Reflection and Response

3. Voltaire concludes that "although we may set a great value upon happiness, we set a still greater upon reason" (par. 14). But then he pulls back: "there was great madness in preferring reason to happiness. How is this contradiction to be explained? Like all other questions, a great deal may be said about it." What might you have to say about it? Write an exploratory, or "question-driven," essay on the subject. That is, begin with a question rather than a thesis or a position, and draw on your own experience, as well as examples that come to mind and your own musings on the subject. Your first draft should be informal: See where your thoughts take you. After you have written as much as you can in this way, revise, shaping it into an essay that a reader would find pleasing and engaging. Cut the weakest passages and develop the strong ones. Your final essay need not argue a position, but instead should take the reader along on the journey of your quest for understanding.
4. One of the striking things about the Brahmin's confession of ignorance is that today, as in 1759, we lack the answers to the questions that perplex the Brahmin. And yet, this ignorance, and even awareness of this ignorance, does not appear to make everyone as miserable as the Brahmin. Why do you think the Brahmin feels this ignorance so acutely? Why for him is this ignorance incompatible with happiness?

Making Connections

5. In "Illusion" (p. 56), Sissela Bok retells the ancient Greek tale of Lycas and his "deluded bliss." She goes on to show that a number of notable thinkers have found reason to defend, at least to some degree, such deluded happiness as Lycas's. But she ultimately argues for the moral awareness that thinkers as various as Barbara Herman, Iris Murdoch, and Immanuel Kant have (each in their own way) expounded. Reread the section "Ignorance, Self-Deception, and Moral Choice" with care. Use Bok's ideas in this section to reexamine Voltaire's story. What insights or new conclusions do you reach? Write an essay to explain what you've found.
6. In "What Suffering Does" (p. 226), David Brooks writes about the value of suffering, pain, and hardship, which is not quite the same as misery, but is surely related. Would Brooks have anything to say to the Brahmin and the old woman in Voltaire's fable?

The Sources of Happiness

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler

Tenzin Gyatso (born 1935), known as "the Dalai Lama," is the fourteenth in the line of Tibetan spiritual leaders known as Dalai Lamas. He was born Lhamo Dhondup to a family of farmers in northeastern Tibet, but at age two he was recognized as the reincarnation of the thirteenth Dalai Lama and an avatar of the Bodhisattva of Compassion. He was enthroned in 1950 and functioned as the political leader of Tibet until the Chinese invasion of 1954. Since 1959, the Dalai Lama has led a government-in-exile in Dharamsala in northern India.

As the spiritual leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama serves his community as a Buddhist monk and promotes a life of simplicity and compassion through lectures, books, and (increasingly) social media.

The following selection is an excerpt from *The Art of Happiness* by Howard Cutler and the Dalai Lama. Cutler is an American writer and psychiatrist with a particular interest in bringing together Buddhist spiritual practice and Western psychology. The book is based on a series of interviews Cutler conducted with the Dalai Lama in 1993–1994.

Two years ago, a friend of mine had an unexpected windfall. Eighteen months before that time, she had quit her job as a nurse to go to work for two friends who were starting a small health-care company. The company enjoyed meteoric success, and within the eighteen months they were bought out by a large conglomerate for a huge sum. Having gotten in on the ground floor of the company, my friend emerged from the buyout dripping with stock options—enough to be able to retire at the age of thirty-two. I saw her not long ago and asked how she was enjoying her retirement. "Well," she said, "it's great being able to travel and do the things that I've always wanted to do. But," she added, "it's strange; after I got over all the excitement of making all that money, things kinda returned to normal. I mean things are different—I bought a new house and stuff—but overall I don't think I'm much happier than I was before."

