

An Open letter to Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama

April 22, 2007

The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Via email: ohhdl@dalailama.com

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama

Your Holiness,

We contacted your office six years ago, on August 25, 2001, regarding your support for invasive research on living monkeys' brains at the University of Wisconsin. Your assistant Tenzin Geyche Tethong replied on September 6, that:

His Holiness was not aware that Dr. Kalin was involved in conducting tests on animals that were painful and extremely cruel.

His Holiness has always been against such tests on animals. In fact, when His Holiness offered to make a contribution to a research work by Dr. Paul Ekman on the subject of CULTIVATING EMOTIONAL BALANCE. His Holiness specifically pointed out that the research work should not involve experiments on animals.

We wrote to you again on September 9, 2005, regarding your continuing support of invasive research on living monkeys' brains at the University of Wisconsin and elsewhere but received no reply.

Following your inaugural lecture at *Neuroscience 2005* (Society for Neuroscience) you were asked about experiments on living animals. You said:

It is a difficult question, [as it] is a difficult [duty]. I will answer, as I do, to the question of many Tibetan Buddhists who are not vegetarians. I encourage the minimum use of experiments on animals, the absolute minimum amount of pain. Only perform highly necessary experiments, and as little pain as possible. If it must be done, [if that is your path, it is compassionate] to kill out of necessity, but only with empathy. Hold in you the sense of the compassionate: "I [acknowledge] that I exploit this animal to bring greater benefit to a great number of sentient beings." You must feel the sacrifice, in your heart. It is never made lightly.

Every scientist experimenting on animals claims that their experiments are necessary and inflict the minimum amount of pain. Your statement amounts to a wholesale endorsement of a lucrative industry with a proven track record of animal abuse and lying to the public.

We urge you to think more critically, to be more empathetic, and once again we beseech you to embrace the Buddhist ideals of kindness and compassion and to renounce your support of cruel experiments.

Are monkeys more compassionate than a Buddhist monk?

Please see: Masserman J, Wechkin S, Terris W. 1964. 'Altruistic' behavior in rhesus monkeys. American Journal of Psychiatry vol. 121: 584-5. <http://www.madisonmonkeys.com/masserman.pdf>

See too, the details of the research you are supporting:

Kalin NH, Shelton SE, Davidson RJ. 2004. The role of the central nucleus of the amygdala in mediating fear and anxiety in the primate. J Neurosci. <http://www.jneurosci.org/cgi/content/full/24/24/5506>

Kalin NH, Shelton SE, Davidson RJ, Kelley AE. 2001. The primate amygdala mediates acute fear but not the behavioral and physiological components of anxious temperament. J Neurosci. <http://www.jneurosci.org/cgi/content/full/21/6/2067>

Sincerely,

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