

# TOWARDS A LARGER EARTH

## Supernormal Capacities and our Evolutionary Birthright

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*“Like the human heart, the world points beyond itself to something greater and more beautiful than its present condition. That something attracts us all, in different ways, and leads many of us to seek transformation. Does it secretly inform the entire evolutionary adventure? Could it be that the human heart and the world’s heart are one in their self-surpassing? We believe that they are.”*

<sup>1</sup> - *George Leonard and Michael Murphy*

Humanity and the cosmos are united in common purpose, drawn by an ineffable pull, to bring forth the beauty and goodness embedded within. In this chapter we will explore the prospect that there are supernormal capacities within us, as yet undiscovered or undeveloped, and that these latent capacities express a natural evolutionary progression, that, if realized, could ultimately result in an evolutionary leap for humanity. By consciously aligning ourselves and engaging with this universal seeking through the cultivation of our latent capacities, we are fulfilling our evolutionary purpose. Even our most basic desires to be better parents or lovers, more competent in our professions, or even to make a better lasagna, contain the seeds of this self-surpassing, our deepest yearnings towards an extraordinary life.

Although big picture narratives have fallen out of favor, we see a deep need for a positive and hopeful view of the world that is compatible with our times, one that gives meaning and purpose to life, one that gives us the sense that we are part of something greater. Evolution is the new story of our time and the even newer story is that evolution happens across all domains - not just biological, but cultural, social and spiritual as well. Although “evolution meanders more than it progresses” as Murphy writes, we can surmise by tracking the increasing complexity of life forms over time, that evolution is purposeful, that it is going somewhere, and that it is possible and beneficial for us to align ourselves with that evolutionary trajectory.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Life We Are Given*, George Leonard and Michael Murphy. Tarcher Putnam 1995 Preface

We will describe an evolutionary worldview, that of Evolutionary Panentheism, fueled by evolutionary love, that provides a basis for understanding our evolving human capacities. We want to demonstrate, as Murphy has, that there is a natural progression of these capacities, and that we, and the entire universe, are predisposed to bring forth the great potentials that were involved at the time of the inception of the material universe. Drawing on the work of Michael Murphy, George Leonard and others, we will paint a hopeful portrait of our vast potential, as yet largely untapped and unrecognized, and explore ways of approaching its development. We do not intend to provide conclusive evidence for whether or not these various capacities exist but rather to look at them as expressions of humanity's evolutionary potential.

Michael Murphy is the co-founder of The Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California and author of many books of fiction and nonfiction including *Golf in the Kingdom*, *The Future of the Body*, and *In the Zone*. Traveling to India in 1950 as a young man, Murphy spent a year and a half meditating at the Aurobindo ashram in Pondicherry. Aurobindo has remained Murphy's main inspiration to this day. Leonard (1923-2010) was also a prolific author whose works include *The Silent Pulse*, *The Way of Aikido*, *Education and Ecstasy*, an Aikido sensei, musician, and president of the Esalen Institute for many years. Both men believed that humanity is capable of much more than is generally believed, and that there could be no worthier goal than the realization of our highest potentials of body, mind, heart and soul, both for ourselves and for society. Together they created Integral Transformative Practice<sup>2</sup> as a pathway for the realization of these positive potentials and as a launching pad for places yet unknown.

Adam Crabtree, psychotherapist, author and one of the world's foremost authorities on trance, has been developing the concept of Evolutionary Love as first proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce. His work is included here because we feel that the concept of evolutionary love is foundational to the worldview of Evolutionary Panentheism. Both will be described in this chapter.