Just around the time that my friend was cashing in on her windfall profits, I had another friend of the same age who found out he was HIV positive. We spoke about how he was dealing with his HIV status. "Of course, I was devastated at first," he said. "And it took me almost a year just to come to terms with the fact that I had the virus. But over the past

year things have changed. I seem to get more out of each day than I ever did before, and on a moment-to-moment basis, I feel happier than I ever have. I just seem to appreciate everyday things more, and I'm grateful that so far I haven't developed any severe AIDS symptoms and I can really enjoy the things I have. And even though I'd rather not be HIV positive, I have to admit that in some ways it has transformed my life . . . in positive ways . . ."

"In what ways?" I asked.

"Well, for instance, you know that I've always tended to be a confirmed materialist. But over the past year coming to terms with my mortality has opened up a whole new world. I've started exploring spirituality for the first time in my life, reading a lot of books on the subject and talking to people . . . discovering so many things that I've never even thought about before. It makes me excited about just getting up in the morning, about seeing what the day will bring."

Both these people illustrate the essential point that *happiness is determined more by one's state of mind than by external events*. Success may result in a temporary feeling of elation, or tragedy may send us into a period of depression, but sooner or later our overall level of happiness tends to migrate back to a certain baseline. Psychologists call this process *adaptation*, and we can see how this principle operates in our everyday life; a pay raise, a new car, or recognition from our peers may lift our mood for a while, but we soon return to our customary level of happiness. In the same way, an argument with a friend, a car in the repair shop, or a minor injury may put us in a foul mood, but within a matter of days our spirits rebound.

This tendency isn't limited to trivial, everyday events but persists even under more extreme conditions of triumph or disaster. Researchers surveying Illinois state lottery winners and British pool winners, for instance, found that the initial high eventually wore off and the winners returned to their usual range of moment-to-moment happiness. And other studies have demonstrated that even those who are struck by catastrophic events such as cancer, blindness, or paralysis typically recover their normal or near-normal level of day-to-day happiness after an appropriate adjustment period.

So, if we tend to return to our characteristic baseline level of happiness no matter what our external conditions are, what determines this baseline? And, more important, can it be modified, set at a higher level? Some researchers have recently argued that an individual's characteristic level of happiness or well-being is genetically determined, at least to some degree. Studies such as one that found that identical twins (sharing the same genetic constitution) tend to have very similar levels of well-being—regardless of whether they were raised together or apart—have

led these investigators to postulate a biological set point for happiness, wired into the brain at birth.

But even if genetic makeup plays a role in happiness—and the verdict is still out on how large that role is—there is general agreement among psychologists that no matter what level of happiness we are endowed with by nature, there are steps we can take to work with the "mind factor," to enhance our feelings of happiness. This is because our moment-to-moment happiness is largely determined by our outlook. In fact, whether we are feeling happy or unhappy at any given moment often has very little to do with our absolute conditions but rather, it is a function of *how we perceive our situation, how satisfied we are with what we have.*

The Comparing Mind

What shapes our perception and level of satisfaction? *Our feelings of contentment are strongly influenced by our tendency to compare.* When we compare our current situation to our past and find that we're better off, we feel happy. This happens, for instance, when our income suddenly jumps from $20,000 to $30,000 a year, but it's not the *absolute* amount of income that makes us happy, as we soon find out when we get used to our new income and discover that we won't be happy again unless we're making $40,000 a year. We also look around and compare ourselves to others. No matter how much we make, we tend to be dissatisfied with our income if our neighbor is making more. Professional athletes complain bitterly about annual salaries of $1 million, $2 million, or $3 million, citing the higher salary of a teammate as justification for their unhappiness. This tendency seems to support H. L. Mencken's definition of a wealthy man: one whose income is $100 a year higher than his wife's sister's husband.

So we can see how our feeling of life satisfaction often depends on who we compare ourselves to. Of course, we compare other things besides income. Constant comparison with those who are smarter, more beautiful, or more successful than ourselves also tends to breed envy, frustration, and unhappiness. But we can use this same principle in a positive way; we can *increase* our feeling of life satisfaction by comparing ourselves to those who are less fortunate than us and by reflecting on all the things we have.

