

Chrtc 390 Module 10 Class Notes by Paul Flaman

Extraordinary Religious Experience and Personhood

Discussion Questions

1. Extraordinary religious experiences are often linked with, or are a manifestation of, neural pathologies. Discuss the implications of this observation for our understanding of the nature and legitimacy of extraordinary religious experiences.

2. Some neuroscientists, e.g., Michael Persinger, consider all extraordinary religious experiences to be hallucinations or delusions reflecting mental illness and/or mini-seizures in the brain. Do the data of neuroscience require such an interpretation? What can a Christian theological approach contribute to our understanding of these extraordinary religious experiences? Among other things, consider the biblical prophetic tradition, charisms, private revelations, various mystical phenomena and traditional Christian theological criteria for the discernment of spirits.

3. How do you think biblical data with regard to angels (messengers of God) and demons / the devil / Satan (angels who rebelled against God) should be interpreted? Do they reflect the language of mythology to personify evil; or are they real intelligent spiritual / immaterial beings / persons created by God; or other?

4. According to the principle of parsimony if one has an adequate explanation for some phenomenon, one should not posit the existence of some other reality to explain the phenomenon. Do you think all extraordinary religious experiences including “miracles” can be, or eventually will be, adequately explained in terms of physical entities and processes including the human brain? Or, is it necessary (does it make more sense) to posit the existence of non-physical beings

such as God, angels, demons, the spirits (souls) of humans who have died ... to explain at least some extraordinary religious phenomena?

5. If a nonmaterial God exists, does it make more sense to explain revelations from God as involving God acting only on the physical including a human person's brain since ontologically we are only physical according to Christians who are non-reductive physicalists (or emergent monists), or does it make more sense to understand ourselves as does traditional Christianity that we have immaterial souls, as a means of our contact with God?

Some Relevant Christian Theological Perspectives

The Bible and Extraordinary Religious Experiences

Since Christians generally regard the human authors of the Bible to be inspired by God in some real sense, the Bible is a primary source for Christian theology including that regarding extraordinary religious experiences (EREs). Both the Jewish scriptures, the Christian Old Testament (OT), and the Christian New Testament (NT), report many EREs. These include, among many others, theophanies such as Moses' experience of the burning bush and God communicating to him the Ten Commandments (Ex 3 and 19-20), and the vision of Saul (later known as the Apostle Paul) of the Lord Jesus which initiated his remarkable conversion and mission of preaching the Gospel (Acts 9:1-30). In the ancient East there were seers, those who practised divination and claimed to receive communications from superior beings or from the spirits of deceased human beings. For example, King Saul, the first king of Israel, in the midst of losing a war, went to a seer (medium) to call up the spirit of the deceased prophet Samuel to consult for advice (see 1 Sam 28:3-25). Prophets, priests and the king, for part of the history of ancient Israel, were pillars of the community playing interdependent roles. Prophecy was not as

institutionalized as were the roles of king and priests. There was a variety among Old Testament prophets (see, e.g., Léon-Dufour; and MacKenzie).

True prophets (in the Bible) are called and animated by the Spirit of God. They did not speak by their own initiative—the initiative was entirely God's. They spoke God's Word, sometimes also by symbolic acts or their lives. For example, the faithfulness of the prophet Hosea to his unfaithful wife symbolized God's fidelity to his unfaithful people. True prophets denounced offences against God's Law and the falsification of true religion. Parts of their message often upset some people. They, however, spoke not only of punishment for sin, for example, the Jewish Exile into Babylon (587-537 B.C.), but of a God of love who pardons, is merciful and builds up. A new covenant with God is promised by Jeremiah and other OT prophets. They call people to focus on the true basis of their religion. The prophets of God often experienced their mission as a burden, were often not listened to, and many were murdered, for example, under the kings Ahab (869-850 B.C.) and Jehoiakim (609-598 B.C.).

