SELF-EXPANSIVENESS AND SELF-CONTRACTION: COMPLEMENTARY PROCESSES OF TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

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ABSTRACT: Friedman’s (1981, 1983) transpersonal cartography of self-expansiveness places the individual self-concept in a central position at the intersection of temporal and spatial dimensions. This map can be inverted, however, by placing transcendent consciousness in the center, creating a new cartography that is equally viable. Juxtaposing the original version (depicting the individual self as emerging bottom-up from a materialistic framework) with this inversion (depicting a transcendent Self as descending top-down from a non-materialistic framework) provides a complementary way to balance these two cartographies, such that together they supersede what can only be expressed in relativistic ways by either alone. This dialectical approach presents an avenue for reconciling long-perplexing paradoxes between notions of immanence and transcendence that underlie much of transpersonal thought.

Horst (2002) has pointed out that contemporary philosophical and scientific approaches to understanding consciousness generally attempt to place it within a materialistic framework, despite the existence of many persuasive arguments against such reductionism (i.e., a non-materialistic or supernatural basis of consciousness cannot be ruled out either empirically or a priori). Conventional psychological thought, as one scientific strand, in particular tends to privilege a reduction of consciousness as being a mere epiphenomenon of brain activity or some similar natural occurrence—a position that Tart (2002) has called materialistic scientism. This marginalizing of consciousness (including the related concepts of mind and the subjective) as being invalid on its own terms is very problematic. In this regard, how can any method holistically approach the study of consciousness if it arbitrarily divorces itself from exploring its possible non-materialistic (perhaps even transcendent) aspects (i.e., studies only parts of the whole and dismisses its possible larger integrative meaning)? For a related example, the long perplexing conundrum of the body-mind problem has never been adequately resolved and implicitly accepting one side of this dualism as real (i.e., that the material body is all there is) is more than premature—it is an unwarranted Cartesian error. Consequently, we posit that an exclusively bottom-up approach that attempts to explain phenomena only from a materialistic view is ultimately indefensible, as would be an exclusively top-down view that explains phenomena only from the opposite perspective. Thus considering consciousness and the self as equally based on non-materialistic possibilities, and not just a mere residual of matter, offers a challenge to the...
prevailing paradigm while reflecting many of the currents of contemporary transpersonal thought.

However, the bottom-up emphasis is congruent with the Western scientific motif that has been dominant over the past 400 years, based on a Newtonian-Cartesian model. Considering this, we argue that either/or approaches to one or the other side of this dualism should be abandoned and replaced with both/and views that unite opposites into a holistic integration in the context of a dialectical approach. Consequently, we provide an alternative to the prevailing naturalistic ethos, specifically one that recognizes an equivalent validity in viewing materialistic and non-materialistic bases of consciousness and self as legitimate approaches. Our purpose is not to undermine the scientific form of inquiry but, rather, to broaden its method for investigating and explaining consciousness and self, including its possible highest expression as transcendent consciousness, from a complementary approach that bases its epistemology in both a top-down and bottom-up fashion.

Our perspective is grounded in the construct of self-expansiveness as developed by one of us (Friedman, 1981, 1983). This construct provides an integrative way to understand a variety of phenomena that mainstream psychology and, more generally, contemporary science tend to overlook or deprecate, namely non-ordinary experiences that are often labeled as transpersonal, mystical, religious, or spiritual. It also applies to the experience of everyday subjectivity and behavior; and, it has wider implications for understanding numerous issues crucial to human adaptation and perhaps even our species’ survival, such as our relationship with our ecology (sustainability) and with others of our kind (peace and social justice).