Researchers have conducted a number of experiments demonstrating that one's level of life satisfaction can be enhanced simply by shifting one's perspective and contemplating how things could be worse. In one study, women at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee were shown images of the extremely harsh living conditions in Milwaukee at the turn of the century or were asked to visualize and write about going through personal

tragedies such as being burned or disfigured. After completing this exercise, the women were asked to rate the quality of their own lives. The exercise resulted in an increased sense of satisfaction with their lives. In another experiment at the State University of New York at Buffalo, subjects were asked to complete the sentence "I'm glad I'm not a . . ." After five repetitions of this exercise, the subjects experienced a distinct elevation in their feelings of life satisfaction. Another group of subjects was asked by the experimenters to complete the sentence "I wish I were a . . ." This time, the experiment left the subjects feeling more dissatisfied with their lives.

These experiments, which show that we can increase or decrease our sense of life satisfaction by changing our perspective, clearly point to the supremacy of one's mental outlook in living a happy life.

The Dalai Lama explains, "Although it is possible to achieve happiness, happiness is not a simple thing. There are many levels. In Buddhism, for instance, there is a reference to the four factors of fulfillment, or happiness: wealth, worldly satisfaction, spirituality, and enlightenment. Together they embrace the totality of an individual's quest for happiness.

"Let us leave aside for a moment ultimate religious or spiritual aspirations like perfection and enlightenment and deal with joy and happiness as we understand them in an everyday or worldly sense. Within this context, there are certain key elements that we conventionally acknowledge as contributing to joy and happiness. For example, good health is considered to be one of the necessary factors for a happy life. Another factor that we regard as a source of happiness is our material facilities, or the wealth that we accumulate. An additional factor is to have friendship, or companions. We all recognize that in order to enjoy a fulfilled life, we need a circle of friends with whom we can relate emotionally and trust.

"Now, all of these factors are, in fact, sources of happiness. But in order for an individual to be able to fully utilize them towards the goal of enjoying a happy and fulfilled life, *your state of mind is key*. It's crucial. 15

"If we utilize our favorable circumstances, such as our good health or wealth, in positive ways, in helping others, they can be contributory factors in achieving a happier life. And of course we enjoy these things—our material facilities, success, and so on. But without the right mental attitude, without attention to the mental factor, these things have very little impact on our long-term feelings of happiness. For example, if you harbor hateful thoughts or intense anger somewhere deep down within yourself, then it ruins your health; thus it destroys one of the factors. Also, if you are mentally unhappy or frustrated, then physical comfort is not of much help. On the other hand, if you can maintain a calm, peaceful state of mind, then you can be a very happy person even if you

have poor health. Or, even if you have wonderful possessions, when you are in an intense moment of anger or hatred, you feel like throwing them, breaking them. At that moment your possessions mean nothing. Today there are societies that are very developed materially, yet among them there are many people who are not very happy. Just underneath the beautiful surface of affluence there is a kind of mental unrest, leading to frustration, unnecessary quarrels, reliance on drugs or alcohol, and in the worst case, suicide. So there is no guarantee that wealth alone can give you the joy or fulfillment that you are seeking. The same can be said of your friends too. When you are in an intense state of anger or hatred, even a very close friend appears to you as somehow sort of frosty, or cold, distant, and quite annoying.

"All of this indicates the tremendous influence that the mental state, the mind factor, has on our experience of daily life. Naturally, then, we have to take that factor very seriously.

"So leaving aside the perspective of spiritual practice, even in worldly terms, in terms of our enjoying a happy day-to-day existence, the greater the level of calmness of our mind, the greater our peace of mind, the greater our ability to enjoy a happy and joyful life."

Free yoga classes are offered each week in Manhattan's Bryant Park. Even today, yoga (with roots in ancient Hinduism and Buddhism) remains a popular form of personal reflection and spiritual meditation. What methods do you use to reflect on your state of mind? [Not in original text.]

