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Honoris Causa Professor Dushan Fedorovich Lambl was a Man Truly Devoted to Science

Abstract

Vilém Dušan Lambl, better known in Russia as Dushan Fedorovich Lambl (1824-1895) — Czech and Russian anatomist, histologist, therapist and parasitologist, doctor of medicine, professor, head of the department of normal anatomy and pathological anatomy of the Imperial Kharkov University (from 1860 to 1871), head of the Faculty therapeutic Department of the Imperial University of Warsaw (from 1871 to 1895), Privy Councillor.

Professor Lambl D.F. the main works on parasitology (he was the first to describe in 1859 the simplest microorganism that parasitizes humans and now bears his name), pathological anatomy (his famous lithographs written on stone), normal anatomy, internal medicine, as well as natural science, ethnography, culture and linguistics of Slavs and others. He was a man with the broadest horizons, sharpness of thought, excellent erudition and incredible knowledge in the field of both fundamental and practical medicine.

Key words: *Dushan Fedorovich Lambl, Imperial Warsaw University, Imperial Kharkov University, giardiasis*

Conflict of interests

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The Path to Science

Dushan Fedorovich Lambl (Vilém Dušan Lambl) was born on December 5, 1824, in Bohemia (Czech Republic). In 1849, he graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Prague with a Doctor of Medicine degree. Lambl considered Professor Jan Dlaugi, who had taught him anatomic pathology, to be his teacher [1, 2].

As a young 21-year-old man, Lambl was a writer. His first works were devoted not to medicine, but

rather to different branches of natural science, geography, ethnography, etc. They were primarily concerned with Slavic lands, their inhabitants, and natural wealth. These writings were based on personal observations and researches conducted during his travels to these lands.

Lambl published his first scientific work on anatomic pathology entitled *Ein Neues Querverengtes Becken* (translated from German as *The New Dollichopellic Pelvis*) in 1853. After that, without leaving his natural science studies, he wrote many valuable

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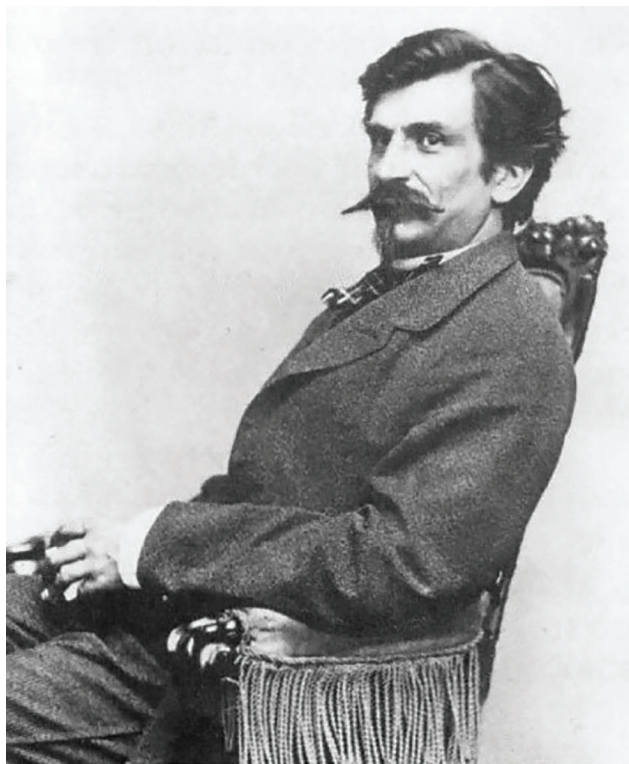


Figure 1. Photo of Lambl V.D. in his younger years. The original document is stored in the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature (PNP), Prague, Czech Republic [11]

articles on general and anatomic pathology, including those where he described circular fibers in the ciliary muscle he had previously discovered.