### **What We Know About Supernormal Capacities**

Most of us have at least heard of, or perhaps even know, people who exhibit unusual abilities, people who for example have deep empathy with others, have precognitive dreams whose foretellings come true in real life, can hear colors, commune with beings on other planes, or experience an extraordinary level of love, joy and connection with all of life. Supernormal capacities have been experienced and observed in human beings most likely since the emergence of homo sapiens. Hunter-gatherers needed to find game for the night's meal and used a form of

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<sup>2</sup> see [itp-international.org](http://itp-international.org)

clairvoyance to “see” them, a technique which is still in use today. Since antiquity, there have been reports of people displaying extraordinary powers. For example, in ancient Indian texts, from the Upanishads to Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras, there are descriptions of *siddhis* (“attainments”), or powers, and recommended techniques to develop them, such as meditation to calm the mind. These texts describe many types of *siddhis* ranging from the ability to see inside one’s body down to the cellular level (*animan siddhi*), to precognition, to traveling in other realms. Catholic literature speaks of *the charisms* of the saints which are considered to be gifts of the spirit but nonetheless represent, if true, a higher, or at least different level of human functioning than is currently evident in our society. Examples here, which have been subjected to considerable scrutiny by the church, include stigmata, luminous phenomena such as halos, extraordinary fragrance emitted by a person’s body, and the *incendium amoris*, or bodily heat, generated by ecstatic devotion. There are varying degrees of certainty that these capacities are real but there is enough evidence to suppose that many of them may be. Supernormal capacities such as these can be seen as extraordinary developments of attributes that are already present within us.

In 2013, Dean Radin of the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, California, published a book titled *Supernormal*<sup>3</sup>, in which he reviewed scientific studies that were designed to explore the validity of some of these extraordinary powers. He determined that there is good evidence to support the existence of a number of capacities described in Patanjali’s yoga sutras such as telepathy, the ability to know another’s mind or condition from a distance; precognition - the ability to know events before they happen; and clairvoyance, or extrasensory perception (ESP). He also identified current examples of people with extraordinary capacities such as the Dutch athlete Wim Hof, known as the Ice Man, who holds the world’s record for sitting still while submerged in ice water (one hour and forty-five minutes) among other feats.

*The Future of the Body*, Murphy’s magnum opus, was supported by data he collected since his college days and assembled through Esalen Institute’s Transformation Project, which was created to study supernormal human functioning. This was the beginning of a collection of over ten thousand accounts that led Murphy to identify twelve categories of extraordinary human functioning, and to the belief that we are fundamentally wired for these experiences, what Murphy calls “the budding organs and limbs of our latent supernature”. These categories include Perception of External Events, Movement Abilities and Love, among others.<sup>4</sup> Murphy

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<sup>3</sup> Dean Radin, *Supernormal*. Deepak Chopra Books 2013.

<sup>4</sup> The 12 are Perception of External Events, Somatic Awareness and Self-Regulation, Communication Abilities, Vitality, Movement Abilities, Abilities to alter the environment directly, Pain and Pleasure, Cognition, Volition, Individuation and Sense of self, Love, and

included only soundly verified data, drawing from the natural and human sciences, psychical research, religious studies and other fields to provide a more complete lens on human development than gained from studying separate domains, an approach he calls synoptic empiricism. As a result of his research, Murphy came to believe that most if not all ordinary human attributes can give rise to extraordinary versions of themselves, either spontaneously or through transformative practice, and that if these were stabilized and mastered throughout society, a new kind of human would walk the earth.

Further, Murphy saw that these human capacities exhibit a continuity, a family resemblance, to capacities inherited from our animal ancestors and created a taxonomy to describe how they may develop, from animal inheritance, through ordinary human development, to products of supernormal development. For example, in the category of Perception of External Events, he uses the example of the eye as a product of animal evolution. Ordinary human psychosocial development of the eye results in improved sensory awareness developed by practices such as martial arts and contemplative practice. Supernormal development could result in extraordinary vision, clairvoyance, and perception of the numinous in the physical world. This taxonomy can provide a roadmap for the intentional development of these capacities.