False prophets are not called and sent by God but speak on their own initiative. They often speak soothing words, what people who do not want to repent of their sins want to hear, rather than calling people to be faithful to God's Word and Law. Related to this consider the following by the biblical prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel:

But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart ... They do not say in their hearts, "Let us fear the Lord our God ..." For scoundrels are found among my people They do not judge with justice the cause of the orphan ... and they do not defend the rights of the needy. Shall I not punish them for these things? says the Lord [T]he prophets prophesy falsely ... my people love to have it so ... (Jer 5:23-31)

The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are prophesying; say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: "Hear the word of the Lord!" Thus says the Lord God, Alas for the senseless prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! Your prophets ... O Israel have envisioned falsehood and lying divination; they say, "Says the Lord," when the Lord has not sent them (Ezk 13:1-8)

In the Jewish scriptures (OT) Moses was unequalled among the prophets. There developed the expectation of a future Servant of Yahweh, an Anointed One (Hebrew *Messiah*) who would transcend the prophetic office even more than Moses. True prophecy in the Bible mainly focuses on presenting a true understanding of God and morality rather than predicting the future or claiming to reveal esoteric knowledge.

The New Testament (NT) presents Jesus as fulfilling and completing the OT Law and Prophets. Jesus is the Messiah (Greek *Christos*, the Christ) awaited by the Jews. As the Servant and Son and Word of God made flesh, the source of life and truth, Jesus transcends the prophetic office and inaugurates the New Covenant. In his own teaching, among other things, Jesus warns of false prophets and says one can distinguish true and false prophets by their fruits. For example, Mt 7:15-20 reports Jesus as saying: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit....” The Gospels also report Jesus as performing many miraculous healings and exorcising many possessed persons of demons.

With Pentecost, seven weeks after the reported bodily resurrection of Jesus, the followers of Jesus experienced a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit which launched the Christian Church (Acts 2). In the NT Church, prophecy is seen as one among a number of charisms, gifts of the Holy Spirit, for building up the Church in truth and love. Charisms should be used in keeping with a God not of disorder but of peace. Paul notes that *agape* love is the greatest gift and everything else is secondary and to be subordinate to it. True prophecy while a valuable gift for the Church will come to an end at the end of time (1 Cor 12-14). The Apostle Paul warns Christians not to accept a different Gospel from false apostles than the true Gospel they received from the true

apostles. He points out that even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). Demons, unclean spirits, are responsible for false teachings (1 Tm 4:1) and can perform wonders (Rev 13). Christians should test the spirits to see whether they are from God (1 Jn 4:1). During New Testament times there was a diversity of views. For example, some Jews, the Saducees, denied the existence of angels and spirits, whereas some other Jews, the Pharisees, and the early Christians, believed in these (Acts 16:16).

Some Christian Theologians, Catholic Teaching, and a Few Other Views Regarding Extraordinary Religious Experiences

Related to the gift of prophecy and the life of the Church some Christian theologians, as well as Catholic teaching, distinguish between “public revelation” and “private revelations” (see, e.g., P. De Letter, “Revelations, Private,” NCE, Vol. 12, 446-8; and CCC, nn. 66-7). Jesus Christ is the fullest revelation of God to humanity. Public revelation was completed in the early Church with the completion of the New Testament and the death of the last Apostle. Christ’s definitive revelation, which gives us the deposit of the faith, is transmitted to us by Scripture and Tradition (see also under Ch. 1 above). Although this revelation is complete and no further public revelation is expected before the Second Coming of Jesus, the Holy Spirit can lead us into a deeper understanding and articulation of this revelation.

Private (unofficial) revelations involve the same charism of prophecy (cf. the Apostle Paul) but they do not add to the deposit of the faith. They do not improve or complete Christ’s definitive revelation, but if they are authentic they can help us to live more fully by it (CCC, n. 67). Philip Wiebe, a philosophy professor at Trinity Western University (Evangelical Christian) in Langley, British Columbia, includes a discussion of thirty contemporary accounts that he has investigated in his *Visions of Jesus: Direct encounters From the New Testament to Today*. He

details and critically assesses these accounts including related dramatic changes in mostly ordinary men and women. These are discussed in the light of psychology, biblical scholarship, neurology and parapsychology.

