

Dear new Iranian colleagues,

I write with gratitude to and humility before God, the eternal, all-pervading, infinite, compassionate, and merciful, who lives and loves us each and all.

I am writing you in connection with my visit to Iran March 2nd through 14th, which I think is Esfand 11th and 22nd as a member of the US civilian diplomacy delegation from the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

First I will introduce myself. My name is Terry Patten. I live in San Rafael, California with my wife, Deborah, and my son, Michael. I travel around the USA teaching “Integral Life Practice.” My work is similar to the work of a spiritual teacher or guide, but it is firmly grounded in rigorous rationality, and appeals to many people who had previously imagined themselves to be agnostic or atheistic. I work as a spiritual guide for people firmly grounded in modern rationality who are also transcending the limits of secular perspectives. Thus, I can be called a “cleric” in a sense.

Integral Life Practice involves self-discipline and self-cultivation of (1) Mind, (2) Body, (3) Spirit, (4) Shadow, and (5) Ethics. Thus, I teach people (1) To grow in their capacity to take perspectives; (As I teach it, this includes learning to take the perspectives of others, to take perspectives on one’s own way of taking perspectives, and to take perspectives on the commonalities and differences of the perspectives of self and other and all, and to take perspectives on how one is doing all of that.) (2) Exercise and hygiene of both the gross physical body and the subtle energy body; (3) How to meditate and pray in relation to the transcendent and immanent spiritual ground of being; (4) How to deepen their psychological growth and self-understanding, and (5) How to cultivate awareness and care and embody them in their actions.

My work is grounded in the Integral philosophical theory articulated by many people, most primarily the well-known American philosopher, Ken Wilber, whose work is widely read all over the world (in nearly 30 languages.) I teach with Wilber’s Integral Institute in Colorado and I am currently co-authoring a book with Wilber about Integral Life Practice.

One thing I value about Integral theory is that it is remarkably successful in creating a rigorously-reasoned context of understanding in which many secular rationalists are coming to respect and appreciate spirituality. It can

function as a rational bridge leading beyond secular materialism to a spirituality that honors all traditions. It also functions as a *language* (or, to use a computer term, *an operating system*) that enables sincere and aware spiritual practitioners to frame their understandings in a way that facilitates communication between them, even if they come from diverse and apparently incompatible paths. In addition, it facilitates rigor and clarity in discussions about spirituality – ultimately focusing attention on the *living or practicing* of spirituality instead of staying forever preoccupied with *ideas about it*.

Integral theory is based on the fundamental insight that all atoms, plants, animals, human beings, societies, systems, and planets appear and evolve through stages of increasing complexity and consciousness. It unites and validates both *interior* (or subjective) realities, and *exterior* (or objective) realities, and the different ways we see and understand how this is expressed in *individuals* and *collectives*. It contradicts points of view that attempt to *reduce* reality to any of its fundamental aspects by excluding others (like secular materialistic “flatland”.) Integral theory expresses a new perspective that goes beyond the thinking that characterizes traditional, modern and postmodern perspectives, and yet it honors and can resonate with the values and truths of them all. It also sees that *every point of view (or perspective) is correct in some key respect, and also partial in important ways too*. Another key implication is that our capacity to take perspectives evolves (and can fall into pathological distortions) both in individuals and in groups. Most importantly, Integral theory sees all perspectives and realities in a framework that honors the spiritual reality that is their essence, no matter how sophisticated or simple.

It is not my purpose to explain Integral theory in this letter, but I hope the simple summary in the paragraph above conveys a general sense of it. Please understand, I do not claim that Integral theory embodies a higher truth than the greatest spiritual understanding of the past as embodied in our greatest mystics, such as Persia’s own Molavi (AKA Rumi) and Hafez. As a matter of fact, their words and spirits are important sources of inspiration to my practice and that of my students. We are aspiring, in a fully postmodern way, towards the great illumination embodied by such precious awakened beings. It is just that we now live in a much more complex world. Integral theory’s unique contribution is to account more adequately for that world’s complex multidimensionality, without losing sight of its spiritual context. I believe

this contribution is increasingly crucial in the midst of the constantly proliferating complexity of our contemporary world in crisis.

