

# Angelos Tanagras

## His Theory of Psychobolia and the Religion of Science

**FOTINI PALLIKARI**

**W**e draw the correct picture of a distinguished personality from all that is written about the person from reliable biographers. In the case of Dr Angelos Tanagras (1875-1971), the president of the Hellenic Society for Psychical Research (HSPR) from 1923 to 1958), the most reliable of sources are his own publications. Namely, his autobiography, his often autobiographical novels and his parapsychological articles, including those in the HSPR journal *Psychikae Ereunae*, which he edited from 1925 to 1942.[1-3]

With more than one hundred such publications, a tentative list of which was recently published, the life, work and character of Angelos Tanagras emerges in full colour.[4] The eldest son of a wealthy family of five, Tanagras was characterized by persistence, determination, tenacity, responsibility, tirelessness and reverence. He was well-read, scholarly, studious, passionate and imaginative. His demeanour showed an elegant, gentle, noble and considerate man, a lover of classical music. In physical appearance, he was slim and of small build, with an early receding hairline, a myopic right eye and frail health since his youth. From his teenage years up to his late thirties, he displayed quite a romantic nature, regularly attending high-society dances.

These were the characteristic features of the man whose philosophy meant to deliver answers to the big questions, such as 'who we are' and 'why we are here' on which the current article will focus. In that direction the key words are: the 'Religion of Science' and the 'Theory of Psychobolia'; the former being Tanagras' firm belief in the 'only true religion', while respecting other religious beliefs and the latter his personal interpretation of psychical phenomena on the basis of his religion of science.

### The Theory of Psychobolia

Tanagras formulated his theory of psychical phenomena and his personal religious belief in science, greatly influenced by scientific concepts and breakthroughs of his time. As for instance, atomic energy and radioactivity, assisted by his expertise in the human body since he was a medical doctor by profession. By studying the creative instincts of living creatures, from the largest to the smallest and by noting the harmony in the movement of celestial bodies, Tanagras became convinced in the existence of a creative power ruling the cosmos with one purpose; the perpetuation of life at any cost. In some sense, his belief bears resemblance to contemporary ideas for a Global Consciousness.

A part of this universal divine creative power is encapsulated within the atoms that make our living body as our psyche. As such 'we are no less than little gods' he proposed. This divine creative power in the living body of humans and animals, carrying immense power, can be released under special conditions independent of our control in the form of a bio-radioactivity. Its release is possibly triggered by the automatic sympathetic system that regulates all involuntary functions of the body, as for instance by an upsetting feeling of anger or envy.

The exact nature of this energy is unknown to us, he suggested. We only know of its existence through its many manifestations that we experience in the form of psychical phenomena. According to Tanagras, telekinesis provided the strongest evidence for psyche in support of his theory. For that reason, he was very proud of his telekinetic medium Cleio.[5, 6]

Tanagras called 'Psychobolia' (ψυχοβολία) the act of bio-radioactivity release and 'epipsychidion' (επιψυχίδιον), or 'dynamolyton' (δυναμόλυτον) the released bio-rays.[7] When released from the living body

the epipsychidion travels through matter according to the principle of least resistance, since there are types of matter that can better conduct it, e.g., wood.[8] There are people sensitive to its presence whom Tanagras generally called mediums.

Tanagras understood the need to subdue the senses of the mediums participating in psychical phenomena demonstrations to enhance their psychic sensitivity. For that reason, he either hypnotized them, or trained them to hypnotize themselves. Today, the enhancement of psychic sensitivity in telepathy and clairvoyance experiments is effected with the Ganzfeld (German for 'whole field') technique of visual and auditory deprivation.

### The Theory of Psychobolia Explains Psychical Phenomena

When absorbed by inorganic matter, the immense power of the epipsychidion can move objects about as in telekinesis, or poltergeist phenomena. It can even materialize itself in the form of apparitions, or ectoplasm. When released due to envy, it can affect the health of living beings as in the 'evil eye'. It alerts birds and dogs to detect illnesses or an upcoming death. It is responsible for the 'staring effect' that makes people turn when someone is focusing their eyes on them.

In psychometry, the mediums can read the biography of a person by sensing the epipsychidion absorbed in their belongings. These powerful bio-rays can pierce through matter, see what lies therein, e.g., inside a sealed envelope or a remote site and return to their source to inform the brain, as in clairvoyance.