One of the benefits of this kind of survey is that it provides us with models, examples of those who have experienced the outer reaches of the human frontier, helping us realize that there is much more to us, and more going on around us, than we realize. We are all carrying a “sack of gold,” the old teaching story goes, but most of us have no idea we are carrying it, much less what is in it. These capacities are our birthright. In developing them through integral practice, we move towards the realization of our highest potentials, becoming fully articulated human beings, and in doing so, we help move humanity forward towards a supernormal embodiment, aligned with the universe’s evolutionary unfolding. Although we are hard-wired for these capacities, from clairvoyance to psychokinesis, there seems to be a difference in their availability, and this may be a good thing. Murphy found that capacities “most crucial to human goodness and growth—namely love, need-transcending joy, and perceptions of oneness with others, are more commonly experienced than potentially dangerous or distracting phenomena such as kundalini arousal or internal clairvoyance...All of us can reach out with love in most circumstances, he says; there are countless ways to perform acts of kindness...We are tilted in the right way towards balanced growth.”

## **The Worldview of Evolutionary Panentheism**

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Bodily Structures, States and Processes. Since this writing, Murphy has added Memory and Imagination.

*“The idea that divinity is present in all things and manifesting itself through the immense adventure of evolution helps account for the mystery of our surplus capacities, our yearning for God, our inextinguishable creativity, or sense of grace in human affairs. It helps explain our quest for self-transcendence and humanity’s proliferation of transformative practices... Every culture in every age has invented ways to realize their kinship or oneness with divinity.”*<sup>5</sup>

The worldview we hold must be broad enough to accommodate the kind of evolutionary change we are proposing here. To determine if this is the case, we can ask ourselves questions such as: Do we believe that the universe is purposeful or random? Is the universe against us, supportive or neutral? Do we have a part to play or are we at the whim of fate? The way we answer these questions has everything to do with how we see our purpose in life and how we act in the world. Such an encompassing worldview has begun to emerge among certain scientists, philosophers and laypeople. Murphy calls this worldview Evolutionary Panentheism, Panentheism meaning literally all in god, or in the divine. In his recent white paper on The Emergence of Evolutionary Panentheism<sup>6</sup>, Murphy summarizes the worldview this way:

*“Evolutionary Panentheism is based on just a few fundamental principles, among them: first, that evolution is a fact (though its discovery have given rise to various theories about it); second, that our universe arises from and is constituted by a world-transcending supernature, call it the One, God, Brahman, the Absolute, Buddha-Nature, Allah, Geist or the Tao; and third, that humans have a fundamental affinity or identity with that supernature, which can be known through immediate experience either spontaneously or by means of transformative practice.”*

Therefore, our fundamental affinity with the divine can be seen as the basis for the existence of latent supernormal capacities. All potentials are already present.

Rather than a mechanical universe subject only to meaningless random mutations as the strict Darwinists propose, the vision of Evolutionary Panentheism is engaging and unifying: everything in the universe, including ourselves, is evolving and filled with divine spirit and consciousness, and that as we open to this evolutionary flow, the more aware of this inherent divinity we become. It leads us to think about how we can be more active, conscious participants in this journey, aligning ourselves with the drive of the universe to self surpass, and awakening to the divine through endless creative discoveries. However, In the face of the pain

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<sup>5</sup> *The Life We Are Given*

<sup>6</sup> Included in *Panentheism Across The World’s Traditions*, Loriliai Biernacki and Philip Clayton

and suffering we see across the world, it can be difficult to believe that there is a divine force working through evolution. Perhaps, our best response to this suffering is to function at our highest potentials: to love, to feel compassion and to look for ways to be of service whenever possible. In short, to live consciously and fully.

### **Evolutionary Love**

Some have wondered if this hidden divinity, which involved itself in matter could be none other than an expression of Love - divine, unconditional love as expressed in the gospel of John -“God is Love.” In 1893, Charles Sanders Peirce, one of America’s great philosophers (1839-1914), who was inspired by this gospel, wrote a monograph titled “Evolutionary Love.” Intrigued by this idea, psychotherapist Adam Crabtree has been developing the concept in a forthcoming book.<sup>7</sup> Stated simply, “Evolutionary love is the heartfelt benevolent desire that everyone—ourselves, others, and all that exists in the universe—reaches their greatest possible fulfillment, whatever that may prove to be. This love is freely given, with no consideration of merit, with no strings attached, with no expectation of return, and it is a love that motivates supportive action in the one who loves.” This love object can be a person, an object or even an idea. When we practice evolutionary love, we are holding the object of our love in its highest possible state of fulfillment. “Love something and watch it blossom” says Murphy. There are many types of this love and on the cosmic level, it could be the telos, or purpose, that drives the universe’s evolutionary advance, the very same purpose which is behind humanity’s desire to continually self surpass, and this driving force is nothing less than love, evolutionary or unconditional love.

