

The Heart of Nonviolence: A Conversation with the Dalai Lama

Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

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with

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Welcome and Introduction by Provost John Etchemendy

Questions Presented by Dr. Mark Gonnerman, Director of the Aurora Forum

The Aurora Forum at the Heyns Lecture

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Provost John Etchemendy: Good afternoon. Welcome to “The Heart of Nonviolence: A Conversation with the Dalai Lama” at the Aurora Forum at the Heyns Lecture in Memorial Church on the Stanford University campus. I am John Etchemendy, Provost of Stanford, and I’m delighted that all of you could join us here this afternoon. Thank you to Mark Gonnerman, Director of the Aurora Forum, and Scotty McLennan, Dean for Religious Life, for inviting me to introduce Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I’m very honored to do so.

The story of the Dalai Lama’s life is well known to most of you, but it bears repeating for it is a source of inspiration for us all and certainly for our students. The Dalai Lama was born in 1935 in Northeastern Tibet to a family of modest means. At two he was recognized as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and was installed at the capital of Lhasa at the age of four. He assumed political leadership of his country in 1950 and struggled to peacefully resist the Chinese invasion of Tibet. In 1959, he completed his Geshe degree, which is a doctorate in Buddhist metaphysics. That same year he and thousands of others fled Tibet as the Chinese crushed a popular uprising. More than 87,000 people were killed. Since then, His Holiness has lived in Dharamsala in Northern India, the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile.

The Dalai Lama is recognized worldwide as a scholar and a man of peace. He is an eloquent spokesman for better understanding and respect among the world’s many faith traditions. He has made pilgrimages to religious sites world wide to encourage dialogue and open exchange. Many universities and institutions have conferred awards and honorary degrees upon His Holiness in recognition of his writings in Buddhist philosophy and his leadership on behalf of a just world. His Holiness was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980 for constructive and forward-looking proposals for the solution of international conflicts, human rights issues and global environmental problems. He advocates a peaceful solution to conflict based on knowledge, tolerance and mutual

respect. He works tirelessly to further the Tibetan freedom and to preserve for humanity the culture heritage of Tibet. Today we are honored to welcome to Stanford a teacher who knows the inner peace and deep calm, the happiness experienced by those who work in a gentle, selfless and persistent way for humanities highest ideals.

The Aurora Forum and the Roger W. Heyns Lecture in Religion and Society seek to generate public conversations that explore democratic ideas and inspire social hope. Thank you Reverend McLennan for arranging this conversation with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We are honored to be in the presence of a teacher whose respect for human rights and democratic ideas is beyond compare. Please join me in welcoming His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

Rev. Scotty McLennan: Let me say a few words about our plan for the afternoon before we start. I will have a conversation with His Holiness about the nature of nonviolence for about one hour. Followed by that, Dr. Mark Gonnerman, who is the director of the Aurora Forum, will join us to present questions that have been collected from the web page that was set up for this event. There are a number of questions which he will select and present to the Dalai Lama and perhaps engage us, the two of us in a bit of conversation as well. Let me begin then, Your Holiness, with a question about your receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize for your work in nonviolence and ask you the simple question, why should one be nonviolent?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Violence is destruction. Nonviolence, I think, is construction. I think by nature we love the constructive work of creation and growing. Consider a flower. From the Buddhist viewpoint, a flower has no consciousness, but, as a living thing, when we see a flower growing we feel happy. If a flower is destroyed we feel unhappy, as if by nature. Furthermore, we are part of nature and also within nature. We are part of a living organism. Since I think that in the beginning we were a type of monkey, I think we were very much related to the trees and vegetation. So still, even if we live in a big house of concrete and iron, we still love small flowers and green things. Even though they are sometimes artificial. But real ones are better [laughter]. So we feel close. Even I think between the artificial flower and real flower, we love the real flower more. I think that's our nature. Therefore, we love living things. So the protection of living things is, I think, nonviolence. The destruction of living things is violence.

Rev. McLennan: But part of our human nature is both hatred, if you will, as much as love. It's violence, as much as nonviolence, is it not? We have a fight-or-flight instinct that's natural to us. It seems that to talk about human nature is of necessity to talk about two natures.

H. H. the Dalai Lama: True, violence or hatred are also part of our life. But look from the beginning of our life: I think love, compassion, and affection are something like the basis of our life. Aggressiveness and hatred may be useful in defense of our life. Life based on this is a positive thing. So violence or hatred, which is supposedly different, protects that. On the other hand, if in our life hatred is as important as affection—and I think they almost dominate our lives equally—then I don't think we need to worry about population growth. If some people are killed, it is balanced. Then we don't need any sort of worry or concern about human population growth. Then, I think, the welfare of humanity is simpler, as I see it. So, in spite of killing or violence, the dominant thing in human society is still human affection, a sense of community, which is very much based on positive emotions. So of course I think the real source of violence is hatred. So

hatred is part of our life, part of our mind. Sometimes, it may help. But although powerful negative emotions like hatred and anger may be a natural part of our mind, one characteristic of these negative emotions is that when they dominate our mind they have a tendency to obscure our vision of reality.