David M Grossman/The Image Works

The Dalai Lama paused for a moment as if to let that idea settle, then added, "I should mention that when we speak of a calm state of mind or peace of mind, we shouldn't confuse that with a totally insensitive, apathetic state of mind. Having a calm or peaceful state of mind doesn't mean being totally spaced out or completely empty. Peace of mind or a calm state of mind is rooted in affection and compassion. There is a very high level of sensitivity and feeling there."

Summarizing, he said, "As long as there is a lack of the inner discipline that brings calmness of mind, no matter what external facilities or conditions you have, they will never give you the feeling of joy and happiness that you are seeking. On the other hand, if you possess this inner quality, a calmness of mind, a degree of stability within, then even if you lack various external facilities that you would normally consider necessary for happiness, it is still possible to live a happy and joyful life."

Inner Contentment

Crossing the hotel parking lot on my way to meet with the Dalai Lama one afternoon, I stopped to admire a brand-new Toyota Land Cruiser, the type of car I had been wanting for a long time. Still thinking of that car as I began my session, I asked, "Sometimes it seems that our whole culture, Western culture, is based on material acquisition; we're surrounded, bombarded, with ads for the latest things to buy, the latest car and so on. It's difficult not to be influenced by that. There are so many things we want, things we desire. It never seems to stop. Can you speak a bit about desire?"

"I think there are two kinds of desire," the Dalai Lama replied. "Certain desires are positive. A desire for happiness. It's absolutely right. The desire for peace. The desire for a more harmonious world, a friendlier world. Certain desires are very useful.

"But at some point, desires can become unreasonable. That usually leads to trouble. Now, for example, sometimes I visit supermarkets. I really love to see supermarkets, because I can see so many beautiful things. So, when I look at all these different articles, I develop a feeling of desire, and my initial impulse might be, 'Oh, I want this; I want that.' Then, the second thought that arises, I ask myself, 'Oh, do I really need this?' The answer is usually no. If you follow after that first desire, that initial impulse, then very soon your pockets will empty. However, the other level of desire, based on one's essential needs of food, clothing, and shelter, is something more reasonable.

"Sometimes, whether a desire is excessive or negative depends on the circumstances or society in which you live. For example, if you live in a prosperous society where a car is required to help you manage in your daily life, then of course there's nothing wrong in desiring a car. But if you live in a poor village in India where you can manage quite well without a car but you still desire one, even if you have the money to buy it, it can ultimately bring trouble. It can create an uncomfortable feeling among your neighbors and so on. Or, if you're living in a more prosperous society and have a car but keep wanting more expensive cars, that leads to the same kind of problems."

"But," I argued, "I can't see how wanting or buying a more expensive car leads to problems for an individual, as long as he or she can afford it. Having a more expensive car than your neighbors might be a problem for them—they might be jealous and so on—but having a new car would give you, yourself, a feeling of satisfaction and enjoyment."

The Dalai Lama shook his head and replied firmly, "No. . . . Self-satisfaction alone cannot determine if a desire or action is positive or negative. A murderer may have a feeling of satisfaction at the time he is committing the murder, but that doesn't justify the act. All the nonvirtuous actions—lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, and so on—are committed by people who may be feeling a sense of satisfaction at the time. The demarcation between a positive and a negative desire or action is not whether it gives you an immediate feeling of satisfaction but whether it ultimately results in positive or negative consequences. For example, in the case of wanting more expensive possessions, if that is based on a mental attitude that just wants more and more, then eventually you'll reach a limit of what you can get; you'll come up against reality. And when you reach that limit, then you'll lose all hope, sink down into depression, and so on. That's one danger inherent in that type of desire.