The mission of many Catholic Saints involves private revelation (Léon-Dufour), for example, St. Catherine of Siena was called to communicate that God's will was for the pope to move from Avignon back to Rome. A number of Catholic feasts (e.g., the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Divine Mercy Sunday) and approved pilgrimage sites (e.g., Lourdes, Fatima, Gaudalupe¹) are related to private revelations to Saints Margaret, Faustina, Bernadette,² the three children of Fatima (two who died earlier are already canonized, the cause for canonization of Sr. Lucia who died more recently is in process), and St. Juan Diego.

Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar noted that genuine movements of renewal within Christianity generally begin with some ERE of a founder (consider, e.g., St. Francis of Assisi being called by Jesus on the Cross to "rebuild my Church," St. Theresa of Calcutta's being called to serve the poorest of the poor, and Chiara Lubich's call and her experiencing a number of intellectual visions related to the founding of the international Focolare Movement.

Theologian Karl Rahner said that public revelation teaches whereas private revelations are regarding something to be done such as to convert and pray for sinners. The Catholic Church's hierarchy tends to take a cautious approach to reported EREs since some of them involve illusion and sometimes even fraud. Claims of private revelations are carefully studied both regarding their content and their fruits. Approval by the hierarchy means permission to publish the content

¹ See the website www.sancta.org for much information on Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego including the remarkable image on his tilma from 1531 which cannot be explained by science. Cf., e.g., Ramon Gonzalez, "Scientists Certify Our Lady of Guadalupe Tilma," *Western Catholic Reporter*, 18 June 2007, 10.

² For a well-done classic movie of St. Bernadette and Lourdes see: *The Song of Bernadette* (1943) which is available to watch online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6zAoq8tRfI>

of such a private revelation for the benefit of the faithful, that they contain nothing contrary to faith and morals. One does not have an obligation to believe in them as one does with Christ's definitive universal and public revelation.

Related to EREs and claims of private revelations theologian Jordan Aumann discusses the discernment of spirits (399-433 and 440-1). This is based on the Bible, for example, are the "fruits" good or bad; is there anything in the message that is contrary to what God / Jesus has revealed? Aumann's treatment also incorporates some of the experiences and writings of genuine mystics and saints such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Ignatius of Loyola, Thomas Aquinas, Francis de Sales and Thérèse of Lisieux. Catholic practice considers faith—is there anything contrary to Catholic dogmas—and reason—is there anything contrary to the certain findings of science and philosophy? With regard to EREs, Aumann treats various signs of the activity of God, demonic spirits and the human spirit and imagination. He distinguishes between the limited power of created beings (humans, angels and demons) and God's power which can work genuine miracles that transcend the powers of created nature including psychosomatic human powers. Aumann says we should not be too quick to conclude that an extraordinary experience is from God or from a demon. He asks whether or not the phenomena can be explained by human causes and factors. Compare the principle of parsimony.

Oliver Sacks, a professor of neurology, interprets the reported visions of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) as migraine hallucinations (166-70). A committee of theologians at the time, however, considered them authentic. She is an informal "saint" with many miracles associated with her, both before and after her death (M.D. Barry, "Hildegard, St.," NCE, Vol. 6, 1117).

Some theologians today, but certainly not all and probably not most, understand angels and demons as involving the language of mythology to personify good and evil. The Catholic Church has always taught their real existence. God's good creation includes angels—invisible intelligent personal spiritual beings. Some of these (Satan and other demons or devils) rebelled against God and became malicious through their own free will (see biblical scholar McKenzie; and CCC, nn. 328-366 and 391-5).³

Regarding some other views and EREs, Michael Persinger, an atheist, materialist and scientist, developed a helmet using magnetic field stimulation to induce hallucinations in someone within a sensory deprivation chamber. He tries to explain EREs, UFOs, etc., away as delusions, as micro seizures in the temporal lobes of the brain, perhaps related to electromagnetic energy building up in the earth prior to earthquakes. Nicholas Regush, who experienced Persinger's sensory deprivation chamber and helmet, reports his experience in part:

I can describe what happened next only as a rapid running of a videotape of faces on the right side of my mental screen. I was no longer a detached observer but was directly involved with the stream of faces bursting out at me and quickly flying into what seemed like a starlit night. Some were known to me, including a face on a poster of one of my wife's musical plays. Others seemed clownish, hideous, and demonlike and appeared to be looking for a fight. All were highly clear, full-colour characters that seemed as real as any I might meet during the day. Only they did not wait around to shake hands. At one moment, after the characters receded from view, I experienced the sensation of flying. I can only assume the cinematic adventure lasted about 20 minutes, because when Persinger opened the door, I seemed to have lost track of time.(71)

Compare Regush's experience of random images without any real meaning or purpose with the "signs of the divine Spirit," according to Aumann (see above), including truth, gravity, enlightenment, edifying, balanced, peace, confidence in God, disinterested love, and so forth.

