

“But for all its benefits in offering moral guidance and meaning in life, in today’s secular world religion alone is no longer adequate as a basis for ethics. One reason for this is that many people in the world no longer follow any particular religion. Another reason is that, as the peoples of the world become ever more closely interconnected in an age of globalization and in multicultural societies, ethics based in any one religion would only appeal to some of us; it would not be meaningful for all. In the past, when peoples lived in relative isolation from one another — as we Tibetans lived quite happily for many centuries behind our wall of mountains — the fact that groups pursued their own religiously based approaches to ethics posed no difficulties. Today, however, any religion-based answer to the problem of our neglect of inner values can never be universal, and so will be inadequate. What we need today is an approach to ethics which makes no recourse to religion and can be equally acceptable to those with faith and those without: a secular ethics.

This statement may seem strange coming from someone who from a very early age has lived as a monk in robes. Yet I see no contradiction here. My faith enjoins me to strive for the welfare and benefit of all sentient beings, and reaching out beyond my own tradition, to those of other religions and those of none, is entirely in keeping with this.

I am confident that it is both possible and worthwhile to attempt a new secular approach to universal ethics. My confidence comes from my conviction that all of us, all human beings, are basically inclined or disposed toward what we perceive to be good. Whatever we do, we do because we think it will be of some benefit. At the same time, we all appreciate the kindness of others. We are all, by nature, oriented toward the basic human values of love and compassion.”

**The Dalai Lama (Tibetan Buddhist Leader), *Beyond Religion***