"So I think that this kind of excessive desire leads to greed—an exaggerated form of desire, based on overexpectation. And when you reflect upon the excesses of greed, you'll find that it leads an individual to a feeling of frustration, disappointment, a lot of confusion, and a lot of problems. When it comes to dealing with greed, one thing that is quite characteristic is that although it arrives by the desire to obtain something, it is not satisfied by obtaining. Therefore, it becomes sort of limitless, sort of bottomless, and that leads to trouble. One interesting thing about greed is that although the underlying motive is to seek satisfaction, the irony is that even after obtaining the object of your desire, you are still not satisfied. *The true antidote of greed is contentment.* If you have a strong sense of contentment, it doesn't matter whether you obtain the object or not; either way, you are still content."

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So, how can we achieve inner contentment? There are two methods. One method is to obtain everything that we want and desire—all the money, houses, and cars; the perfect mate; and the perfect body. The Dalai Lama has already pointed out the disadvantage of this approach; if our wants and desires remain unchecked, sooner or later we will run up against something that we want but can't have. The second, and more reliable, method is not to have what we want but rather to want and appreciate what we have.

The other night, I was watching a television interview with Christopher Reeve, the actor who was thrown from a horse in 1994 and suffered a spinal cord injury that left him completely paralyzed from the neck down, requiring a mechanical ventilator even to breathe. When questioned by the interviewer about how he dealt with the depression resulting from his disability, Reeve revealed that he had experienced a brief period of complete despair while in the intensive care unit of the hospital. He went on to say, however, that these feelings of despair passed relatively quickly, and he now sincerely considered himself to be a "lucky guy." He cited the blessings of a loving wife and children but also spoke gratefully about the rapid advances of modern medicine (which he estimates will find a cure for spinal cord injury within the next decade), stating that if he had been hurt just a few years earlier, he probably would have died from his injuries. While describing the process of adjusting to his paralysis, Reeve said that while his feelings of despair resolved rather quickly, at first he was still troubled by intermittent pangs of jealousy that could be triggered by another's innocent passing remark such as, "I'm just gonna run upstairs and get something." In learning to deal with these feelings, he said, "I realized that the only way to go through life is to look at your assets, to see what you can still do; in my case, fortunately I didn't have any brain injury, so I still have a mind I can use." Focusing on his resources in this manner, Reeve has elected to use his mind to increase awareness and educate the public about spinal cord injury, to help others, and has plans to continue speaking as well as to write and direct films.

Inner Worth

We've seen how working on our mental outlook is a more effective means of achieving happiness than seeking it through external sources such as wealth, position, or even physical health. Another internal source of happiness, closely linked with an inner feeling of contentment, is a sense of self-worth. In describing the most reliable basis for developing that sense of self-worth, the Dalai Lama explained:

"Now in my case, for instance, suppose I had no depth of human feeling, no capacity for easily creating good friends. Without that, when I lost my own country, when my political authority in Tibet came to an end, becoming a refugee would have been very difficult. While I was in Tibet, because of the way the political system was set up, there was a certain degree of respect given to the office of the Dalai Lama and people related to me accordingly, regardless of whether they had true affection towards me or not. But if that was the only basis of people's relation towards me, then when I lost my country, it would have been extremely difficult. But there is another source of worth and dignity from which you can relate to other fellow human beings. *You can relate to them because you are still a human being, within the human community. You share that bond. And that human bond is enough to give rise to a sense of worth and dignity. That bond can become a source of consolation in the event that you lose everything else.*"

The Dalai Lama stopped for a moment to take a sip of tea, then shaking his head he added, "Unfortunately, when you read history, you'll find cases of emperors or kings in the past who lost their status due to some political upheaval and were forced to leave the country, but the story afterwards wasn't that positive for them. I think without that feeling of affection and connection with other fellow human beings, life becomes very hard.