Tanagras considered that precognition was a by-product of telekinesis. A precognitive dream about the fatal illness of a loved one, for instance, can stimulate the release of the epipsychidion of the dreamer that can affect the health of person in the dream. Similarly, a precognitive motor accident could have been



LEFT: photograph of a lecture to police officers in the University amphitheater, with handwritten notes: (X) A. Tanagras; (1) medium Konstantia; (2) professor of forensic medicine I. Georgiadis (1874-1960); (3) professor of neurology and psychiatry Katsaras (1860-1939). RIGHT: Angelos Tanagras in naval uniform, with decorations. The inscription reads year '1936'.

brought about by the epipsychidion of the person who had the vision, which acted on to damage the mechanical parts of the vehicle.

### The Religion of Science

Not everything in a human being is material and blind mechanical energy, he suggested. A human being is not the result of blind laws and coincidences. The purpose of life is to appreciate the incomprehensible grand design of the creator and become familiarized with physical pain, so that the psyche realizes its inferiority before the divine creative power. Pain was given to us to generate the instinct of self-preservation and therefore to moderately secure the existence of life.

Fundamental to Tanagras' theory was the belief that something spiritual, immaterial, immortal and indestructible exists in human life, with super-human potential. Death, Tanagras explained, is just a simple transformation of the same element. Upon death the part of divine creative power in living beings, the epipsychidion, merges with the ultimate universal creative energy to continue its grand plan of sustaining life. The divine power gives moderate importance to individual death, while making the existence of the various kinds of life dependent upon the needs of the whole of creation.

The pain observed in death and that terrifying, deadly image of agony is only characteristics of the illness and not of death itself, as death is necessary for the accomplishment of a grand plan. There is no death, but the simple transition from the consciousness of ego into nothingness. The intellect is gone; there is complete indifference to everything. Whatever material remains is simply automatic.

Surely, Tanagras's theory of psychobolia and his 'religion of science' to interpret psychical phenomena and to answer the big questions of life cannot be considered as the simplest possible hypotheses to be offered for that purpose. Instead, they were rich in imagination, supported by knowledge of complex scientific principles of physics, psychology and medicine.

Tanagras founded the Hellenic Society for Psychical Research after the model of the British SPR, with the determination to study psychical phenomena following the strictest scientific methods. In his efforts to build and sustain the Hellenic SPR, Tanagras was fortunate to have the support of the majority of the Greek scientific and intellectual community, who have not been at all hostile towards him. University professors participated in his lectures and demonstrations of psychical phenomena with his mediums. They

offered him the amphitheatre of the Athens National and Kapodistrian University for his lectures to the students of the psychology laboratory and to students of the police academy. The old building of the Athenian Academy of Sciences was also offered to him for similar lectures.

It was the university professors who helped him test the telekinetic activities of his medium Cleio, both at the Kapodistrian University and the Technical University. When he undertook to organize the fourth International Parapsychology Conference in Athens in 1930,[9] the scientific community came to his assistance, offering the university's main hall for its inauguration lectures. Even the Greek state supported him, covering his parapsychology conference costs in addition to private donations. Ψ

### NOTES

- [1] Fotini Pallikari, *Angelos Tanagras: My Memoirs* (Athens: self-published, 2016). It is available at [http://users.uoa.gr/~fpallik/wholebook\\_2018.pdf](http://users.uoa.gr/~fpallik/wholebook_2018.pdf). There were well over 1,000 reads of it recorded up to recently on some public research platforms where it is available.
- [2] Fotini Pallikari, *Angelos Tanagras: A Collection of Short Stories* (Athens, self-published, 2017). <http://users.uoa.gr/~fpallik/tanagras.htm>.
- [3] (2017- ) Articles on the life, work and character of Tanagras are regularly published in

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/Tanagras.Memoirs/about/>

- [4] Fotini Pallikari, 'Angelos Tanagras: Literature and Parapsychology. An Overview' (2019), article no. 34 in note 3.
- [5] Fotini Pallikari, 'Angelos Tanagras, the Oslo International Parapsychology Congress and the telekinesis of Cleio', *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 73 (October 2009), pp. 193-206.
- [6] Fotini Pallikari, 'Angelos Tanagras: The Telekinesis of Cleio Revisited' (October 2018), article no. 32 in note 3.
- [7] Psychobolia (ψυχοβολία) from

psyche (ψυχή) and boli (βολή, 'throw'). 'Epipsychidion' (επιψυχίδιον) comes from 'epi' (επί, 'upon') and psyche. 'Dynamolyton' (δυναμόλυτον) comes from dynamo (δύναμη, 'force') and lyton (λύω, 'release').

- [8] Tanagras suggested that the phrase 'knock on wood' arose from the characteristic of wood as a good conductor of the epipsychidion.
- [9] Fotini Pallikari, 'Athens, 1930: The 4th International Parapsychology Congress' in Pallikari, *Angelos Tanagras: A Collection*, p. 59, also article no. 21 in note 3.