Rev. McLennan: The problem it seems to me—as somebody who's also committed to nonviolence and considers myself a pacifist—is that I'm often asked, aren't there circumstances under which violence is not only appropriate, but really the right way to react? For example, the classic question about self-defense. Would you not defend a member of your own family when violently attacked? Would you not defend your family or friends or innocents beyond your family? Or what if your nation is attacked? Why wouldn't it be appropriate under those circumstances to use a limited form of violence to repel that attack?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Now, first, the definition of violence or nonviolence cannot be made on the basis of the surface appearance or action alone. The real demarcation of nonviolence or violence includes an action's motivation. In other words, I think any action that is motivated by a sense of concern and compassion is essentially nonviolent. For example, teachers or parents, generally speaking, of course there are bad teachers and bad parents [laughter]...But, generally speaking the mother is very important to the child.

Once I received a letter from a young person who had to defend himself from his mother. So he does not understand the expression that the mother is so important. So that kind of mother is actually a bad mother. So in that letter the boy shows very much appreciation for the father. So only the father is taking care of him, not the mother. Of course there are also some bad fathers [laughter]....

Generally speaking, parents may sometimes use harsh words or sometimes even disciplinary actions out of concern for the child. I also received disciplinary action when I was very young. My cousin read the prayer book daily. One day I crawled over the text that my cousin was using and messed up all the pages. So he beat me. I remember that. Since then, I have a little hatred towards that person [laughter].

So an action out of a sense of concern is actually nonviolent. On the other hand, if you want to deceive someone, you may exploit that. Say you want to cheat them. Then, with that motivation, you use some nice words, too much praise, a smile—not a genuine smile, but a little smile—then perhaps some gift, or put some check in their pocket...So these actions are essentially violence.

So, within this context, one can understand that even in the case of an example like the protection of one's own family members, or the protection of a particular principle that you cherish, if an individual is perpetuating a certain action, then in order to counter that person's action, to provide a way of checking it so that you can help the individual not indulge in that behavior in the future, one can take very strong countermeasures. This is certainly not only permissible but that is the right thing to do.

So, in a deeper sense, a nonviolent or compassionate action may actually look a little harsh, forceful.

Rev. McLennan: But it strikes me that your example of your cousin and his response, his violent, angry response, which you say still lingers with you—and, having read your autobiography, I know you cited that story as one that is still very powerful for you— it seems that violence breeds violence, hatred breeds hatred even if it's done with that positive motivation. What is the response that you would have to the fact that this still lingers for you? Even though you say that was done out of a relative's real concern and love for you?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Now, I can take another approach that I mentioned this morning. Generally speaking, if we examine the nature of the human psyche, we find emotions like anger and hostility on the one side, and another group of emotions like attachment on the other side. And they have their natural roles to play. The attachment family of emotions is there to help us seek the conditions that we need for our health and well-being. The family of emotions that is part of hostility and anger and hatred are mechanisms which enable us to repel those forces that obstruct and threaten us. So we can see that naturally they do have a role to play. Now, however, the problem is that these afflictive emotions have a tendency to obscure the actual vision of reality. So they tend to react in a way that is inappropriate to the given situation. So when you look from that wider perspective, then, while recognizing they have a natural role to play, you will be able to be aware of the excesses of these kind of mechanisms.

Once you are aware of the excesses that they can lead to, one is able to recognize that a reaction to a situation out of these very natural mechanisms tends to create vicious cycles. Anger or hatred may serve a temporary purpose of removing certain obstructions, but because it reacts in a very exaggerated manner, it creates more chain reactions. So once you recognize that, you might be able to look for ways of fulfilling the same role without resorting to these negative emotions. For example, one can imagine where one can repel the obstructive conditions and bring together positive conditions by relying more on affection and compassion, tempered with wisdom and understanding. The advantage of that is, that while you'll be able to fulfill your aspirations there will be no negative side effects.

Rev. McLennan: If we move this to the international arena....In my own tradition and the Christian tradition, there have been three historic responses to attack and to trying to deal with the reality of violence in the international realm. One has been crusade, to respond to or even to initiate action against a so-called evildoer. That does not get a lot of support these days amongst Christian theologians. But a second position has been one of just war. That is, there are circumstances—tragic as they may be—when we must respond violently out of love to reestablish the right order for the nation and the world. The third response has been one of pacifism, one of our peace churches within Christianity, certainly one that Martin Luther King, Jr. supported, often traced back to Gandhi and his work. But if you can help me for a moment with the just war tradition: Are there conditions under which you would say that there is such a thing as a just war and we must go to war in order to lovingly restore order?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Generally and intelligently speaking, the violent method is just a method. In order to achieve a genuine, justified goal—something beneficial to a large number of people out of compassionate motivation—limited violence is permissible. So according to that principle, yes, there could be a just war. But today there is a new reality. In ancient times, nation-to-nation or

community-to-community wars were isolated incidents. According to that reality, if your goal is right and your motivation is sincere, then war is mobilized and organized. Today's violence is much more serious than the violence of one individual or a few people. But war could be permissible, or reasonable because it is a destruction of your so-called enemy. Enemy means you often have some contact. So in ancient times—I think of ancient American people—I think their enemy is only within their own community or their own land and not in Asia or some other land where there's no connection. So that means the enemy is your neighbor. So the destruction of your enemy is a victory of your side.

