



## Editorial

In the wide range of contemporary explanations of spirituality, conditioned by diverse approaches and perspectives of their authors, one core concept is crucial for a thorough comprehension: *spirituality revolves around self-transcendence*. The very essence of spirituality is the act of surpassing oneself. But what precisely does this entail?

The English term *transcendence* derives from the Latin verb “transcendere”, which is composed of the verb “scandere” and the preposition “trans”. The former word stands for “moving upward” or “to climb”, whereas the latter denotes “through” or “beyond”. Conclusively, the term indicates a motion that “goes through” or “beyond” our usual human experience that is always tied to an object of our awareness. No matter if an object of our awareness is a sensory or mental phenomenon, it appears within the “light” of our awareness and becomes attached to a subject of experience, the “I” related to that object.

Since the primary object of any experiencing subject is the body in a broad sense, the awareness or identification “I am this body” arises. This “I” attached to the body represents the self in the self-transcendence formula. As explained by Michael James in the opening interview of the Fall 2023 edition of *Spirituality Studies*, “*The ‘I’ that*

*knows all other things is ego, the first person or subject, which is what knows itself as ‘I am this body’, but since this body is an object known by ego, it cannot be what ego actually is, because ego is aware, whereas the body (like all other objects) is not aware.*”

In its spiritual sense, self-transcendence refers to the process of “reaching beyond” the experiencing subject (ego, self or “I”), which is constantly related to objects, to the turning point, where this false awareness of oneself as “I am this body” is surpassed and the underlying reality of what truly “is” (Lat. *esse*) is “disclosed” (Gr. *alátheiā*) as pure, that is contentless awareness “I am”.

All contributors to this edition of *Spirituality Studies* offer their unique perspectives on this process, whether it is the exposition of teachings of Ramana Maharshi, framing spirituality conceptually for empirical research, practicing contemplative singing, addressing social violence from Midrashic perspective, or evaluating Thomas Merton’s novitiate conferences. Dear readers, I encourage you to explore these enlightening insights featured in the *Spirituality Studies* journal.

Cordially  
**Martin Dojčár**