John Eccles (1994), a neuroscientist who believed in God and that humans have immaterial souls or selves, developed a dualist interactionism hypothesis. According to this the

³ See, e.g., also Deborah Gyapong, "Priest Battled with Satan," *Western Catholic Reporter*, 31 Oct. 2005, 10.

immaterial self or soul of a person can control one's brain at the level of quantum mechanics without violating the law of the conservation of energy. Eccles does not speak of God or other spiritual forces influencing the human brain, but his hypothesis could easily be adapted to explain how God, angels and demons could influence a person's thinking and behavior as reported in many religious experiences.

Nancey Murphy is a Christian who supports non-reductive physicalism, an anthropology that views humans as ontologically only physical, but who nevertheless are capable of true freedom and of relating to God the Creator. She discusses various kinds of religious experiences including visions and revelations. Any visions caused by God she thinks presumably involve the same neural capacities as in hallucinating or dreaming. Revelatory experiences seem to the person (subject) as poured in by an external agency. They can carry greater conviction than what are attached to sense perceptions, and the after effects may last a lifetime such as with a conversion experience. She notes that the church has developed criteria for discerning whether an experience is merely a human phenomenon or a true experience of or from God. She suggests that religious experiences do not depend on any special faculties over and above ordinary human emotional and cognitive faculties. The religious experience supervenes on cognitive and/or affective experience in the context of an encounter with God. In her view God is not only creator and sustainer but an agent in particular events (Brown, Murphy & Malony, 143-8).

EREs raise interesting questions regarding causality and ontology. With regard to various interpretations of these, among other things, consider the presuppositions and/or beliefs of the interpreter, whether he/she is a scientist, philosopher, theologian or something else.

Compare an atheist/materialist like Persinger, a deist who believes in God but does not think God

is directly involved with Creation, and a theist who believes in God who is personal and who acts in human individuals and history.

Neuroscience and Extraordinary Religious Experiences

Extraordinary Religious Experiences (EREs) have a long history going back to ancient peoples in various parts of the world including ancient Asia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Africa and the Americas. There is no culture in recorded human history that has not practiced some form of religion.(Mark 2018) Among indigenous peoples religious rituals and experiences include sweat lodges, contact with spirits of the elders, dreams with special meaning, rites of passage or maturity including the Sun Dance and piercings, and medicine people or healers with special knowledge of herbs and magic.(Sullivan and Jocks 2019) EREs are a central part of many foundational stories in religious traditions—not only in the Jewish and Christian traditions as noted above in the “theology” part of this chapter, but also, for example of the Buddha and Buddhism, the Prophet Mohammed and Islam, and Joseph Smith and Mormonism.

Some peoples used drugs with psychedelic effects to induce “spiritual” experiences. For example, psilocybin from mushrooms was used in South America, Mexico and the Southern United States; igobaine was used by an African group to cause EREs; and peyote, a small spineless cactus, was used for thousands of years in South America. Peyote, for example, is reported to trigger states of deep introspection and insight which can be accompanied by rich visual and auditory effects. For safety reasons it is recommended to embark on the experience only if a medicine man or shaman is present or at least someone who is not likewise intoxicated.(“Peyote,” WFE, 3 July 2007)

EREs feel different than ordinary experiences and perception. They can involve “the direct sensory awareness of God or the divine” and/or a perception that has a “numinous-mystical feeling”. They can involve visual, auditory, imaginative and/or cognitive elements (Saver and Rabin 1997, 498-9). Can science legitimately examine EREs? Since empirical science and its

tools including various brain-imaging technologies examine only physical qualities, if EREs are *solely* aspects of immaterial / supernatural reality, then “no,” empirical science cannot study them. If, however, EREs are experienced by *fully* embodied human beings, then the “body” aspect of the experience can be studied.