"Generally speaking, you can have two different types of individuals. On the one hand, you can have a wealthy, successful person, surrounded by relatives and so on. If that person's source of dignity and sense of worth is only material, then so long as his fortune remains, maybe that person can sustain a sense of security. But the moment the fortune wanes, the person will suffer because there is no other refuge. On the other hand, you can have another person enjoying similar economic status and financial success, but at the same time, that person is warm and affectionate and has a feeling of compassion. Because that person has another source of worth, another source that gives him or her a sense of dignity, another anchor, there is less chance of that person's becoming depressed if his or her fortune happens to disappear. Through this type of reasoning you can see the very practical value of human warmth and affection in developing an inner sense of worth."

Happiness versus Pleasure

Several months after the Dalai Lama's talks in Arizona, I visited him at his home in Dharamsala. It was a particularly hot and humid July afternoon, and I arrived at his home drenched in sweat after only a short hike

from the village. Coming from a dry climate, I found the humidity to be almost unbearable that day, and I wasn't in the best of moods as we sat down to begin our conversation. He, on the other hand, seemed to be in great spirits. Shortly into our conversation, we turned to the topic of pleasure. At one point in the discussion, he made a crucial observation:

"Now sometimes people confuse happiness with pleasure. For example, not long ago I was speaking to an Indian audience at Rajpur. I mentioned that the purpose of life was happiness, so one member of the audience said that Rajneesh teaches that our happiest moment comes during sexual activity, so through sex one can become the happiest," the Dalai Lama laughed heartily. "He wanted to know what I thought of that idea. I answered that from my point of view, the highest happiness is when one reaches the stage of Liberation, at which there is no more suffering. That's genuine, lasting happiness. True happiness relates more to the mind and heart. Happiness that depends mainly on physical pleasure is unstable; one day it's there, the next day it may not be."

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On the surface, it seemed like a fairly obvious observation; of course, happiness and pleasure were two different things. And yet, we human beings are often quite adept at confusing the two. Not long after I returned home, during a therapy session with a patient, I was to have a concrete demonstration of just how powerful that simple realization can be.

Heather was a young single professional working as a counselor in the Phoenix area. Although she enjoyed her job working with troubled youth, for some time she had become increasingly dissatisfied with living in that area. She often complained about the growing population, the traffic, and the oppressive heat in the summer. She had been offered a job in a beautiful small town in the mountains. In fact, she had visited that town many times and had always dreamed of moving there. It was perfect. The only problem was the fact that the job she was offered involved an adult clientele. For weeks, she had been struggling with the decision whether to accept the new job. She just couldn't make up her mind. She tried making up a list of pros and cons, but the list was annoyingly even.

"The 'right choice' is often the difficult one — the one that involves some sacrifice of our pleasure."

She explained, "I know I wouldn't enjoy the work as much as my job here, but that would be more than compensated for by the pure pleasure of living in that town! I really love it there. Just being there makes me feel good. And I'm so sick of the heat here. I just don't know what to do."

Her mention of the term "pleasure" reminded me of the Dalai Lama's words, and, probing a bit, I asked, "Do you think that moving there would bring you greater happiness or greater pleasure?"

She paused for a moment, uncertain what to make of the question. Finally she answered, "I don't know . . . You know, I think it would bring me more pleasure than happiness . . . Ultimately, I don't think I'd really be happy working with that clientele. I really *do* get a lot of satisfaction working with the kids at my job. . . ."

Simply reframing her dilemma in terms of "Will it bring me happiness?" seemed to provide a certain clarity. Suddenly it became much easier to make her decision. She decided to remain in Phoenix. Of course, she still complained about the summer heat. But, having made the conscious decision to remain there on the basis of what she felt would ultimately make her happier, somehow made the heat more bearable.

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Every day we are faced with numerous decisions and choices. And try as we may, we often don't choose the thing that we know is "good for us." Part of this is related to the fact that the "right choice" is often the difficult one—the one that involves some sacrifice of our pleasure.