Although Friedman’s initial development of the construct of self-expansiveness was grounded in a naturalistic approach fitting into the prevailing materialism, his model is methodologically flexible enough to allow for the inclusion of more than such a view. Specifically, his cartography of self-concept focuses on the centrality of the individual—but this can easily be altered to accommodate an alternative perspective recognizing the equal importance of transcendent consciousness. Simply put, self-expansiveness can be justifiably viewed as either centered on a non-material transcendent consciousness of the Self (capitalized to differentiate it from the personal, or more limited, self) or centered on the individual self in the material here-and-now (as it was based in its original framework). In such an inversion, with transcendent consciousness being seen as the center, the cartography of self-expansiveness becomes changed into a cartography of Self-contraction, starting from the limitlessness of non-material transcendent consciousness and contracting into the limitations of the material world of space and time. From this inverted view, transcendent consciousness is viewed as central and the individual as peripheral. Thus the construct of self-expansiveness constitutes a model portraying individual’s potential for transcendence, while the new construct of Self-contraction constitutes a model portraying transcendent consciousness’s potential for immanence.

We begin with a discussion of transpersonal psychology in general and then concentrate on a brief overview of Friedman’s construct of self-expansiveness, followed by exploration of its inversion when transcendent consciousness is centrally placed. Finally, we situate this discussion within the context of one of the
most perplexing issues in both Western and Eastern philosophies, the relationship between immanence and transcendence.

**Transpersonal Psychology**

Transpersonal psychology can be understood as the scientific field that investigates expanded states of consciousness, notably experiences that extend or transcend space and time beyond ordinary conceptions and perceptions of being and reality, a theme on which we individually and collectively have extensively written (e.g., see Friedman, 1983; Pappas, 2004; Pappas & Friedman, 2004), as have many others. More specifically, Lajoie and Shapiro (1992) reviewed many definitions of transpersonal psychology, concluding it to be “the study of humanity’s highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendental states of consciousness” (p. 91). According to Walsh and Vaughan (1993), a common theme in transpersonal thought involves a focus on an expansion of the sense of self such that it goes “beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche or cosmos” (p. 203). These views are also consistent with Cortright’s (1997) proposal that transpersonal psychology focuses on “developing a self . . . [in which] consciousness is seen to be a vast, multidimensional existence where ever new aspects of Being are manifested” (p. 9). Similarly, Scotton (1996) suggested a view of transpersonal psychology based on the epigenetic development of consciousness from an independent sense of identity toward a transcendent identity, one where the ego is no longer attached to space-time limitations.

Classical figures who have investigated transpersonal psychology include William James and Carl Jung, while contemporary figures include Robert Assagioli and Stanislav Grof, to name a few. For James (1890), the transpersonal was understood in the context of a connection between the ordinary self with the higher Self, viewed in a variety of ways (including as the universe, spirit, God, or cosmic energy). On a somewhat different note, Jung (1964) believed that, through the process of individuation, the transpersonal essence of the universal Self manifests into the individual self’s expanded sense of a collective identity that is spiritual (e.g., dreams and myths may reveal symbolic themes whose content leads to these universal experiences). Assagioli (1973) referred to the transpersonal Self as the amalgamation, gestalt, or synthesis of being that permeates unification with all existence as well as fosters transcendence, expanded states of consciousness, blissful synthetic realization, and emergence of experiences of spontaneous illumination. More recently, Grof (1985, 1992) explored transpersonal psychology from the perspective of a space-time-consciousness model in which he mapped the expanded boundaries of the psyche through realms of transpersonal experiences. According to Grof, during corporeal-bound experiences, the ego (or sense of self) remains within the confines of the physical body and materially grounded perception; it thus functions within a non-expanded, spatial-temporal, awareness—in the ordinary lived world. Fundamental to this perceived reality is the experience of physical separateness, individuation, and sovereignty of the ego within its materialistic domain, representing a sense of the self as dwelling within the province understood through scientific materialism. However, Grof discussed spiritual emergence, or the
awakening of spirituality, as involving a radical shift from this ordinary experience to one that can include communion with spiritual beings and cosmic energies that extends the self into deeper connections with the transcendent. He identified a number of stimuli for this emergence, including intense emotional experiences related to near-death, disease, accident, physical exertion, childbirth, lovemaking, and psychedelic use. Grof and Grof (1990) described the consequences of experiencing spiritual emergence, as follows:

None of these individuals will ever again think of themselves as completely separate. They all have had vivid and convincing experiences that transported them beyond the restrictions of their physical bodies and limited self-concept to a connection with something outside of themselves. (p. 35)

Accordingly, Grof (1985) described transpersonal experiences as revealing a connection in which “consciousness has expanded beyond the usual ego boundaries and has transcended the limitations of time and space” (p. 129) in ways that involve ego expansion into either consensual or non-consensual realities beyond the corporeal-physical boundaries of a “skin-encapsulated ego existing in a world of separate beings and objects” (Grof, 1992, p. 91). For Grof, the transpersonal is expressed in terms of a field of expanding consciousness that includes a realm of transpersonal identity accompanied by emerging themes of spiritual realizations and cosmic unity—and, in extreme form, psychotic emergency.

**Self-Expansiveness**

Consistent with these transpersonal psychological approaches, Friedman proposed the construct of self-expansiveness to describe the possible expansion of personal identity through an active process of self-conception. In order to remain consistent with the tenets of materialistic science, Friedman rigorously grounded his construct in a spatial-temporal cartography (see Figure 1) and, to make it amenable to empirical investigation, operationalized it through a self-report measure, the Self-Expansiveness Level Form (SELF). His cartography embeds self-expansiveness within a space-time field with these two dimensions depicted as orthogonal (i.e., empirically unrelated). Space was conceptualized as a linear continuum extending from contracted (small) to expanded (large), while time was conceptualized as a linear continuum extending from past to future. From this cartography the personal self-concept was placed at the intersection of the space and time dimensions at a center point defined as the present or here-and-now. The personal self-concept restricted to the present is seen as the typical individualistic Western self-concept and called the personal self. However, the self-concept is seen as malleable and, through cognitive self-conceptualization using the psychological process of identification, able to result in self-expansiveness beyond the personal-level of self-concept.

On the spatial dimension, the self-concept is seen as capable of expanding outwardly toward a larger sense of identification with the external world, such as the social and physical context of the personal self, or inwardly (i.e., contracting) toward a smaller sense of identification with the microphysical elements of the personal self, such as cells and organ systems. The self-concept is also seen as capable of expanding
temporarily toward the past or future of the person. Thus the construct of self-expansiveness emphasizes that our self-concept is not bounded within a static, inertial, and physically-limited corporeal existence, whether seen as objective or subjective, but can expand through a process of identification in which the self-concept incorporates both larger temporal (e.g., from our ancestral past to possible future connections with distant descendents) as well as spatial (e.g., from the most basic level of material existence to that of an interconnection with all that exists) boundaries. Our relationship with the material world is thus conceptualized as interactive and overlapping systems within systems such that the world and the individual are in no defensible way distinct but, rather, part of a unified system.

The extreme expansion of the self-concept this way, significantly beyond the usually conceptualized connection with the personal-level of self-concept (i.e., to an extremely expansive identification with the materialistic world, including with events in the distant past or future and with the very small or large), is seen as evidencing a transpersonal self-concept. This construct provided a materialistic approach to defining the transpersonal that is congruent with conventional psychological and other scientific approaches.

Likewise, another pattern of transpersonal identification is seen as resulting in the transcendence of all limitations of the self-concept so that it expands beyond the constraints of time and space, but this possibility is still grounded in the spatial-temporal cartography and does not require direct supernatural (i.e., in the sense of non-material) reference. More specifically, the supernatural is not contained within the materialistic space-time map, but is only implied by that which resides outside the cartographic boundaries containing the material world.

Figure 1. The original cartography of self-expansiveness. Note. Adapted from Friedman (1981, 1983).
These two patterns of self-concept, one thoroughly materialistic and the other implicitly non-materialistic (but framed in a way avoiding all explicitly supernatural discussion and its concomitant paradoxes), illustrate two ways in which self-concept can expand beyond the prevailing insular view of the personality. This space-time cartography thus provides a grid, grounded only in naturalistic assumptions, which can be used to understand and explore individual differences in transpersonal self-concept and generate a consensual basis of meaning for the notion of the transpersonal.