In the last twenty years, many people are beginning to achieve a new level of complexity in their awareness, including the ability to hold more paradox, such as the truths of both science and religion. We also refer to this as “Integral.” This level of awareness naturally stands free of the zero-sum divisiveness that characterize all previous structures of awareness, traditional, modern, and postmodern. To the best of my knowledge perhaps 2% of the population of the US and Europe is just beginning to spontaneously emerge into this Integral awareness. Far fewer have matured in it. And even fewer are self-aware and responsible for that awareness.

It seems clear to me that Integral awareness and thought, and authentic spiritual practice are appearing among some Iranians. This is rare and important.

My work has been devoted to clarifying Integral practice and serving individuals who want to cultivate their total development, including especially their spiritual growth and understanding. Although I have always voted and contributed money to support the most sane voices in US politics and government, my work and identity have been primarily spiritual, cultural, intellectual, interpersonal and organizational rather than political.

However, two months ago, I suddenly got a very strong feeling that I needed to travel and connect to Integral leaders and thinkers in the Islamic world. Very soon I realized I wanted to go to Iran. This was puzzling, because I haven't been a special student of Persian language, politics, culture, or religion. At first I didn't understand why this was something *I* should be doing. My best sense now is that it might be to come to sit together in prayer with people in Iran and to seek out people capable of a profound sacred conversation, and to forge alliances among sincere people with world-centric integral awareness.

I come intending to serve. I know my whole delegation comes, as I do, with the hope of building bridges of friendship, mutual understanding, and alliance with Iranian citizens. I personally am especially interested in meeting spiritually illuminated people with a capacity for nuanced and complex meta-perspectives. I hope to pray or meditate together, and to build a shared base of spiritual intimacy for serving higher orders of understanding

and cooperation, particularly between America and Iran. Of course it is most critical that we prevent acts of war, but I want to set my sights much higher.

To come to the point: I hope you find what I have said here intriguing. I will be most grateful for anything that you can do to facilitate the success of my mission in coming to your country. Can you introduce me to others who would understand what I am saying and share my interest in an Integral dialog?

May God bless you and your great nation and venerable spiritual tradition. May God also bless the benefit to the world that I hope will emerge from our meeting.

With deep respect, and in service,
Terry Patten

PS: I have arranged for the translation into Farsi of a number of documents that I would like to share with interested people. They are listed below.

#1 and #2 offer short summaries of the two most fundamental concepts of Integral theory. #3 is a poetic and summary statement about three forms of spirituality I practice and teach. #4 is a prophetic declaration about the urgency of our time by the spiritual teacher under whom I studied intensively from the ages of 22 to 37.

1. *Integral Sustainability 101* by Barrett Brown: A brief introduction to the four quadrants of Integral theory and the use of the quadrants for sustainable development initiatives as used by the United Nations Development Programme. (UNDP)
2. *How Consciousness Develops Adequate Complexity to Deal with a Complex World: The Subject-Object Theory of Robert Kegan*: A brief summary of the “orders of consciousness” observed by the renowned Harvard developmental psychologist that helps provide a more specific sense of how consciousness evolves through stages and suggests what Integral consciousness means. This essay is a composite of writings in three Harvard PhD dissertations by Kegan’s students, Berger, Hasegawa, and Hammerman.
3. *The Three Faces of Spirit* by Terry Patten. In this essay I evoke the three fundamental perspectives through which human beings can be related to the Ultimate, or Spirit, or God: 3rd person *contemplation*, 2nd

person *prayer* (or *communion*), and 1st person *meditation*, and the richness of including them all.

4. *Not-Two is Peace* by Adi Da Samraj. Here are 4 chapters from a book by my original spiritual teacher. Here, he speaks prophetically, pointing out a series of insights: a) that recent genetic evidence proves that all human beings are literally a single family, b) that technology and population have turned all war into genocide, c) that all points of view are inherently partial and thus worthy of surrendering, and d) that we are each responsible for the health of our whole world. He proposes that we “leave our flags at the door” of a new kind of forum and form a global cooperative order.