Now today's reality is no longer that. According to the modern, global economy—where the environment is also an issue—the whole world has now become like one family, almost like one body. So some destruction of other part of the world is actually destruction of yourself. So therefore, according to the new reality, this awful destructive violence which we call war, I think is out of date. In the ancient past one could sometime justify war. Now, according to the new reality, I think it is very difficult to justify. So that's my view.

Rev. McLennan: If we look at the claim that was made by our president before we entered the war in Iraq, one of the concerns was the risk of weapons of mass destruction literally destroying the world. Now, there have been a lot of questions raised since then about whether that was a reality. But we know that Iraq had internally used weapons of mass destruction on its own people and we know that there were genuine concerns about what had happened to the weapons that the weapons inspectors had found originally and had ordered destroyed, and there wasn't a full accounting of all of those weapons having been destroyed. So if we have a situation where a country might, indeed, put the whole world at risk, wouldn't it be better to invade that country under a just-war theory and try to stop this kind of destruction of the earth under current conditions?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: In the past century, like the Second World War and the Korean War, it seems to me that although there was immense violence, unimaginable suffering, and destruction, history shows that this war protected or saved Western civilization and democracy. And the Korean War also protected South Korea, at least in the beginning, because of the free economy. So there is more prosperity, then eventually democracy and freedom, including religious freedom—all these freedoms they now enjoy. I recently met a Korean student who disagrees with my view. So I don't know. We need further research. So that's my view.

Then there was the Vietnam War with the same motivation, the same goal: protect South Vietnam. Eventually we see that this was totally wrong, a total failure. So that's what history now shows quite obviously. As for the Iraq War, it is still too early to say if it's right or wrong. I think that in another few years we'll see. Then history will show whether this sort of war is really justified in relation to a broad, good result. So, up to now, I think it's difficult to say. At least the motivation is to bring democracy and freedom, and that goal is the right goal. So now it depends on the attitude of the Iraqi people. So, we'll see. So far there have been lots of casualties, and the number of American casualties is always very clear. The number of Iraqi casualties is not very clear. Of course, I think much more, manyfold, must have been involved. It's all very sad, it's very sad.

Rev. McLennan: As a teacher here at Stanford I often teach Socratically. That is, I will ask a question one way and then I'll switch gears and put myself on the opposite position and ask it the

other way. If I might for a moment ask you from the other side: Isn't any war, even a war that has the sort of justified motivation to start with—and you mentioned several wars that do—ultimately, lead to the same end? That is, doesn't all war ultimately lead to considerable destruction of the civilian population?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Yes.

Rev. McLennan: With continued resentment of many vis-à-vis the enemy?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Absolutely, absolutely.

Rev. McLennan: And doesn't violence continue to breed violence again and again? And isn't the way to interrupt that to simply swear off war forever?

H. H. Dalai Lama: That's why I am saying the concept of war is outdated, out-of-date. I think a real, lasting satisfactory solution through war is very difficult. And, as you mentioned, exactly, I agree. Even though physically, the other is defeated through violence, hatred increases. So I often express or comment that if we mishandle the present problem in Iraq, mainly in Iraq—our countermeasure for terrorism is of course terrorism itself, the worst kind of violence, very bad... Still, the counter method, if we do not handle it properly, then today one bin Laden, next few years, maybe ten bin Ladens, or one hundred bin Ladens, also. So it's very complicated.

And also, I think, we must see this from the viewpoint of a more holistic, wider picture than the present few individual mischievous people who are acting today. We can't blame everything on these people. Their reaction is due to certain deeper forces that are linked with past history. So it's very complicated.

Rev. McLennan: We've been speaking somewhat pragmatically about the realities of today versus more ancient times, when tactically it might make sense to be violent. But what about the heart of nonviolence, the topic on which we're gathered today? That is, the spiritual dimension of nonviolence. From your own tradition, where does nonviolence, from whence does nonviolence come? And how would you defend nonviolence as a Buddhist in contrast perhaps to a Christian or a Hindu or some other tradition? Where does the heart of nonviolence come from, spiritually speaking?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: I think the common thing is compassion. All major religions speak the same word: love, compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, contentment. So these are, I think, the source of or the basis for nonviolence. So this is common. Perhaps the more unique perspective on nonviolence from the Buddhist side would be to emphasize the deep interconnectedness of the interests of different communities that are involved, and not only that but also the interconnectedness of the human health and well-being of the wider nature as a whole. And then particularly emphasize the cause-and-effect relationship of human behavior in relation to other factors. So a Buddhist approach would really underline these connections. So everything is interdependent and relative. That, I think, is a unique concept.

Rev. McLennan: In the Christian tradition, and as I understand the Gandhian approach, there is a sense that God or ultimate reality is within us, or certainly we are understood to be created in the image of God, and the pacifist response is saying you cannot damage or harm the God within, since God is within all. Is there anything like that, from your perspective, to call upon in defense of nonviolence? Is there any sense of a transcendent within or God within, or of us having been made in the image of God?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Given that Buddhism is not a theistic spiritual tradition, there would not be something comparable to this idea of a God within. However, in the Indian Sanskrit tradition that Tibetans have inherited, perhaps one of the important spiritual principles is the recognition of our deep indebtedness to all beings because of the countless lives that we have had. And in fact other sentient beings are referred to as “mother sentient beings” so the term *mother* is used for all other beings. And that instills a powerful kind of spiritual attitude towards others. Similarly one of the most important spiritual principles in Buddhism is to deal with ego-centrism or self-centeredness, and to try to reorient ourselves and have a more other-centered, more altruistic perspective. So this emphasis on recognizing the destructive effects of ego- and self-centeredness has relevance here.

