

*Ethics for the New Millennium*, by the Dalai Lama

reviewed by [Leo D. Lefebure](#) in the [November 3, 1999](#) issue

St. Augustine told Christian pastors that their most eloquent instruction would lie not in their words but in their lives. The Dalai Lama's new book is an example of that principle still at work. Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, offers his wisdom for handling the problems of life, ranging from personal discontent to global conflicts.

He does not seek to convert others to the distinctive teachings and practices of the Tibetan heritage but presents a series of down-to-earth principles for finding happiness and avoiding suffering—strategies which he hopes will benefit all people, whatever their religious orientation. He values all religions as medicines for human ills, variously appropriate for different persons in different circumstances. As the Dalai Lama himself acknowledges, much of what he presents is close to the wisdom traditions of all the major religions: anger, greed and jealousy cause suffering; generous concern for others brings happiness. Cultivation of the virtues leads to a peaceful mind even in adversity.

Perhaps strangest for many Western readers is the dissolution of the self under Buddhist analysis. This deconstruction of identity, however, leads not to a postmodern nihilism but to a free and resolute commitment to seek happiness through compassion for all beings. Though readers of the Dalai Lama's earlier works will not find much new here, and though many of his recommendations are not fully developed, all seekers of wisdom and happiness can benefit from his reflections and, even more, from the witness of his life.