Unconditional love can also be seen as source of supernormal capacities. When Brazilian psychic and healer Thomaz Morais was asked about his power source, he said the ultimate source of his powers and all human energies is love. "Only by attuning to the ultimate energy of love can we transmute ourselves inwardly... then biological transformation... and then, harmony and peace... there is nothing else of greater value..."<sup>8</sup>

Finally, here are Leonard and Murphy: “We have suggested that cosmic evolution as we know it, from the big bang to the present moment is finally an expression of Eros, of love. If this is so, then can we doubt that love stands as the highest and most fundamental human impulse... a true expression of who we are, a fundamental condition of the path upon which we walk.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Crabtree, Adam. *Evolutionary Love and The Ravages of Greed*

<sup>8</sup> *Miracles and Other Realities*. Lee Pulos and Gary Richman Omega Press 1990

<sup>9</sup> Leonard and Murphy, *The Life We Are Given*. P. 194

## **Cultivating Supernormal Capacities**

Throughout history, human beings have used various means to develop their latent gifts, such as religious practices, magic, psychoactive drugs, vision quests, and recently assisted by technology such as “transcendence tech.” Many of these have brought about positive change; however, if one sided, these attempts towards transformation may ultimately fail because they can result in uneven development or only short term changes of state rather than a permanent positive shift.

From their collective experience and research into human transformation, Murphy and Leonard realized that for true lasting transformation, there must be long-term practice involving body, mind, heart and soul. We are multidimensional beings, and developing all of our aspects simultaneously creates a kind of synergy that sets the stage for nonlinear, quantum shifts in us and potentially for the arising of our latent supernormal capacities. Other guiding principles include the need for several mentors rather than a single all-powerful guru, and the value of practicing with a community of engaged practitioners to provide context and foster loving support, accepting us as we are, while moving us towards the higher good. From these and other principles, they created Integral Transformative Practice<sup>10</sup> (ITP) to help people to reach their highest potentials and explore the frontiers of human evolution. Integral practice helps to avoid the uneven development that comes from exclusive work on one aspect. Of course, in any practice course correction may be required.

There are numerous studies that demonstrate the value of an integral approach, for example combining meditation and aerobic exercise,<sup>11</sup> as well as numerous examples of the dysfunction that can result from developing some aspects of our being at the expense of others: neglecting one’s body in the pursuit of enlightenment, or focusing on physical health to the exclusion of all else. Consider also the dangers of highly developed spiritual ability with little or no attention to moral development. We see ITP or other integral practices that involve and integrate the entire being, as a necessary foundation for grounded exploration into expanded human capacities. Involving and integrating physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health is critical to this effort. When this groundwork has been done, the arising of latent capacities can be seen as a natural outgrowth of evolution, although as Murphy often says, “evolution meanders more than it progresses” and we acknowledge that there are no guarantees.

In *The Future of the Body*, Murphy identified what he called transformative moves or modalities that further the development of the capacities that he identified. The classes of modalities that

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<sup>10</sup>see [itp-international.org](http://itp-international.org)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.nature.com/tp/journal/v6/n2/full/tp2015225a.html>

appear the most often in his survey are: somatic development through sport, martial arts and somatic awareness; mental imagery or visualization; religious or contemplative practice; and psychotherapy, or other types of disciplined inner work. Combining modalities such as these produces a balanced development of our entire being. Much territory remains to be mapped, more effective modalities to be identified, and work in this area continues.

