Suggested Discussion Questions for topic: **Self-actualization** (Condensed One Page Version)

The purpose of this one page version is to more easily access transition between the questions without having to flip through pages. It is recommended that you cross off areas which you’ve covered once you move to a new question but don’t feel that you need to cover every question.

The topic of self-actualization is an important topic within the realm of practical philosophy since it involves aspects of awareness, knowledge, and attaining wisdom through growth.

"What a man can be, he must be. This need we call self-actualization." - Abraham Maslow
"Every individual, every plant, every animal has only one inborn goal - to actualize itself as it is." - Fritz Perls

Whether famous or unknown, educated or not, rich or poor, self-actualizers tend to fit the following profile:

**Spontaneity.**  ➔ Do you consider yourself as alive, engaged and spontaneous as you can be? If so, when is this expressed and how often? If not, what is holding you back?

**Being open to opinions and ideas.**  ➔ To what extent are you open to other people’s opinions and ideas?

**Self-knowledge.**  ➔ Do you make time on a regular basis for contemplation in order to know yourself better?

**Comfortable acceptance of self, others, nature.**  ➔ To what extent do you accept others? ➔ To what extent do you accept yourself and your life’s circumstances? ➔ To what extent do you feel at one with the world and/or the universe?

**Continued freshness of appreciation.**  ➔ Can you say that you have a continued freshness of appreciation for the world (i.e. a sunset or a flower)? If not, do you believe that this can this be reinvigorated for you if it is lost?

**Fellowship with humanity.**  ➔ Can you describe your connection to humanity? Do you have a deep identification with others and the human situation?

**Autonomy.**  ➔ To what extent do you believe that it is possible to be autonomous in your life?

**Profound interpersonal relationships.**  ➔ Would you say that you have enough deep loving bongs in your life?

➔ Do you feel that your best relationships help to foster growth towards self-actualization? If so, in what way?

➔ Do you find it hard to manage the more superficial relationships in your life which you feel that you may have outgrown? If so, how is this continuing to affecting you?

**Comfort with solitude.**  ➔ Do you value your solitude? If so, can you explain how your time in solitude may help you to be more self-actualized?

**Non-hostile sense of humor.**  ➔ Are you easily able to laugh at yourself, or is this something that you find difficult? If so, why?

**Peak experiences.**  ➔ How often would you say that you experience feelings of bliss, ecstasy, harmony, and deep meaning? Can you describe any of them?

➔ Are these kinds of experiences contingent on someone else being a part of these experiences with you?

➔ To what extent do you feel stronger and calmer than ever before, filled with light, beauty and goodness?

**Efficient perceptions of reality.**  ➔ What ways do you know of that we can more easily distinguish between what is fake and what is real in our lives?

➔ Do you take time to bring in new knowledge into your understanding of the world on a regular basis?

**A sense of completeness, integration and belonging.**

When one becomes self-actualized not only is one truly becoming ‘oneself’, but that there is an essential completeness to the person: body, heart, mind and soul all are now essentially ‘alive’ in consciousness, and have come into their own. Moreover, each of these ‘centers’ of the human-being have now become much more integrated, so that one what ‘thinks’ is also more integrated -or synonymous with how one feels, etc. To this end, this suggests less likelihood for hypocrisy, and such an individual feels that they belong significantly more to the human species, but are at the same time are at last free to be their unique and individual selves.

➔ Can you relate to this sense of completeness, integration and belonging and if so, how?

**Thinking beyond yourself.**

Most of Maslow's subjects had a mission to fulfill in life or some task or problem ‘beyond’ themselves (instead of outside of themselves) to pursue. Humanitarians such as Albert Schweitzer and Mother Teresa are considered to have possessed this quality.

➔ Can you relate to the difference of having a mission which is beyond yourself instead of outside of yourself?

➔ Do you have any such missions in place now? If so, what are they?

**Attitude and growth.**

Maslow and Carl Rogers both suggested necessary attitudes and/or attributes that need to be inside an individual as a pre-requisite for self-actualization. These attitudes are described through the following questions:

➔ Can you relate to a real wish to be yourself, to be fully human, and completely alive? If so, in what situations do you feel this way?

➔ Do you consciously put yourself in vulnerable situations to help with your growth? If so, when do you do this?

➔ Do you take steps to uncover painful aspects in order to learn about/growth through and integrate these parts of yourself?

**The pathway to self-actualization.**

Maslow's writings are used as inspirational resources. The key to Maslow's writings is understanding that there are no quick routes to becoming self-actualizing: rather it is predicated on the individual having their lower deficiency needs met. Once a person has moved through feeling and believing that they are deficient, they naturally seek to grow into who they are, that is self-actualize. (See Maslow's hierarchy of needs below).

➔ Do you believe that the lower needs of this diagram need to be satisfied before self-actualization can take place for you?

(See diagram on last page of notes)