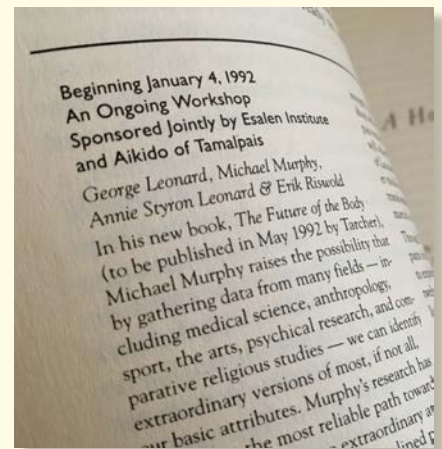


The Adventure of Integral Transformative Practice

By Christina Grote
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ITP was conceived in the spirit of experiment and adventure, not surprising given that its founders are adventurers of the highest order. Consider Michael Murphy's journey to India as a young man in the 1950's, encountering a mysterious golf pro in Scotland, as he was on his way to co-founding the Esalen Institute in Big Sur. And George Leonard, journeying to many, often dangerous, parts of the world as a reporter and senior editor for *Look Magazine*, documenting and sometimes participating in the seismic shifts underway in his native South at the time of the Freedom Riders and the lunch counter sit ins. In a seminal issue of *Look*, he predicted that California would become the epicenter of the human potential movement, a phrase that he coined.



Original ITP workshop notice from
The Life We are Given

Another kind of evidence of this spirit can be found in a notice that appeared in the January–June 1992 catalog of the Esalen Institute, designed to attract participants to an “ongoing workshop” co-sponsored by Esalen and Aikido of Tamalpais, to be held in Mill Valley, CA, not yet formally called ITP.

“...Participants will be offered the opportunity to engage in an extended bodily transformation experiment, and there will be discussion of the applications of integral transformative practice to society at large.”

Earlier in this notice there is mention of Murphy’s new book *The Future of the Body* (May, 1992) and its findings. The most reliable path toward the realization of the extraordinary human attributes described in this work, Murphy found, is regular, disciplined practice which cultivates “the physical, vital, cognitive, volitional, affective and transpersonal dimensions of human functioning in an integrated way.” ITP was created by Leonard and Murphy to be this practice, weaving together the strands of Aikido, the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and George and Michael’s original work, to explore a big idea - the possibility that we can intentionally develop our latent supernormal attributes in a grounded and balanced way, integrating and transforming body, mind, heart and soul.

There was a citation in that same class notice referencing a page of *The Silent Pulse* by George Leonard that got my attention. I have four **printings** of that wonderful book so I looked through them for that page and found some information that was a surprise to me and maybe to you as well.

From this reference, I learned that the nascent ITP project drew elements from an earlier one initiated by George Leonard in 1982, the Energy Training Bodily Transformation Experiment. This was but

one modality of what was then called Energy Training (what we now call Leonard Energy Training), described as "a body of work that teaches alternative ways of dealing with everyday life situations, and for enhancing the flow of vital energy." This experiment made use of affirmations of varying gradients, from simple to remarkable, with the stated goal of helping people take back responsibility for their own health from professionals by enlisting the powers of the placebo effect, "to achieve feats of self-healing and positive bodily transformation that bring the yogic legends to mind." Wow!

So George had been working with affirmations for at least a decade before the inception of ITP. One affirmation that everyone said then was, "My entire being is healthy, vital, and balanced" and we still use this one today, although we now say the words in a different order.

There is much to be unpacked regarding the placebo effect and its possible relationship to what Murphy has termed "the unseen forces of grace," but I will save that for another time. What interests me here is the second part of the sentence, the idea that ordinary people from all walks of life are potentially capable of feats of self-healing and positive bodily transformation is a radical concept, one that we are still living into today. Murphy included a vast inventory of examples of transformation and practice modalities in *The Future of The Body*, and in their own research with this first experimental group, Leonard and Murphy reported some significant transformations over two years of integral practice such as the shrinking of cataracts, the development of a more open, loving heart and the ability to remain calm in the face of danger.

Expanding our worldview to accommodate the possibility of integral transformation is an important and necessary step towards transformation itself. Can we see ourselves as beings on an evolutionary journey ripe with potential and limitless creativity, as explorers into a vast unknown territory? Can we see our entire being, body, mind, heart and soul as capable of transformation? Can we embrace the possibility that ordinary people like us can achieve "feats that bring yogic legends to mind?"

Viewing our practice as a journey of discovery into what is possible for us, connected with the greater whole, is inspiring. We really don't know what we are capable of. Our yearning to self surpass, to move towards a greater wholeness, or holiness, is the same urge that drives the evolutionary processes of the universe. Our heart, and the heart of the universe are one.

It may not be your plan to explore these further reaches of human nature. It is certainly a great thing to lead a grounded and centered life, integrating and transforming all of our aspects towards greater fulfillment. Perhaps though, knowing about the intentions of the founders to create a practice that engages our entire being towards the realization of extraordinary attributes will inspire you to go further and deeper into your practice. As George used to say, "Onward!"