**If they are natural, why don't we see more of them?**

We really don't know what the limits of our capacities are. Cultures only encourage capacities that they value, and suppress those that they do not. Supernormal capacities, such as remote viewing, can even be seen as a threat to social order. If we give ourselves permission to explore them however, many more could surface. How many of us were told as children that there aren't colors around people? That we can't possibly be seeing angels?

Most religious and spiritual traditions warn against engaging with these capacities. "Moksha before siddhi" is the phrase used in the Hindu tradition, meaning liberation before powers; we must free ourselves from identification with the ego before we can be trustworthy. To the founders of most of the world's spiritual traditions, the material world was seen as static and cyclical, a place to escape from, not an arena for life's creative exploration. The western occult traditions also speak of how easy it is to be seduced by the "glamour" of special powers. Belief in one's superiority and potential attachment to powers becomes an impediment to spiritual development and is potentially fatal to any further advance.

However, we can view the development of these powers differently. Science has given us a new perspective on the universe "as a place of novelty and creativity, firing our imagination with the idea that human possibility is coupled with evolution's dynamism." We want to engage with the world rather than escape from it. We believe that we need healthy ego-strength in order to transcend ourselves. In *The Future of the Body*, Murphy proposes an integral approach "where our world engaging capacities would be cultivated within a deepening spiritual realization, and would be viewed as necessary to our development rather than an impediment to it."<sup>12</sup> We could surmise that humanity has not come far enough in moral development to be trusted with these abilities, but as there are signs that more and more people are discovering some new ability arising within them, any program designed to encourage their development needs to address this. It is crucial to have a theoretical framework for understanding them and sound practices with which to integrate and develop them.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Future of the Body* p. 174

## **Capacities Important Now and in the Future**

*“The higher gifts of genius - poetry, the plastic arts, music, philosophy, pure mathematics - all of these are precisely as much in the central stream of evolution - are perceptions of new truth and powers of new actions. There is, then, about these loftier interests nothing exotic, nothing accidental; they are an intrinsic part of that ever-evolving response to our surroundings which forms not only the planetary but the cosmic history of our race.” - Frederic Myers<sup>13</sup>*

No matter our situation or circumstances, we have within us access to infinite resources. Although we have myriad capacities latent within us and capable of being developed, we feel that some have a particularly important role to play, and are needed in both our current circumstances and in those we cannot yet imagine. With many challenges on the horizon such as global warming and the enormous societal disruption predicted as a result of technological advance, what human qualities or capacities will be needed and of value? What will give meaning and purpose to our lives?

To navigate the river of exponential change that is at work in our society and direct it towards a promising future, we will need to further develop capacities such as a strong sense of our own identity with its unique insights, along with the ability to remain grounded and centered and resilient in difficult situations; clear intentions and focus of will, clear insight into situations, inspired creativity, and creative problem solving. These imbued with love and respect for all of existence.

Drawing again from Murphy’s work in the Future of the Body, here are a few of the capacities that stand out - Cognition, Volition, Individuation, and Love.

### **Cognition**

Supernormal Cognition includes various ways of knowing including analysis and reasoning; intuitive comprehension of another’s subjective state; problem solving that involves visual, auditory, or other imagery; and mystical illumination. Human ingenuity has overcome countless obstacles and there are plenty of reasons to believe that we will continue to do so. Inspirations, such as those of Mozart, whose extraordinary musical works seemed to form all at once, are not limited to such geniuses. They happen spontaneously for all of us in our everyday epiphanies, our “ahas”. This occurs, as Murphy writes, because we have a “greater life” in us that we draw upon both consciously and unconsciously informing our daily activities.

### **Volition**

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<sup>13</sup> Myers 1843-1901. Psychologist, and Co-founder of the Society for Psychical Research.

Supernormal Volition is marked by one-pointed involvement; by disregard for immediate results; by spontaneity, freedom and effortless mastery; and by a sense that the self is somehow larger and more complex, or conversely, that it disappears into something beyond itself. The flow state, first studied and named by Mihali Csikszentmihalyi, involving many human attributes, clearly includes an exceptional type of volition. The profound intention and highly focused activity that is part of this state can seem to trigger those startling events that Carl Jung called synchronicities, or meaningful coincidences. These events often reveal a new path to be taken, a long sought discovery or something of significance to those who experience them.

