Synopsis for Video: "Self-Actualization and Self-Transcendence

Self-actualization and self-transcendence are stages we can attain in our development, but according to American psychologist Abraham Maslow they are also the higher needs we have, per his hierarchy of needs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Self-Transcendence

Self-Actualization

Esteem Needs

Belongingness Needs

Safety Needs

Physiological Needs

We continue to have all of these needs even as we move up the hierarchy. I want to especially emphasize the need for self-actualization even when we begin to experience self-transcendence.

The starting point and foundation for self-actualization is discovering what we love and have a passionate interest in. It is also identifying our values. This is where we begin to become our own person.

Self-actualization requires self-knowledge and discipline.

4 areas for our attention and care as we develop ourselves:

1. Body
2. Mind
3. Relationships

4. Environment

For self-actualization we will need to cultivate disciplines, habits and practices in all 4 areas.

At some point we begin to long for and have glimpses of something beyond ourselves, i.e., self-transcendence

Flow states are a sign/experience of self-transcendence. We are able to perform effortlessly at a very high level. Time disappears. A sense of self vanishes. There is no separation between us and what we are doing, as we become completely immersed in it.

The fruits of self-actualization (e.g., the flow state), from the perspective of self-transcendence, are given to our highest purposes of benefitting others. This may seem like a cosmic bait and switch scam to ego, but it delivers greater liberation, joy, meaning and satisfaction than ego can even imagine.

There are many routes to self-transcendence, but I will focus on just 2.
1. Meditation/spiritual paths that reveal the constructed nature of the conceptual self, where we identify with the witness of that construct rather than on its content.
2. Surrender to serving our group and/or a higher purpose than ourselves.

We can ask: What is the moral center of gravity of our group?

Our group can be at a conventional stage of moral development, which cares for the well-being of the group, but not all people/beings. It may not be based on universal moral principles.

<u>Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive stages of moral development</u>

- Pre-conventional: What's good is what's good for me.
- Conventional: What's good is what's good for my group. Rules-based.
- Post-conventional: What's good is what's good for all. Based on universal principles.

Self-transcendence can become a resource for those with nefarious intentions at pre-conventional or conventional stages of moral development. Millions have been slaughtered throughout history, particularly in the 20th century, in just this way.

As far as I can see self-transcendence at the post-conventional stage of moral development, giving the fruits of our self-actualization to the highest purposes beyond ourselves, is the ultimate aspiration. There may be more beyond this, but I don't see it and am not qualified to talk about it if there is.