Theistic beliefs are also very powerful according to some of my Muslim friends. They told me, according to their tradition, that not only human beings but also other forms of existence are also a creation of God. Since all these things are created by the same source, the same God, we have to love and respect the existence of all other creatures in the same way we love and respect human beings. These beliefs are, I think, very, very powerful.

Rev. McLennan: Do you think there are certain kinds of nonviolence that are appropriate and inappropriate? For example, do you see any problem with marches and rallies in defense of a certain aim that you may have politically, socially, or religiously?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Such actions, so long as they are nonviolent, depend on your goal. On a few occasions I just express that I want to join them [laughter].

Rev. McLennan: And how about economic boycotts as tools of nonviolent resistance? How about the Montgomery bus boycott that began Martin Luther King, Jr.’s career?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: I think it worked in the case of South Africa. It was of course right. Economic boycotts are complex and need to be judged in the context of particular circumstances. In some cases, of course, when the country as a whole is effected, the situation becomes very, very difficult. Then poor people are the first casualties. Not only the leaders, but also their armies are well fed. Then the people—innocent people—suffer most.

Rev. McLennan: And what about fasting as a nonviolent technique? Gandhi led a lot of his campaigns by fasting himself. If he found that the campaign was becoming violent, he would stop it and fast.

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Yes.

Rev. McLennan: For Cesar Chavez in California, with the United Farm Workers movement, the labor movement, fasting was part of his Catholic Christian spirituality. How do you feel about fasting as a method of nonviolence?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Of course I admire Gandhi's movement. I think he was a very realistic person. His sort of fasting was not just carried by emotion but he would study the situation and calculate the effects of fasting. That's very good. But on the other hand, if it's a situation where you know it's not going to make any impact, then one needs to rethink the method. A few years ago in Delhi, and also New York, a Tibetan decided to fast unto death. I approached them and spoke of moderation. I said I admire and appreciate their determination, but their approach seemed unrealistic. To fast unto death is a kind of suicide and violence. Of course limited fasting like Mahatma Gandhi had done may achieve some bigger goal. And perhaps a limited fast is also good for health [laughter]. So I think Mahatma Gandhi always remained very thin, and this, I think, was due to his fasting. I think some American friends are too big—too much eating.

Rev. McLennan: We need to fast.

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Yes [laughter].

Rev. McLennan: And how about standing in front of tanks, in, say, Tiananmen Square? How about sitting in trees that are to be cut down in a forest in order to save those trees, at risk of dying yourself, as the trees are cut?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: No. Of course again, according to reality, if you just stand...I think in Thailand some monks put their robes around trees and they sit with the tree to protect it. If that works, then these things are a really effective method. But if doesn't care about the life of the person who protests, then they not only fail to achieve the goal but may also lose their life. So I don't know [laughter]. This may be foolish. It may be better to live and carry out more work instead of just die.

Rev. McLennan: So if I'm hearing you correctly, there's an important mix here between a spiritual commitment to nonviolence and the kind of tactics you use. You must be wise, and, to some extent, be concerned about self-preservation as you pursue those tactics. There's no reason to die for the cause if you won't be successful?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: There's an important eighth-century Buddhist ethical teacher who made the point that when you initiate and engage in a certain action—whether you're rejecting something or resisting something or embracing something—you make sure that you do so with awareness of the ramifications of your act. So, for example, the very purpose of engaging in nonviolent protest is to bring about beneficial effects. And if it turns out in a given situation that nonviolent protest is going to have a counter effect, a non-beneficial effect, then one needs to change the tactic. What is important is the aim, not the method itself.

Rev. McLennan: But I assume there would be cases, where in order to achieve a result—for example the salt marches in India or some of the civil rights activities in this country, where you

know you are putting your life at risk—and you go forward, and in fact some of you do die in that situation....

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Yes, generally, even in Buddhism, sacrificing even one's life for the force of a noble goal is accepted.

Rev. McLennan: Are there things that you would like to tell us about your understanding of, say, Gandhi or King or Rosa Parks, who has just died here in this country, Desmond Tutu of South Africa, Mother Teresa or any of these other figures we look to as nonviolent exemplars? Are there things that we should hear from your lips about these other people?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: As I mentioned earlier, I've always admired Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent movement. He was thoroughly educated in England as a lawyer, so I think he acted out of principle and with wisdom. We never met. I also never had the opportunity to meet Martin Luther King. Of course I have met many followers of Mahatma Gandhi. They are called Gandhians—wonderful people, really. Gandhi was very well educated, and, of course, he became the leader of India's freedom movement. But, still, he kept in very close touch with the Indian masses, and I think that's great. I met Martin Luther King's wife on a few occasions. On one occasion I visited her at their home. When I heard stories told by his wife, oh, they were really wonderful. She once told me that at one time King wanted to wear Indian dress, Gandhi's sort of dress. At that point, I think, oh, what use? I said, because I was just trying to imagine how King would look in Gandhi's robes [laughter].