The development of volition can take the form of using ongoing self reflection to recognize our often conflicting and half-hidden inner drives, leading to the integration of our many wills into one-single harmonized will, allowing for a strong, single pointed focus when we want it. We will need this type of will to manifest our intentions, using inner guidance, sensing our way towards what is next for us in an exponentially changing world. The ultimate manifestation of supernormal volition culminates in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic statement of surrender, “Not my will, but Thine be done.” We are in harmony with Divine intention.

### **Individuation and Sense of Self**

George Leonard writes, “To be human, it seems clear, is to have a personal identity. This identity is unique and irreversible and it provides our particular viewpoint of the universe. This identity is not the constructed ego but the essence of who we are. This uniqueness becomes more pronounced as our capacities develop. Exercising and broadening the repertoires of body, mind, heart and soul may contribute to the supernormal development of individuality towards “the realization of an ego-transcendent identity that perceives its oneness with all things while remaining a unique center of awareness and action”.

### **Love**

All events and persons are the divine in disguise. The Indian greeting Namaste brings this recognition to the forefront of social interaction. This greeting, technically meaning “I bow to you”, it is often taken to mean “The divine in me bows to the divine in you”. Looking back to our earlier discussion of evolutionary love, through that lens we can see all things in the universe as arising from this love and being imbued with love in every particle. With evolutionary love, we are moved to hold each person (including ourselves), idea or thing in their highest potential, in their fullest flowering, to sustain a fervent wish that they realize that potential, and if possible, to act to help them achieve it.

Love, like all human capacities, grows through its exercise. If we can come to see each one of us as love made manifest, we are more likely to treat each other with respect, work together to achieve common goals, and value all of life, whatever form it may take; we could live from the point of view of love. “If I love the world as it is, I am already changing it,” says novelist Petru Dumitriu, “a first fragment of the world has been changed, and this is my own heart.”

In summary, the supernormal capacities of Cognition, Volition, Individuation, and Love, as described above, and others that may develop in response to new demands, give us a strong basis for not just surviving but flourishing in what will then be for us “a larger earth”. Supernormal cognition gives us clear vision and openness to receiving inspiration, while supernormal individuation allows us to perceive our oneness with all things and yet to be a unique center of action. Focused will and the flow states that trigger synchronicities can show us the way forward. Love, entwined with the capacities of body, mind, heart and soul, enjoins us to hold all in their highest possibilities. The development of these capacities will help position us to be of the greatest assistance to humanity and a world in need, and to aid in our mutual evolutionary journey.

### **Suggested Practices to Open to the More**

Integral Transformative Practice (ITP) is a community-based path of practice that engages and integrates all dimensions of our being - body, mind, heart and soul – providing a foundation for balanced growth over time, enabling us to draw from “the greater life within us.” Here are a few guidelines to consider as you engage in the unfoldment of your evolutionary nature:

- Practice being grounded and centered in the present moment.
- Focus on clear intentions and also allow for the workings of grace.
- Identify your gifts and look for ways to serve the world.
- Communicate to be understood and inquire to understand.
- View any given situation from multiple perspectives, holding all in unconditional love.
- Develop the capacities of body, mind, heart and soul.
- Stay alert, notice synchronicities and be curious about anomalies, things that seem to happen out of the blue.
- “Expect nothing; be ready for anything.” - George Leonard

### **Our Broader Purpose**

*“If it is true that Spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is Secret God, then manifestation of the divine in him/herself and the realization of God within and without are the*

*highest and most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth.” Sri Aurobindo*

Ultimately, we believe our purpose as human beings is to explore, to grow in love, and express our latent divinity. We do so by developing ourselves through integral practice, contributing talents which most benefit ourselves and the world, and by consciously moving with the power of evolutionary love, that has propelled human beings from the earliest days, towards an ever greater flowering of the richness we embody.