With a perfect command of German, French, Italian, English and Russian languages, Lambl dreamed of a journey whereby he could study and aggregate all those remarkable and rare materials on anatomic pathology that were scattered throughout various European museums. He made that journey across Europe in 1856. After visiting Germany, Holland, Belgium, England, France, Italy and Austria, and working hard in hospitals and museums in 26 cities, he published his wonderful *Reisebericht* (translated from German as *The Trip Report*), which included a lot of critically important and interesting pathological and analytical observations [3].

One of the most outstanding periods in Lambl's biography dates back to 1856–1860, when he was a privat-docent of the Anatomic Pathology Department at the University of Prague. There, he organized private courses in normal and pathological histology, which drew the attention of many doctors visiting Prague. During that period, many of the young Russian scientists (MDs) who were preparing for their academic careers worked under the

supervision of Professor D.F. Lambl. Dushan Lambl soon established his school, whose students were treated with special warmth, love, and respect [4].

Professor Lambl's Work at the Imperial Kharkov University (1860–1871)

In September 1860, Dushan Lambl was appointed an extraordinary Professor of the Anatomy Department at the Imperial Kharkov University. He was notified of the appointment while abroad (in Prague), so he took up his duties in January 1861. Lambl acquired Russian citizenship. He gave lectures in impeccable Russian. Vladislav Skvortsov, the famous Kharkov scientist, claimed that “the period of Lambl's work at the Kharkov University was the golden age for the General and Anatomic pathology Departments. At that time, the teaching of general anatomy changed significantly, and it reached the level which existed only in some of the best universities abroad.”

In Kharkov, Dushan Lambl met a young but promising lawyer, Anatoly Koni, who later became his close friend. Koni left wonderful memories of Dushan Lambl, thanks to which we can imagine (over 100 years on) Lambl as a vivid personality surrounded by students and colleagues and interacting with the university community. In his memoirs, Anatoly Koni writes: “...A student of the famous Joseph Hyrtl, an agile and energetic person with beautiful, lively, smart brown eyes on a lean face under a loosely-falling bush of iron-grey hair, Lambl made an impression of an outstanding man, and he was that man. A real master, he was not a narrow specialist. He responded to all kinds of spiritual demands of human nature. A lover and connoisseur of European literature, a subtle connoisseur of art, he could truly say about himself, “*nihil humanum a me alienum puto*” (translated from Latin as “nothing human is alien to me”). For example, he knew Dante's works in detail, and his explanations and remarks inspired me to like and take interest in artistic works of W. Hogarth.” [5]

Dushan Lambl liked attending meetings of the Faculty and the Council of the Imperial Kharkov University. During his 11-year work in Kharkov, he was among the most active members of these meetings. He was interested not only in subjects directly related to his specialty and department but also in

most issues related to university life. His numerous opinions, reports and reviews were always substantial and based on facts and scientific evidence.

It is noteworthy that working at the Kharkov University, Dushan Lambl acted as an opponent during the defense of a doctoral thesis by still unknown doctor Nikolai Vasilievich Sklifosovsky, who later became a famous surgeon. He recommended the faculty to provide Doctor Mitrophan Popov with a university scholarship for studying anatomic pathology. Later on, Popov wrote an extensive and important scientific work titled *The Faculty of Medicine of the Kharkov University During the First Hundred Years of Its Existence. 1805-1905*. [6]

In 1862, Lambl was sent as an official adviser for medical subjects to the International Exhibition in London by the university. In the same year, he was elected an honorary member of the Czech Medical Society.