The reported apparitions in Medjugorje which began on 24 June 1981 are the first apparitions in history to be thoroughly investigated by science. In 1984 Professor Henri Joyeaux led a team from France, and in 1985 Dr. Luigi Frigerio led a team from Italy. Their findings included the following: The five alleged visionaries were found “to simultaneously look at precisely the same spot ... within one-fifth of a second of each other when the Blessed Virgin Mary allegedly appears. Such synchronization can only be explained by some external ‘object’ holding their gaze—but one which those around them could not see.” The alleged visionaries also simultaneously knelt within one-fifth of a second and gazed “upwards while fixated on a spot moving upwards when the apparition” was finishing. Their eyes did not move during the entire apparitions which lasted 3 to 45 minutes. During the apparitions they did not react to pain but they reacted normally to pain at other times. They also tested normal for hearing but during the apparition they showed no reaction to ninety decibels of sound which is equivalent to a loud explosion. Electroencephalographic (EEG) tests confirmed “that the alleged visionaries’ brain functioning is normal and healthy.” These tests ruled “out the possibility of epilepsy or psychotic hallucinations,” hysterical “neurotic reaction or pathological ecstasy,” as well as sleep or dreaming.

[Before the apparition, the brain waves of the alleged visionaries were] ... predominantly beta rhythm interspersed by alpha rhythm (normal conscious attentiveness). At the start of the apparition, the beta rhythm ... [remained] for a short time and then ... [was] replaced by an almost uninterrupted alpha rhythm ... [which] is most often observed during relaxation, in a state of expectation, or engaged in meditation. It also usually requires practice [for example, in monks after years of meditating] to achieve such a diffuse response. ... [I]t

is noteworthy that the alpha rhythm over the entire cranium was exhibited while the alleged visionaries had their eyes wide open throughout the apparition. Closed eyes would be expected with alpha rhythm because visual stimulation usually produces interference with alpha rhythm.

[When] ... a 1000 watt light bulb was placed in front of the eyes [this is usually painful to the eye and normally causes increased blinking and influences alpha rhythm] of the alleged visionaries during the apparition ... There was no blinking movement... [and] there was no change in alpha rhythm to the 1000 watt light. This is scientifically inexplicable and never seen before

.... [D]uring the apparition the alleged visionaries ... [were] heard simultaneously praying, "Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name ..." When asked, they report[ed that] Mary ... [was] leading them in the Lord's Prayer.

In summary, the unique aspects of the results of the scientific investigations point to the conclusion that nothing in the physical realm is allowed to interfere with the apparition experience. Scientific experts have defined the phenomena "as a state of active, intense prayer, partially disconnected from the external world, a state of contemplation with a separate person whom they alone can see, hear, and touch." ("Discernment & Scientific Study of the Visionaries in Medjugorje": retrieved 18 Sept. 2019 from: <https://www.medjugorje.com/medjugorje/scientific-studies/discernment-a-scientific-study-of-the-visionaries-in-medjugorje.html>; compare also Armitage 2016)

What has science learned about EREs? Some types can be deliberately induced. For example, in Walter Pahnke's "Good Friday Experiment" in 1962, which involved 20 seminary students, 10 were given the drug psilocybin and 10 were given placebos at a 2-hour religious service. Most of the psilocybin subjects experienced "difficult psychological struggles" at the time and had a profound experience which they considered to have "mystical elements" and to have made a "contribution to their spiritual lives." Eight of the ten later reported it as an overall positive experience. (Doblin 1991) Hallucinations which may have a religious aspect can also be induced by other psychedelic drugs. As we considered above under the theology section of this chapter, neuroscientist Michael Persinger has also used a helmet causing magnetic field stimulation to induce hallucinations in someone within a sensory deprivation chamber. Neuroscientist Andrew Newberg has also produced SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography) brain images of Tibetan Buddhists while they meditated and felt at one with everything, and of Franciscan nuns when they sensed the closeness of God in prayer (Newberg, D'Aquili and Rause 2001, 7 and 36).

