Nonviolence as Ethical Spirituality: The Case of the Dalai Lama

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Abstract

The Dalai Lama is a political and spiritual leader who, like Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., before him, has voiced strong opposition to violence and oppression while also calling for resistance to injustice. Unlike Gandhi and King, the Dalai Lama has not been on site with his people to protest oppression. In a unique move necessitated by exile from Tibet, he has taken to the world stage to expose the suffering of the Tibetan people while advocating justice, for preservation of Tibetan culture, and for a peaceful solution to the Tibet-China conflict. This paper analyzes the Dalai Lama’s understanding of violence as grounded in afflictive emotions that create suffering both in the spiritual as well as in the political realm. The Dalai Lama’s analysis of “anger-hatred” as a destructive afflictive emotion requiring spiritual attention underwrites his moral argument for nonviolent resistance. This paper argues that the Dalai Lama not merely examines violence as a problem of spiritual affliction but that he addresses peace and nonviolence as an ethic. Rather than seeking public validation in terms of religious particulars, the Dalai Lama presents an ethic that can be universalized, that is benevolent and otherregarding, and that employs the language of normative action guides and rational principles.

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What is a Dalai Lama? As written on his office’s official website, “The Dalai Lamas are believed to be manifestations of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet. Bodhisattvas are believed to be enlightened beings who have postponed their own nirvana and chosen to take rebirth in order to serve humanity.” As a spokesman for the peaceful and compassionate resolution of conflict, he promotes love and compassion on a global scale, and urges all beings to create their own happiness. Contents. The life of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama’s teachings on compassion and happiness. The Dalai Lama’s teachings on Buddhist meditation and concepts. The Dalai Lama’s teachings on ethics and responsibility. The Official Website of The Office of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Nowadays, however, events in one part of the world eventually affect the entire planet. Therefore we have to treat each major local problem as a global concern from the moment it begins. We can no longer invoke the national, racial or ideological barriers that separate us without destructive repercussion. In the context of our new interdependence, considering the interests of others is clearly the best form of self-interest. I view this fact as a source of hope. The Dalai Lama suggests the ethics of an act (deeds. Can you think of some of your actions that do
harm or violence to people's happiness that you consider ethical? Unethical? The Dalai Lama makes a distinction between religion and spirituality. Discussion Questions 1. The aim of spiritual and therefore ethical practice is to transform and perfect the individual's motivation, in the most comprehensive sense. What strikes you about these definitions? Continually ask yourself such questions as. Consider the case of anger. activities and conditions which trigger these afflictive emotions and consider staying away from them until we can build up our inner resources and ability to restrain our thoughts and actions. Next we must recognize the situations.