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In This Issue of IJTS

This issue begins with an editorial comparing the type of skepticism applied within quantum physics, that only requires evidence, and the skepticism in psychology that rejects exceptional human experiences and capacities even when there is good evidence. This suggests that the kind of skepticism applied in transpersonal psychology might be less objective than what is applied in other areas of science.

The paper in this issue's general section, "Unexpected Side Effects: A Cautionary Note on Challenges of Persistent Self-Transcendence," by Elizabeth Stephens and Harris Friedman, adds an important caveat to the quest for spiritual processes that claim to elevate seekers beyond their conventional ego development. Such processes, while offering potential benefits, may also contribute to difficulties such as emotional challenges, loss of the capacity for pleasure (anhedonia), dissociation, and negative impacts on agency, motivation, and memory. Moreover, serious and debilitating conditions such as depersonalization may be misidentified as persistent self-transcendence. As the authors note, self-transcendence is not yet well defined; their call for caution in its pursuit is timely.

Both the editorial and this first paper bring attention to ways in which practices and norms associated with product marketing can have deleterious impacts on psychology and spirituality. New Age spirituality is a genuine religious identity

that deserves as much respect as any other religion, but the doctrine that its beliefs have a place in psychology is a matter of faith rather than fact—and efforts to import its tenets into the literature of psychology deserve to be called out. Similarly, efforts to produce symptoms associated with advanced spiritual states should, in accord with medicine's hippocratic oath, first do no harm. If there are risks of discomfort or adverse impact associated with practices or processes that claim to lead to self-transcendence, these should be transparently disclosed.

Exploration, innovation, and invention are flourishing in both psychology and spirituality, and these impulses should not be thwarted. In keeping with the ethics that are central to both endeavors, these forward-looking efforts necessarily require careful consideration of the impact of inaccurate or misleading representations, and of the potential for adverse effects. Transpersonal psychology, with its empathetic psychological interest in the practices and processes of human spirituality, is an arena where these issues deserve careful consideration.

The Editors