Rev. McLennan: Are there times when you think it's appropriate for nonviolent practitioners to make common cause with the violent? That would be, for example, being a medic in the military, and supporting the military effort, but in a nonviolent way, as a medical assistant, or sheltering soldiers or guerillas in one's home or monastery as they carry out their activities, or providing logistical support like intelligence for killing a despot like Hitler. Are there times when the nonviolent should make common cause with the violent?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: It is very difficult to generalize. One has to be very specific and judge by the circumstances in individual cases and know the nobility or the lack of it of a particular method or movement and so on. This morning we had a discussion of the question on cloning and genetic manipulation. So these kinds of questions are similar. We cannot really generalize. They need to be really looked at on an individual case-by-case basis.

Rev. McLennan: Could we look then specifically at the case of Tibet and look at the fact that a number of commentators have said that it is nonviolence that has allowed the Chinese to succeed in Tibet? And the suffering of the Tibetan people as you have taught us again and again has been so substantial, perhaps one-fifth of the population lost to genocide, and people coming to you saying nonviolence is not the way, nonviolence has set Tibet back, has not helped our country. How do you respond to them?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Firstly, our basic principle is nonviolence. Secondly, in *our case* violence is almost like suicide. And I think most importantly, whether we like it or not, we have to live with our Chinese brothers and sisters side by side. So in order to live happily, friendly, with affection, it

is very, very essential that while we are carrying out this movement we must follow the nonviolent principle so that later we can live happily. If violence is involved there will be bloodshed, and bloodshed means more casualties among the Chinese. And of course Tibetans will also suffer. But more casualties among the Chinese will bring about more resentment from their relatives. And in order to achieve our goal, support from the Chinese community is very essential. So for that reason, also, we must strictly follow a nonviolent way. Some sort of positive impact is already there among the Chinese. Quite a number of Chinese are really showing their sympathy, their concern about Tibet. Quite a number of individuals come to see me and express their apology for what the Chinese have done on Tibet. Quite a number of Chinese are also showing their solidarity with us. This is, I think, very clearly the result of our nonviolent approach. If more bloodshed has taken place, I don't think we would see this amount of support or sympathy from the Chinese community, and I think we may not receive this kind of thing. And so in this particular case I feel the nonviolent method is the best. Also, we are not seeking separation. We are not seeking independence, but a genuine separate autonomy. So from that viewpoint also the nonviolent approach is the best way.

Rev. McLennan: If you look at the results, though, of the guerilla activities from the north of Vietnam during the Vietnam War, along with regular army actions from the north, and ultimately those forces prevailing, against one of the greatest military powers in the world, the United States, and previously against the French, why isn't guerilla warfare and the will of the people to fight an outside oppressing nation a possible way for Tibet?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: First, the population, and, I think, the forest is a little different than the lowland. It is a combination, like Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion. But then, of course, there are many differences among Tibetans outside and also inside Tibet. Even among Tibetans there are some who that say our neighbor only understands the language of violence and not reason. I have had heated discussions with some Tibetan youth who criticize my approach. I said, "Yes, okay, let us think about violence. First, we need weapons, substantial weapons. From where we get them? From where do we buy them? This is not so easy. Just a few guns or a few explosives will not work. We need something much more substantial. And how shall we send them to Tibet? Through Nepal is impossible, and through India is impossible. Through Afghanistan is totally impossible. Through Burma? Impossible. Through jobs with the CIA? That will help [laughter]. So it easy to say *jihad*, but actual implementation is very complicated, very harmful, and too risky." The young Tibetan just cried in response to this. No answer. So, in our case, I truly believe our approach will really bring some positive result, at least among the Chinese public side, not from the government side. The government is still too full of suspicion. They surely believe now, here, we are carrying out some conspiracy with the help of these famous university professors or teachers.

Rev. McLennan: Let me ask you if a nonviolent way then of responding to the current situation would be for you to go back nonviolently to Tibet, to go back to your people. Would your presence in the country be a way to give some hope and give some sense of unity and the hope of maintaining your culture and so on? Why would this not be the next step for you as a nonviolent practitioner?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Yes, in the early '80s, there was real hope. And also, some of my friends from the West suggested that this was the right time to return and carry on work within Tibet. So at that time, of course, we seriously discussed this among ourselves. But then the Tiananmen massacre happened, and while this had nothing to do with the Tibet issue the whole policy became harder and not like the early '80s when things were really hopeful and the leadership really accepted the reality. That kind of attitude disappeared. So now the real question is, of course, is it our main objective not just to return, but to assure the well-being and basic rights of six million Tibetans? So as soon as the Chinese government is ready to look more realistically at the Tibet issue then of course I can some help to carry out this work.

In fact, a few years ago, in one of my official political statements, I express that if the Chinese government really looks closely and realistically at the Tibet issue, I will use my moral authority to dissuade those Tibetans who want separation. We are not saying separation. Because our own interest is in Tibet, a land-locked country, that is materially very backward but culturally very advanced. But we cannot fulfill our stomachs through prayer. So in order to get prosperity we must develop economically. Therefore, as far as our economy is concerned, we will get greater benefit if Tibet remains within the People's Republic of China. That is very clear.