Beyond providing an interesting way to conceptualize a transpersonal construct within a materialistic framework, this approach also provides access to empirical inquiry about its usefulness—taking it beyond the level of mere speculation that has plagued much of the transpersonal literature. Through the SELF, a short (18-item) self-report measure that operationalizes the construct of self-expansiveness, a number of promising empirical studies have been conducted. For example, the SELF has shown acceptable psychometric properties in a number of research studies (Friedman, 1983; MacDonald, Tsagarakis, & Holland, 1994; MacDonald, Gagnier, & Friedman, 2000; Pappas, 2003), supporting that conventional scientific approaches to researching the transpersonal realm are possible from this model. It has also been shown to differentiate known-groups engaged in so-called “transpersonal practices” from control groups (Friedman, 1983; Pappas, 2003), further supporting the validity of this approach. In addition, the use of the SELF in applied work has been explored in terms of its potential in psychological assessment to differentially diagnose transpersonal concerns, such as distinguishing between spiritual emergence, a normal and desirable growth toward transpersonal self-actualization, and spiritual emergency that can be associated with various pathologies (Friedman & MacDonald, 1997, 2002).

One of the major underlying advantages of the construct of self-expansiveness and its associated measure, the SELF, inures from its being framed in naturalistic terms, such that it avoids numerous metaphysical quandaries (i.e., by grounding the construct in an empirical cartography that is congruent with the precepts of conventional science and basing it on the well-understood psychological process of identification through which the self-concept can be seen as capable of expanding). This enables self-expansiveness to serve as a unifying construct across various traditions, such as in cross-cultural settings in which competing religious and spiritual understandings produce divisiveness and communication impasses. For example, in recent research in India, the SELF was found to basically have the same psychometric properties as in studies in Western cultures (Friedman, MacDonald, & Kumar, 2004) despite the vast differences in religious and spiritual beliefs between these cultural contexts, supporting that the materialistic framework around the construct of self-expansiveness can provide some commonality across cultures.

Friedman (1983) defined the level of self-expansiveness as “the amount of the true self [i.e., Self], or the universe of all possibilities, which is contained within the boundary demarcating self from non-self through the process of self-conception” (p. 39). Thus, he posited a nondualistic position in which the true, or noumenal, Self is the entire universe (including beyond time and space, thus not restricted to a materialistic framework) while limiting his work to only the aspects of the phenomenal self as understood through the self-concept, which can be cognitively known and empirically measured. The conscious self (or phenomenological

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consciousness) and the larger Self (transcendent consciousness) are both viewed as outside of the conventional scientific venue and impossible to capture conceptually through any symbolically mediated process, such as cognition or measurement. For the sake of building a transpersonal psychological science congruent with how contemporary science is understood, exploration of the noumenal Self and conscious self was intentionally bracketed from his empirical approach. Recently, Friedman (2002) returned to this theme, calling for agnosticism about the noumenal transcendent while advocating for the continued development of a science of the phenomenal aspects of the transpersonal, such as in the use of constructs like self-expansiveness that focus on the more limited self-concept (while bracketing the conceptually unknowable noumena, including ordinary self- and transcendent Self-consciousness). Therefore, by connecting the construct of self-expansiveness with the SELF as a measurement tool while bracketing noumenal concerns, Friedman’s approach provides an avenue for the empirical exploration of many transpersonal phenomena using conventional scientific methods and also opens the possibility for various transpersonal applications.

**SELF-CONTRACTION**

In order to work within the broad framework of conventional science, Friedman presented his model of self-expansiveness framed from a purely materialistic vantage that, again, allowed for a transpersonal research methodology and for the development of applications. However, he also alluded to the possibility of transcendent noumena through his space-time cartography by not just mapping the material world of space and time, but also by portraying that which resides outside of the map’s materialistic boundaries and is beyond space and time—thus indirectly pointing to the noumenal possibilities without specifying them (since they are beyond the ability to convey through direct symbolic expression). In addition, that which is outside of our sense of self-concept, no matter how far expanded, can possibly be intuited (directly experienced without conceptual mediation, e.g., through a sense of awe, faith, mystery or participative knowing) though not grasped cognitively in a way accepted by conventional science.