In 1865, Dushan Lambl was entrusted with managing a therapeutic hospital. Here, Professor also proved himself as an experienced organizer and manager. According to his contemporaries, "as a practitioner, he chuckled at the narrow specialization that was rapidly developing at that time. While trying to understand the nature of the disease, he relied on his creative thought, rather than recklessly following the ideas expressed in the latest foreign books, especially in different chemical and other studies. He cured not the theoretically understood disease, but each patient, individualizing his methods and instructions and giving special attention to psychological observation. He was often looked upon as an original, but this eccentric was famous for a lot of brilliant healings in cases when there was a certain identified serious disease, and in situations when it was just needed to put a person in a cheerful mood without attaching certain medical labels supported with a pre-determined treatment procedure and regime." [1]

As for the Anatomic Pathology Department at the Kharkov University, Lambl deserves great credit for its foundation and development. When he came to Kharkov, he took up a position as a Professor of the Anatomy Department. At a meeting held by the Faculty of Medicine on May 20, 1864, he was "offered to teach anatomic pathology," and he accepted that offer. [7, 8]

Lambl was a brilliant speaker. His lectures, which were attended not only by students and doctors,

but also by professors from other departments, met the highest European standards and were distinguished by the breadth of the lecturer's horizon, clarity, and brilliance of thought. The Professors lectures were also interesting because he supported the explanation of material with pictures drawn with colored crayons on the board.

"... It was a real pleasure to listen to his vivid, strictly scientific speech full of experience and numerous examples," wrote Anatoly Koni. While preparing for his lectures, Professor conducted a detailed literature review of the latest medical achievements in the field and provided examples from his own research experience [5, 9].

Dr. Lambl was one of those scientists who had extensive knowledge and a gift for a clear, distinct, and consistent presentation of information. Professor Timofey Illinsky noted that the "constant presence of Lambl in a group of people working under his guidance, and his readiness to explain all arising questions make anatomic lessons in the hospital more valuable. Not only a specialist but also any educated physician will benefit from spending some time attending Lambl's classes, because, in addition to microscopic examinations, they will be able to use received knowledge in practice, at the patient's bedside" [17].

Dushan Lambl's student, Professor Popov, wrote: "At least two courses (around 300 people) attended Lambl's lectures. The first seats were taken with a fight a few hours before the lecture. Those sitting at the back had to use binoculars, and one-third of the audience usually listened to the lecture standing up... Lambl was very strict and demanding during the midterm exam in anatomy. He did not even think about excluding any topic from the exam. The student had to know all the sections of anatomy. I remember a very sad fact during the midterm exam in 1863 when twelve of my comrades got a "1" for failing to tell with sufficient accuracy the anatomical paths of blood circulation in a fetal body." [6]

Professor Lambl was a skillful anatomist. While working, he often liked to say "while medical practice failures make patients silent, anatomic pathology makes the dead talk." He performed autopsies professionally, carefully, quickly, and consistently; he noticed even the smallest pathological changes in all organs. In his opinion, autopsies had great educational and cognitive value, as well as the ethical impact on students and doctors, who always

filled the autopsy room. “I found him in front of a marble table surrounded by a group of students. He performed an autopsy... and did it very skillfully, with great precision and knowledge. Active and self-confident, fully involved in finding a solution to the pathological question, greedily smoking a little cigarette stub that miraculously did not burn his nose, he seemed a real high priest of science on his exceptional service,” Koni admiringly wrote about his friend [5, 10].

Passion for his work and constant work with the audience sometimes distracted the Professor's attention. Twice — in 1867 and 1871 — it almost had dramatic consequences when Dushan Lambl came close to dying after getting an infection through a cut on the finger while dissecting a body that had died of pyemia. Both cases required lengthy treatment, but at that time, there were no antibiotics, and so it was a difficult task.

Lambl's knowledge was truly encyclopedic: he published over 100 works on various branches of natural science, ethnography, culture and linguistics of the Slavic community, general and anatomic pathology, histology, parasitology, and therapy. Lambl studied inflammation, ovarian tumors, purulent peritoneal inflammation, and congenital pathology of the skeletal system. Particularly worth mentioning is his outstanding scientific paper titled *Microscopic Examinations of Intestinal Discharges*. For the first time, he described an endamebas — a “single-celled infusoria” found in diarrheal discharges in case of bloody diarrhea in children. It was named “*Cercomonas intestinalis*”. Later on, however, in France, the protozoan was renamed after the scientist who discovered it — “*Lambliia intestinalis*”, and the disease caused by it became known as “giardiasis” [11].