In the meantime, the best guarantee for the preservation of Tibetan culture, spirituality, and the delicate environment is a meaningful autonomy. That means all these fields, about which we are very much concerned and informed about policies regarding these things, should be in the hands of human beings who know these things. So far the problem is that all the decision makers are Chinese, not Tibetan. Nowadays, even the names of places have been given new names. Recently I met one Tibetan who visited Tibet one week ago. He told me it had been fifty years since he left his own native place in central Tibet for study and became a refugee in India. So he knows many Tibetan place names, but when he used these names the local people did not understand because the places had been given new names. Because some Tibetan words are difficult to pronounce in the Chinese language, they created new names that can easily be expressed in Chinese. So there are things directly connected with Tibetan and Tibetan matters that are handled by people who are completely ignorant. So that is a problem. This is the problem, isn't it? So meaningful autonomy is the best guarantee for the preservation of Tibetan culture, Tibetan spirituality, and the ecology of Tibet. You know, the one Chinese movement was to cultivate winter wheat. This is possible in the lowlands, but in the cold highlands it is impossible. But the Chinese carried out a large-scale movement during the Cultural Revolution without a proper study of the local conditions. Often that happens. So there was great damage to the environment. So anyway, we look for meaningful autonomy that has a mutual benefit for the Chinese government as well as the Tibetan. This is the best way to develop stability and unity and prosperity. So I can help. I can serve.

Up to now, the Chinese government's present policy is to spend a lot of money, but once that money is reduced I think development in Tibet will cease. With a lot of buildings and concessions there it may look as if the economy has developed. But in a real sense all this comes from central government money, not from local money. Some my friends describe this to me as the economy of the Chinese, but not the economy of Tibetans. So unless the whole policy becomes more realistic, more open, I don't think that I can serve much.

I often receive two types of messages from Tibet. One message simply expresses that I should come before they die. Another message, although they are eager to see and meet me personally, is that under present circumstances I should not return. In any case, I already told China's government I wanted to see Tibet myself as early as '83. So we made some preparations for my visit around 1985. But then the Chinese government did not respond favorably. Then again, in 1992, I expressed that I wanted to go. Again, there was no positive response. And then now, these days, now that I am getting older, I am asking the Chinese government if I may make a pilgrimage to mainland China not Tibet. But the Chinese government is very, very reluctant to allow me to go there. So, obviously, in the eyes of the Chinese public, the Chinese government has created an image of the Dalai Lama as a semi-devil. They called me anti-people, anti-Buddhist, anti-Tibetan. I don't know. Once they create that kind of image it would be a contradiction to allow that semi-devil to visit China. So it takes time. I think it will take time.

Rev. McLennan: Your Holiness, can I call upon Mark Gonnerman, the director of the Aurora Forum, to engage us in some questions that have come up on the web page to the Aurora Forum?

Dr. Gonnerman: Thank you, Scotty. Good afternoon, President Hennessy, Provost Etchemendy, colleagues, friends and neighbors. Thank you for coming here this afternoon. And I thank you, Scotty for asking the Aurora Forum to join with the Heyns Lecture. I hope this won't be the last time we collaborate in this manner.

Your Holiness, words cannot express our gratitude for the way you remind us day after day, that the most effective teaching is done by example. And we know that your example as a leader of a nonviolent resistance movement outshines and will outlive the pain and suffering that has been inflicted upon you and your people. May you and they dwell in peace.

The Aurora Forum brings together scholars, writers, artists and socially engaged thinkers in a series of open and creative exchanges such as this—exchanges that explore democratic ideals and inspire social hope. Our typical format is to open up to audience discussion after listening in on dialogues such as the one we've just heard. Because it would be difficult to accept questions from the floor here today, we have asked Aurora Forum members to submit questions in writing on our website (and anyone can join the forum by going to our website [auroraforum.org]). So for the remaining portion of our time together here, we will take advantage of this opportunity to extend the conversation by asking questions of the Dalai Lama that have been sent in.

So the first question: Does the steady stream of violent images fed to people young and old through television, movies, and video games, interfere with our ability to understand and embrace nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution? Why are violent images so prevalent in mainstream media? Would the way toward a more peaceful society be for Americans to turn off their TVs [applause]?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: If you switched off the TV completely it would be a quite boring society. [laughter]. I think media people choose first the more shocking sorts of news. So these negative things—murder, violence, starvation, or scandal—become news. So for many years I have been telling media people they should report in a more balanced way. It is very important to inform the public about all these negative things, but it is also important to show the activities of humanity that

come out of compassion, a sense of community, and a sense of responsibility. Right now millions of young children are being taken care of, and also millions of sick people. And millions of old people are being looked after. So these are positive things. If people always look at violence and sad things, then they get the impression that humanity is bad and that aggression or cruelty is the dominant force, the dominant part of our humanity. So this is then conveying the wrong message. So the more balanced way creates a more peaceful, happier, and compassionate society. That is a common goal. That is in everybody's interest. So, in education, you must cultivate from kindergarten dialogue about nonviolence and reconciliation. I think this is very important. Media people, government leaders, members of parliament, and big companies must help young people cultivate basic attitudes towards themselves, towards society, and towards family members. I think all have the common responsibility to bring about a better, happier, more responsible society through work in their own professional fields. So that's what I feel. Enjoy television, but not twenty-four hours a day. Occasionally look at an educational program, then stop and sleep [laughter]. That's better. Watching all night is very bad for your eyes [laughter].