Transcendent consciousness, although remaining undefined in this original cartography as well as here, can be placed in the center of a map for heuristic purposes to explore its implications when used that way. A map, framed on such an alternative but parallel approach to the model of self-expansiveness, can portray transcendent consciousness from a perspective that is complementary to the original map. Either materialistic or non-materialistic approaches alone are seen, from this vantage, as incomplete while a full description requires both to be addressed, like two sides of the same coin that can only be described fully through taking both sides into account. Consequently, a duality is created by either ignoring the non-materialistic implications of noumena that underlie all phenomena or, conversely, positing that transcendent consciousness is the only basis of self-expansiveness. However, since both the phenomenal and noumenal are inextricably intertwined (like the snakes of the Western caduceus, the yin-yang of the Eastern tai-chi, and the two triangles of the Judaic Star of David), addressing one side of the duality unavoidably references the other. Nevertheless, all language and thought are
relativistic and incapable of capturing the absolute—that can only possibly be
directly experienced (although even experience is too relative of a word to describe
what that might entail) and alluded to through non-rational (i.e., “trans-rational” but
not necessarily irrational) means such as poetry or music. Consequently, if any
transpersonal theory is to be considered valid in an ultimate and not merely relative
sense, it must employ techniques that would be consistent with both conventional
scientific approaches and, more broadly, approaches that are congruent with insights
from other knowledge traditions and cultures. This means that any form of scientific
inquiry must not be solely linear and concretely material or it becomes undermined
by its own methodology (Friedman, 2003). Our efforts here are to acknowledge that
the importance of including transcendent consciousness in the mapping process
should rest on the affirmative dual recognition that, yes, consciousness as a possible
non-material unknown is crucial, and yes, matter is crucial—holding both
affirmations simultaneously aloft. The fundamental unity of both, which takes
precedence over emphasis on either, needs recognition. We believe that only in such
a case, can we have a balanced view that is coherent in the broadest sense and that
honors the full-range of human existence.

Consequently, just as it is useful to posit a materialistic cartography to further
a scientific inquiry into transpersonal matters, it is equally useful to demonstrate how
this cartography is arbitrary and can be inverted in a way that places the transcendent
aspects of consciousness in an equally important position. This inversion is
reminiscent of how Euro-American geographic maps customarily place north on the
map’s top, whereas it is equally logical for the southern hemisphere to be on top
(as, for a novelty, is found in some Australian tourist maps). More specifically, if the
transcendent consciousness of Self is placed at the intersection of the time and space
dimensions of the cartography, then the personal self would be correspondingly
shifted to placement outside of the boundaries of the map. Such an inverted
cartography (now called a cartography of Self-contraction as opposed to the original
cartography of self-expansiveness) is presented here (see Figure 2). Note that
extremely expanded and contracted space as well as the distant future and past are
placed adjacent to the center of the cartography and, as the dimensions go toward the
periphery, they merge with the present time and space or the here-and-now of the
personal self in the material world.

The implications of this are fertile. The original cartography of self-expansiveness
is based on the possibility of transpersonal expansion of the limited self-concept
toward transcendence through identification. The newly inverted cartography
implies the opposite, namely that the Self, the ultimate transcendent consciousness,
can emanate though descending into space and time into the personal self. Both
descending top-down (through emanation into space and time from the Self) and
identifying bottom-up (through expanding toward transcendence from the self) can
be portrayed through the same essential cartography, implying they are essentially
the same process. Just as time can be portrayed as flowing in either future or past
directions in an equally plausible manner from a physics perspective, this inversion
of Friedman’s model can provide a balance to the scientific approach advocated by
the construct of self-expansiveness, its underlying cartography, and its methodology.
Moreover, as in that original map in which transcendent consciousness can only be
referenced indirectly through what is beyond the map, and not directly pointed to in
the map, likewise the presentation of this inverted cartography can allude to a balance, when combined with the original cartography, that can only be stated indirectly—since it is beyond all direct reference.