In 1861-1865, Professor Lambl released the original version of anatomic pathology in the form of lapidary lithographic notes. He believed that “text engraving with drawings is more preferable than printing as it enables us to insert more original drawings in the text without wasting time and money for woodcut printing.” Lambl's notes are the first and unique textbook on anatomic pathology in the Russian Empire. The first two issues were devoted to the bones and joints pathology, the third one (1862) — to tumors, and the fourth one (1865) — to skin diseases. However, later sections were not published and existed only as notes passed around students [6].

Lambl was a public figure who actively participated in the work of the Kharkov Medical Society. In 1861, he was given the high honor of heading the society, becoming its first president [12, 13].

On April 21, 1867, during a visit to the International Congress of Physicians held in Paris, Professor Lambl was elected Vice-President of the Congress, which emphasized his high authority in the European scientific and medical community.

In 1871, on the proposition of Professor Yakov Kremyansky, the Council of the Imperial Kharkov University gave Lambl the title of Doctor Honoris Causa (Honorary Doctor of Medicine) “in respect for his merits in the field of medical sciences”.

In the same year, Dushan Lambl was transferred to the Ordinary Professor position at the Department of Intermediate-Level Therapy at the University of Warsaw. “Having moved to Warsaw, Lambl remained a man truly devoted to science, infinitely devoted to the throne and the Empire, a worthy representative of the Russian flag on the periphery”, wrote P.I. Kovalevsky.

Professor Lambl's Work at the Imperial University of Warsaw (1871–1895)

His knowledge of anatomy, anatomic pathology, physiology and internal medicine made Professor Lambl a top-ranked multi-skilled specialist and scientist. His move to Warsaw, in particular, to the Department of Intermediate-Level Therapy at the Imperial University of Warsaw (IUW), was seen as a true godsend. A broad-minded person possessing ingenuity, excellent erudition, and incredible knowledge of both fundamental and applied medicine was vital to the department and the university, especially during the period of global reforms and transformations. Thanks to Dushan Lambl, the Department of Intermediate-Level Therapy began a new life. He constantly invented, developed and implemented something, tirelessly working in the hospital with his students and young doctors to bring the department's work to the required level. He completely changed the educational process, redid lecture courses, and improved approaches to the diagnosis and treatment of patients. Diverse hospital material allowed Lambl to share with his students the vast store of knowledge he possessed. Dushan Lambl continued to follow his principles,

working hard with students and medical residents at the patients' bedsides in the Holy Spirit Hospital [14]. Lambl was not always satisfied with the educational process at the Kharkov University, and it was the same in Warsaw. Anatoly Koni, who maintained a warm relationship with him after he left Kharkov, wrote: "Alien to all routine, putting working interests above everything, he experienced rough days (judging by his letters). A Czech by birth, he sincerely loved Russia and wished it true grandeur and involvement in cultural tasks of the West. Oftentimes the surrounding reality contradicted his wishes." [15, 16]

In the first years of leading the department, Professor Lambl prepared a crucial document, *The Project for Collecting Scientific Statistics in Warsaw Hospitals Exemplified by the Holy Spirit Hospital*, and presented it to the Faculty Medicine at the Imperial University of Warsaw.

Members of the Academic Council involved experienced Dushan Lambl in reviewing scientific articles, dissertations, and papers submitted for a competition to fill vacancies at the Faculty of Medicine. His detailed reviews were devoid of formalism and included important comments that helped papers look complete. Interestingly, in 1894, Professor Lambl received for review the works of Nikolai Mukhin, Doctor of Medicine, submitted "for the Department of Clinical Pathology and Therapy". Among other works, Dushan Lambl singled out the monograph *Toxic Spastic Paralysis*: "The book by privat-docent N.I. Mukhin ranks high thanks to its completeness and classified content, and it makes a useful contribution not only to Russian writing but to medical literature in general." Professor Mukhin headed and managed the department first in Warsaw and then, from 1915, in Rostov-on-Don [4, 3].