Dr. Gonnerman: Here's another question that has to do with differences in religious worldviews. Is there something inherently and relatively calming about a perspective that places this life within a cosmological and ethical framework that is much broader than that now prevalent in the affluent secular West? In other words, if you have a world view that has a picture of multiple lifetimes, and that one's ethical decision making effects multiple lifetimes, does that create less anxiety in people than the world view that looks at life—the life that we're living now—as just the one life we will be living?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: That I don't know [laughter and applause]. I think, to some people, it is much easier to accept just this life. So there is this one meaningful life, and then it's finished. That is much simpler. On the other hand, one can be serious about this life, but also serious about the next life. So that is more complicated and there is more concern. So there is more anxiety. [laughter]

Dr. Gonnerman: Not the answer I expected to hear [laughter].

H.H. the Dalai Lama: To some people, yes, this life becomes a very difficult one. But still the person may feel some hope about the next life. So there's variety. In the past, different masters at different times taught different sorts of philosophy. So I think it is important to choose or to accept a view according to one's disposition. This I believe.

Dr. Gonnerman: I think, as you know, at the root of the question is the concern that violence erupts out of anxiety and stress, and this ties back to what you were talking about this morning. Someone sent in a question: Is it possible for a Western person living a lay life to cultivate a life without violence without becoming a monk or a nun? If so, what is the method?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Of course there are many monks and nuns who are also caught in the midst of anxiety [laughter]. I think of course anyway that life becomes less complicated if one is a single person. I usually tell this to monks or nuns, whether they are Tibetan or Christian. I usually joke about how becoming a monk, a single person, is less of a burden, so they get less consolation [laughter]. In a family, of course, you are very happy in certain periods. But during certain periods

you may also be very unhappy. So you see, with a family, your mind has many ups and downs. The monks and nuns have a single-person mind that is perhaps is more like that [gestures to show an even line] [laughter]. But I think he [translator Geshe Thupten Jingpa] can tell better. Previously, he was a monk. Now he is no longer a monk. Through his own experience he can answer better [laughter]. I remember after his first child was born he expressed to me that he couldn't get rest or sound sleep because of the disturbance caused by the child. So much depends on one's own mental attitude, irrespective of whether one is a believer or nonbeliever, or, within believers, theistic or non-theistic, or living a celibate monastic life or married. I think much depends on an individual's way of thinking. Anyone can utilize human intelligence in a realistic way. I think peace does not mean not being involved, not thinking, not being serious—that kind of peace is a peace based in doubt. This is not healthy. *Knowing* the consequences or seriousness of a situation is more realistic. If you can solve problems, there is no reason to worry. If there are things you cannot solve, there is no point in worrying. Take the realistic approach. Study. Our experiences, whether painful or happy, are important. Because of this we are living. But, due to small events, say, which on the basis of exhilaration—too much happiness, too much excitement, too much worry—that is an unrealistic approach. Accept the reality. If things are very serious and have very painful sort of consequences, then be cautious and work hard without losing hope, and with more determination you will have more self-confidence. So sometimes challenges are good. No challenge, and your life becomes soft and you will spoil. So the negative thing, if you utilize it properly, is a source of strength. So I think much depends on one's own outlook.

Dr. Gonnerman: Yes, and in response to that, here is a person who writes that when he or she—I don't know who it came from—does not get enough hugs and compassionate touching such as massage or body work, this person feels more easily irritated and emotionally closed. Do you think this is an individual need, a Western need, or a universal need? What about cultures where touch has different boundaries?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: It is human nature, I think, and we can approach the answer to this through medical science. In the weeks after birth, physical touch between the mother and child is a very crucial factor for positive development, particularly the enlargement of the brain. So physical touch is a basic need. We begin our lives through physical contact. So, naturally, physical touch means that you have someone who is mentally and emotionally very close. The mind is invisible, and the only visible thing is physical. So physical touch represents an expression of closeness. So I think that's human nature, universal human nature. And even animals are often are licking each other and engaged in physical touch. I think all mammals are the same, though there may be some exceptions. Otherwise, I think that by nature they seek closeness with each other and touching. I think that's very good. So that's universal not only among human beings but also other mammals. Even I think some butterflies sit together and live together. Not only in the mating time. But if they are too close they will lose their ... What do you call them [laughter]?

Dr. Gonnerman: Their scales [laughter]. Shifting gears a little bit: our last Aurora Forum was entitled "Arbitrary Convictions, Capital Punishment in the United States." So someone sent a question to follow up on that: What does the fact that the United States still has the death penalty tell you about the United States? And what words do you have for people who suffer day after day in America's prisons, including wardens and guards and social workers? And is imprisonment ever helpful to violent human beings?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: For many years groups like Amnesty International have furthered a worldwide movement to abolish the death penalty. I'm one of the signatories. The death sentence creates many sorts of problems, and, in particular cases we need a lot of study, a lot of kinds of investigation. But generally, particularly in the name of punishment, and, in some cases, revenge, I think it's wrong. And if there's no danger of any revival of negative activity by the person who committed a crime, then I think the death sentence is very, very cruel.

I'm not a legal expert, and of course I do respect the rule of each country or each state, but I prefer abolition of the death sentence. Of course, I respect the individual legal systems of different states, including the United States, but, at the same time, my general position is really to prefer a system that abolishes the death penalty.