To place this discussion in the larger context of philosophical traditions, this issue concerns the fundamental paradox of the relationship of the One to the many, or the relationship of immanence to transcendence. Immanence and transcendence are reciprocal terms with the former relating to something beyond mere materialism participating within material existence, whereas the latter refers to something that is beyond materialism’s limits and outside of material existence (e.g., the immanent quality of a so-called deity would be located within the material world, whereas the transcendent quality of a so-called deity would be radically outside the material world—and, of course, any such deity could be seen as having both qualities). In the Platonic tradition that is core to much of Western philosophy, how the divine emanates into the world (i.e., how the One through immanence becomes the many) and likewise how the individual can relate to the divine (i.e., how the many through transcendence can relate to the One) has been a long conversation (e.g., from the Stoics, to the deliberations of Bruno and Spinoza, to more recent speculations such as by Schleiermacher who argued within the Western tradition for the identity of mind and body in the context of resisting reductionism to either, championing instead a non-reductive unity of life as a reconciliation of immanence and transcendence [e.g., see Forster, 2002]). Likewise in the East, this is reflected in a similarly long conversation, perhaps starting with the twofold mystery of Laozi’s teachings, which viewed non-being as equal to being in a way in which the delineation between non-being and being must be reconciled to achieve oneness.

*Figure 2.* A cartography of Self-contraction with transcendent consciousness as primary. *Note.* Adapted from Friedman (1981, 1983).
with the Dao, a process Chan (2001) discussed as also bridging between immanence and transcendence. Also, of course, this has long been the focus of much of transpersonal theory, such as Wilber’s (1993) discussion of the relationship of evolution to involution and Smith’s (2003) discussion of traditional (top-down) and modern (bottom-up) worldviews.

Thus, the original cartography of self-expansiveness can be interpreted as a materialistic map of transcendence, namely how the limited self-concept can, through the process of identification, expand in space-time toward transpersonal possibilities and even toward those that transcend the material constraints of space and time and possibly even further, toward ultimate union with the Self. The modified cartography of Self-contraction, alternatively, can be interpreted as a consciousness-based map of immanence, namely how the unlimited Self can, through the process of emanation, descend into the material world of space-time toward manifesting the individuality of the self. Together, both cartographies recursively complete each other so that both immanence (within materialistic space-time) and transcendence (beyond materialistic space-time) can be reconciled as part of a unified, dialectical, process.

**Conclusion**

Having presented a modification of Friedman’s transpersonal model of self-expansiveness that allows for non-materialistic transcendent consciousness to be viewed as central (in contrast to the original materialistic perspective in which this was framed), we believe it is important to emphasize that such an inverted model be presented to counterbalance any attempt to reify the original model—and that either approach alone is ultimately inadequate. Both together, however, can more aptly express the union of the underlying dualities that have long perplexed those attempting to reconcile these issues. Just as physics attempts to reconcile difficulties such as the alternating particle and wave-like properties of light (i.e., the wave-particle duality) by using neologisms such as wavicle, juxtaposing both the cartographies of self-expansiveness and of Self-contraction together provides a better overall portrayal of the unified field of the self/Self as based on both non-materialistic transcendent consciousness and materialistic existence. Together, they allude to a deeper understanding that cannot be directly portrayed in a conventional scientific way but, perhaps, can be directly experienced during our most profound moments.

An old nostrum suggests that only two disciplines can provide a comprehensive picture of the world: physics and phenomenology (i.e., by using either third- or first-person accounts). Since the view that physics can eventually explain all is a prevailing Western cultural belief, there is no need to elaborate here on that view. The possibility of phenomenology being in a similar position is less widely understood (e.g., see Bruzina, 2000, for a discussion of Husserl’s approach that all that is usually seen as existing outside of the person can equally well be seen as residing within the subjective self). However, we consider either account alone inadequate.