Neuroscientist Mario Beauregard has used fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) technology to study the brains of Carmelite nuns while they prayed (Beauregard and O'Leary 2007, Ch. 9). Some people have used certain group rituals including drumming and chanting (e.g., North American Indigenous people), and dancing (e.g., Whirling Dervishes in Sufi Islam) to evoke certain types of religious experience (Gulati 2006).

Some people with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and epilepsy also have hallucinations with religious connotations or a type of extraordinary religious experience. In neuroscientist Ramachadran's *Secrets of the Mind* video documentary, John who had epilepsy and was not religious before sometimes felt extremes of pain and joy and that he was God as a result of his seizures (Ramachadran 2014, 39:50-52:20 min.). Many people with epilepsy, however, do not have such experiences. People who have such experiences understand them in the light of their cultural background (Saver and Rabin 1997, 499-505).

EREs tend to have certain characteristics. They may involve visions, locutions (auditory), intense salience, and/or epiphanies / revelations. Medical doctors Jeffrey Saver and John Rabin, who studied "The Neural Substrates of Religious Experience," distinguish "mystical state" and "psychotic state" experiences. Mystical state experiences are generally harmonious and resolve completely within a short time, the individual is self-negating and understands themselves as a "vessel for higher power" and returns to share their experience with others. Their account is recognized as valid by others in the visionary's culture or subculture. On the other hand, psychotic experiences are often associated with illness and deviance, the individual has illusions of personal grandiosity and omnipotence, the individual tends to become more and more isolated, and the individual's account is rejected by others in his/her culture or subculture. (Saver and Rabin 1997, Table 2) EREs use the same brain regions normally involved in perception, emotion, and

reasoning. Both neuroscientists Andrew Newberg and Mario Beauregard (see above) conclude that there is no special “religious” area or “God spot” in the human brain (cf. also Saver and Rabin 1997, 498).

The scientific data concerning EREs has been interpreted in various ways. Is religion inherently pathological? For example, Karl Marx considered religion to be the opium of the people (1843) and Sigmund Freud thought religion was a neurotic infantile delusion related to wish fulfillment and an attempt to control the external world (Cherry 2019). Note, however, the difference between the “psychotic” and the “mystical” states as described above by Saver and Rabin.

Are ERE’s inherently neutral because they are ambiguous? Not necessarily, but God can transform any experience. For example, the migraines of Hildegard of Bingen were transformed into deeply meaningful experiences, providing spiritual insight according to Oliver Sachs (1985, 166-70). As we noted above, however, under the theological part of this chapter, her visions were interpreted as authentic by a panel of theological experts at the time. Does God ever deliberately induce EREs? This is not a question which empirical science can address. Science can only go so far as we considered above, for example, with the empirical tests conducted on the “visionaries” of Medjugorje.

Can or should scientists *reduce* EREs to the neural / physiological aspects? No. As in many cases of empirical science, the data underdetermine the theory—interpretations include more than the data itself; they also involve the interpreter’s presuppositions. ERE scientific data has been interpreted as “nothing but” abnormal neural activity creating hallucinations, for example, by the atheist and materialist Michael Persinger; and as the embodiment of a genuine religious experience which provides evidence that God created us to perceive spiritual reality and relate to it, for

example, by the Catholic neuroscientist Mario Beauregard who uses the analogy of a television receiver to explain the brain's mediatory role in religious experience (Beauregard and O'Leary 2007, 292-3) If the latter, how can God or immaterial reality interact with material, that is, the human body / brain? Under the theological section of this chapter we considered Nancey Murphy's interpretation that religious experience supervenes on cognitive and/or affective experience in the context of an encounter with God. Neuroscientist John Eccles developed his dualist interactionism hypothesis to explain how the person's immaterial self or soul interacts with his/her brain (1994). It seems that this hypothesis could also be adapted to try to explain how God (immaterial) interacts with the human person via his/her brain.

On January 4, 1993 Dr. Joseph English, president of the American Psychiatric Association, met with Pope John Paul II and they discussed sin, guilt, God and medicine. "[A]fter the pope had expressed his belief that a full understanding of an individual must take into account the 'spiritual dimension and capacity for self-transcendence,' the psychiatrist agreed" (Shorto 1999, 12-13).