Then, the conditions in prisons: On a few occasions I have had some discussions and have actually met with prison inmates. Then I hear their experience. Oh, it's really, very sad and awful. And the attitude of prison wardens is often also very cruel. So I really appreciate and admire people who are really taking care of prisoners by visiting them and giving them some meditation instruction or some method that helps them achieve more peace. In India, in New Delhi, in Tihar jail, one superintendent of police, one lady, Kiran Bedi, really transformed the prison culture while she was in charge of the prison. Such things are now happening also in America where my friends are changing the culture within prisons and giving some training to those who are in charge of looking after the prisoners. So I think that is great work. And then I think, basically, that society should not create the impression that prisoners are rejected by the society. I think that's a mistake. That attitude creates prisoners who have no sense of responsibility. But if we create some kind of impression in the minds of these people that even though they are criminals and have done bad things they are still a part of society, then they must improve and change themselves because society is still taking care of them and they are part of the larger society. That gives them new hope and a new way of thinking. It also helps them examine themselves. I think that is important. Next question?

Dr. Gonnerman: I think this could be the last question. You just mentioned an approach that might give people who are in prison a sense of hope. The Aurora Forum was established in large part to bring people like yourself to Stanford University who are translating vision into practical action in order to inspire social hope. As you travel around the world and see a great deal of suffering and pain, you remain hopeful, and optimistic. Where does that hope come from?

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Come from? [He points to his head (laughter).] See things through a wider perspective, and look in a more realistic way. Then I think there are many reasons to be hopeful.

Now in the case of Tibet, for example, it is very difficult if you look only locally. Sometimes you may get a feeling of hopelessness. But I jokingly tell people nowadays that both we and the Chinese government officials have a certain kind of mantra to repeat. My mantra is, "I'm not seeking independence, I'm not seeking independence." This is my mantra. The Chinese government officials' mantra is "Tibet is part of China, Tibet is part of China." That is their mantra [laughter]. So both mantras seem less effective. My mantra has still not yet developed full

conviction in the minds of the Chinese officials. And I think the Chinese mantra has not fully convinced the world at large. Still, does the world consider Tibet as some separate nation? This morning I think you [Rev. McLennan] mentioned an *invasion*. So, therefore, the problem that we are facing is a man-made problem: new guests from China without proper invitation. [laughter] And that guest comes as a liberator, with a gun [laughter]. All Tibetans have to act according to the instruction from the gun. That's the problem. Recently I met some Tibetans who told me that 99% of the Tibetan population resents its liberator. So that's the problem. So the Tibet issue depends on events in China proper.

Now look at China proper: firstly, the People's Republic of China is established on the basis of an authoritarian Marxist system. So look on the global level: the former Soviet Union and East Germany and the rest of the East European countries are no longer authoritarian. At least the communist authoritarian system has diminished. Not by Western force or Western nuclear weapons but because of their own popular peaceful movements. Not only communist authority, but other type of authoritarian rule in Chile, in the Philippines, and in quite a few African states. I think there are many cases where things are now changing. I think with democracy and freedom of speech the whole world is moving toward a more democratic way. So now, China: I think there is one clear example, the Tiananmen sort of event. I think people want clean government that is less corrupt, more honest, and open. That means democracy, of course.

There are drawbacks to democratic systems. But still, comparatively, as we already touched upon today, media people have a very important role. So I tell media people that they should have a long nose like an elephant and should smell everywhere. Whether in the academy or the university or government or politicians or professors, or religious leaders like myself, they should smell everywhere, front and behind and make the reality clear to the public. This is very important. So, in a cruel society, a totalitarian system, there is no freedom and no free information actually. The government fools its own people, and this is very sad. This has to change. Now, through technology like the Internet, the government's actions are also move visible, and this increases government's censorship. In the long run, this creates more difficulties. Therefore, today's China is very much changed compared to thirty years ago. And positive change will continue. Therefore, from a wider perspective, the People's Republic of China is a more free and open society. Then the Tibetan problem, problems with other minorities, and also relations with India and other countries, including the United States, become much easier. Therefore, from a wider perspective, the Tibet problem is hopeful.

So there is some reason to be hopeful. Not blindly hopeful. I don't think wishful thinking. So therefore, my hope comes from here [points to shaved head]. And the less hair, more bright. So that means, more wisdom [laughter and applause].

Dr. Gonnerman: We thank you for bringing your warm heart and your sharp mind to us and teaching us here today and tomorrow. This will conclude the Aurora Forum at the Heyns Lecture and we ask everyone to stay in your pew as the Reverend Scotty McLennan and His Holiness the Dalai Lama depart from Memorial Church through the center aisle.

H. H. the Dalai Lama: Thank you, thank you very much [applause].

The Roger W. Heyns Lectureship in Religion and Community was established in 1994 to honor a long-term member of the Memorial Church congregation at Sunday University Public Worship. Dr. Heyns had been the Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley and Director of the Hewlett Foundation. He was deeply interested in the role of religion in societies.

Founded in January 2003 with the support of Stanford Continuing Studies, the Aurora Forum at Stanford University brings together scholars, writers, artists, and socially engaged thinkers in a series of open and creative exchanges that explore democratic ideals and inspire social hope. This conversation was recorded for later broadcast by KQED Public Radio. Visit auroraforum.org for more information on this and other Aurora Forum programs.

Comments?

We welcome your comments and suggestions via email to auroraforum@stanford.edu or via the feedback form on our website: auroraforum.org.

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