If consciousness and the self can, however, be seen simultaneously from both vantages (i.e., as materialistic and non-materialistic), it might better complete gaps in
the prevailing materialistic scientific paradigm that dismisses valuable transpersonal (i.e., non-ordinary, mystical, spiritual, and religious) experiences through an exclusively bottom-up myopia, as well as avoid the solipsism that is so endemic with idealistic top-down approaches. Friedman’s model, as modified here, accommodates for both perspectives in a way compatible with bottom-up and top-down vantages. This new synthesis, emerging from the dialectic between materialistic and non-materialistic cartographies and their underlying bottom-up and top-down epistemologies, recognizes that both are interdependent with, and incomplete without, the other. This approach also honors both equally and leads to a more comprehensive way to envision wholeness, a perspective that is sorely needed in our contemporary understandings (e.g., see Friedman & MacDonald, 2002; Wiedemann, 1986).

Finally, although there may be no way to empirically validate the cartography of Self-contraction since we see it as simply beyond the purview of present-day science to address (see Friedman, 2002 for a discussion of the limits of science as applied to transpersonal psychology), nevertheless many benefits could stem from this approach to revising Friedman’s model. By situating self-expansiveness and Self-contraction in a logically (although not empirically) equivalent position, a defensible theoretical basis is provided to avoid positing either top-down or bottom-up approaches as absolutely better. This could be extrapolated to a number of similar antinomic contexts, such as in privileging the prevailing Western medical model based on biological reductionism as opposed to a broader biopsychosocial spiritual and transpersonal model of illness. The recent resurgence of interest in the medicinal use of psychedelics, in which biological explanations have increasingly been invoked as the primary mechanism through which these substances are seen as exhibiting their powerful therapeutic effects, illustrates a context where transpersonal explanations could possibly be equally, if not better, suited for explaining these important phenomena (Friedman, 2006). Perhaps the approach used here could also expand the range of research seen as scientifically legitimate. The longstanding scientific tendencies within psychology that generally privilege narrow methods (e.g., viewing experimental methods as the gold standard for research) and disfavor broader approaches (e.g., phenomenological methods) could perhaps be seen more clearly as an arbitrary and unjustified stance through the lens of potential reversibility of many models from a bottom-up to top-down perspective. It should also be noted that this type of methodolatry disadvantages the perceived value of many approaches especially useful for meaningful transpersonal research, such as on elusive topics resistant to conventional methodologies. Hopefully by developing top-down models, a basis for challenging the hegemony of narrow research methods that align better with bottom-up approaches can occur. It is even possible that this approach could offer positive consequences for those engaging in spiritual practices in ways that are scientifically informed. Rather than having to accept only bottom-up scientific explanations that often reduce these practices to their mere biological effects, which can be dispiriting to practitioners, having alternative conceptualization that also allow for top-down depictions could be beneficial.

This discussion has relied on considering bottom-up and top-down approaches as complementary strategies for transpersonal model building as applied to the
construct of self-expansiveness as expressed through its original cartography and the alternative cartography of Self-contraction. The underlying ontological assumption is that both approaches provide glimpses of a more inclusive reality, neither being necessarily any more or less valid than the other. However, the relative value of each approach may be enhanced when both are combined, portraying in a more holistic fashion that which points toward, but may never fully captures, whatever may be absolutely real. This reconciliation is in stark contrast to the ongoing conflict between the traditional religious worldview that posits that only the sacred is ontologically real and the prevailing modern scientific worldview that denies reality status to all that cannot be reduced to materialism (Smith, 1976). Hopefully our approach to reconciling these competing worldviews can be applicable not just to the complementary transpersonal constructs of self-expansiveness and Self-contraction but also to other transpersonal concerns, leading to a more integrative understanding.

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