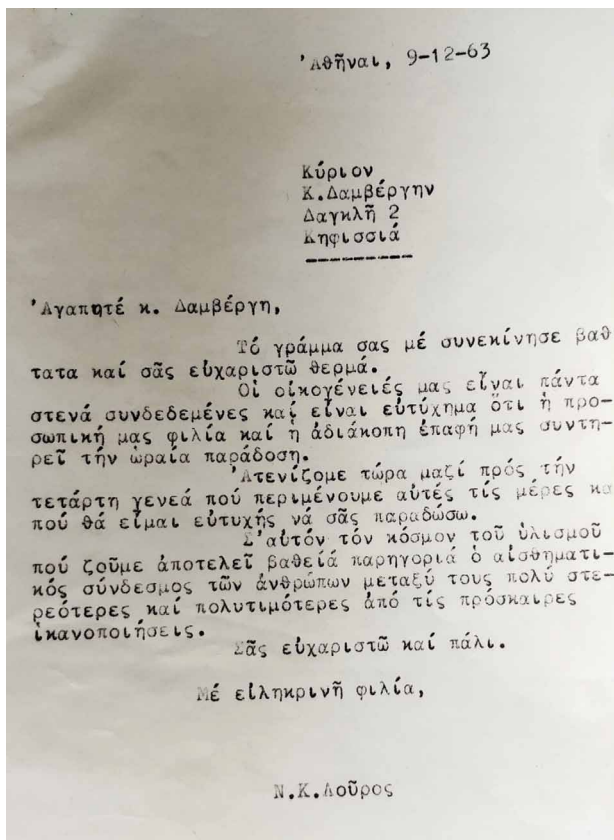


Figure 3

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 Eknayan, Marios Marselos, Katerina Gardica and Costas Tsiamis, as well as Dr. Marios Papadakis, for their devotion to the endeavour.

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