Professor Lambl tried to eradicate the long-standing tradition of evaluating dissertations, according to which the supervisor could be appointed as the censor. He criticized this practice when he was once appointed an official opponent to the dissertation of his student, physician Heinrich Patsanovsky: "Since this dissertation was written based on the material of the hospital under my jurisdiction, since I saw the work done with my own eyes, and therefore I am familiar with the content of the paper, I want to direct the attention of the Faculty of Medicine to the fact that, in my opinion, the evaluation of the dissertation's merits should be entrusted not to me,



Figure 1. Photo of Lambl V.D. during his years in Warsaw. Original document is stored in the Literary Archive of the Museum of Czech Literature (PNP), Prague, Czech Republic [11]

but rather to any other member of the faculty, to a Professor who could analyze the paper objectively as an outsider.

Therefore, it would be advisable for the Faculty of Medicine to engage teachers of relevant subjects to express their opinion based on the assessment, which should act as a scientific control. I neither intend to express my opinion nor wish to become an official opponent in a case involving my assistant." [1] When Professor Lambl worked at IUW, such statements were often heard at the Faculty of Medicine; they always generated debates and helped reduce opportunism and formalism in the Council's work. Professor Lambl devoted all his time to medicine. For him, the pleasures of social life were almost non-existent. He was married to Eugenia Edelberg, and they had a beautiful daughter Olga. Work and home were the only spheres he cherished. While Lambl "pursued science", said Professor P. Kovalovsky, "he was not alien to art. He painted, loved

music, and was no stranger to creativity in this field, he carved and drew on a stone, and being involved in these activities, he could not see another life.”

It is worth noting that Dushan Lambl liked young people, placing great hopes on them, and often openly and selflessly defended young residents. There was a case at a meeting held by the Faculty of Medicine when he spoke in defense of residents, who he believed had been “unjustly slandered by the city council”, and his speech generated a big debate. In 1884, Lambl was awarded the Order of Saint Stanislaus, first grade. Moreover, “on January 4, 1889, His Majesty the Emperor, having received the report of the Minister of Public Education, was most graciously pleased to promote Lambl to the rank of privy counselor.” [4]

Professor Lambl spent 23 years at the University of Warsaw. This period was one of the most fruitful periods in the scientist’s life. During that time, in addition to works published under his supervision, Lambl published many great articles on clinical medicine, filled with scientific interest. In 1893, Lambl received the P. Zagorsky award for his last great work *Selfdislocation of the Spine (Spondyl Olithesis)*, which he had worked on for many years. The award given by the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences came with a money reward amounting to 4,000 rubles, a huge sum which exceeded the professor’s annual salary.

Dushan Lambl suffered from bronchial asthma for a long time, especially in his last years, when the attacks became more frequent and severe. On February 13, 1895, the acute disease suddenly cut the outstanding scientist’s life short at 74. A few days later, Professor Lambl was buried in Warsaw’s oldest necropolis in the Powazki Cemetery. “Professors, comrades of the deceased, students, many friends, and acquaintances led the coffin to the grave, which was covered with wreaths.” [4, 10]

In his will, Professor Lambl, who loved young students dearly, ordered to donate “20,000 Austro-Hungarian forints to the Support Fund for Czech Students of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Prague and the Technical University of Prague.” [9]

He was a bright, energetic, intelligent, and clever man of his time, who valued life, loved art, raised more than one generation of doctors, and left a large footprint on the sands of time and Russian medical science.

Author Contribution:

All the authors contributed significantly to the study and the article, read and approved the final version of the article before publication

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Ambalov Yu.M.: editing and approval of the final version of the article

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