In every century, men and women have struggled with trying to define the proper role that pleasure should play in their lives—a legion of philosophers, theologists, and psychologists, all exploring our relationship with pleasure. In the third century BC, Epicurus based his system of ethics on the bold assertion that "pleasure is the beginning and end of the blessed life." But even Epicurus acknowledged the importance of common sense and moderation, recognizing that unbridled devotion to sensual pleasures could sometimes lead to pain instead. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud° was busy formulating his own theories about pleasure. According to Freud, the fundamental motivating force for the entire psychic apparatus was the wish to relieve the tension caused by unfulfilled instinctual drives; in other words, our underlying motive is to seek pleasure. In the twentieth century, many researchers have chosen to sidestep more philosophical speculations, and, instead, a host of neuroanatomists have taken to poking around the brain's hypothalamus and limbic regions with electrodes, searching for the spot that produces pleasure when electrically stimulated.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939): Austrian psychotherapist and the founder of psychoanalysis.

None of us really need dead Greek philosophers, nineteenth-century psychoanalysts, or twentieth-century scientists to help us understand pleasure. We know it when we feel it. We know it in the touch or smile of a loved one, in the luxury of a hot bath on a cold rainy afternoon, in the beauty of a sunset. But many of us also know pleasure in the frenetic rhapsody of a cocaine rush, the ecstasy of a heroin high, the revelry of an alcohol buzz, the bliss of unrestrained sexual excess, the exhilaration of a winning streak in Las Vegas. These are also very real pleasures—pleasures that many in our society must come to terms with.

Although there are no easy solutions to avoiding these destructive 45
pleasures, fortunately we have a place to begin: the simple reminder that what we are seeking in life is happiness. As the Dalai Lama points out, that is an unmistakable fact. If we approach our choices in life keeping that in mind, it is easier to give up the things that are ultimately harmful to us, even if those things bring us momentary pleasure. The reason why it is usually so difficult to "Just say no!" is found in the word "no"; that approach is associated with a sense of rejecting something, of giving something up, of denying ourselves.

But there is a better approach: framing any decision we face by asking ourselves, "Will it bring me happiness?" That simple question can be a powerful tool in helping us skillfully conduct all areas of our lives, not just in the decision whether to indulge in drugs or that third piece of banana cream pie. It puts a new slant on things. Approaching our daily decisions and choices with this question in mind shifts the focus from what we are denying ourselves to what we are seeking—ultimate happiness. A kind of happiness, as defined by the Dalai Lama, that is stable and persistent. A state of happiness that remains, despite life's ups and downs and normal fluctuations of mood, as part of the very matrix of our being. With this perspective, it's easier to make the "right decision" because we are acting to give ourselves something, not denying or withholding something from ourselves—an attitude of moving toward rather than moving away, an attitude of embracing life rather than rejecting it. This underlying sense of moving toward happiness can have a very profound effect; it makes us more receptive, more open, to the joy of living.

Understanding the Text

1. How does the Dalai Lama explain the relationship between greed and contentment? Does this offer any insight into the author's desire for a new car?
2. *Happiness* and *pleasure* seem to be key terms for the Dalai Lama. How does the author explain the difference between these two things?
3. What steps does the Dalai Lama say we must take if we want to be happy?

Reflection and Response

4. In this conversation between the Dalai Lama and a psychiatrist, the Dalai Lama sometimes distinguishes his work from that of psychology. Do you also see these two professions as having different goals and different means to achieve them?
5. The Dalai Lama lists several factors that may contribute to happiness, such as good health, wealth, and friendship. But he emphasizes that "for an individual to be able to fully utilize them towards the goal of enjoying a happy and fulfilled life, *your state of mind is key*. It's crucial" (par. 15). Identify a time in your life when your external circumstances and your inner state of mind were at odds or out of agreement. (Perhaps the situation was bad but you felt fine; or perhaps the situation seemed fine but for some reason you felt bad.) In a short essay, tell the story, explaining both the circumstances and your feelings in some detail. Then analyze the story, drawing on the Dalai Lama's comments about the importance of "state of mind." Finally, address these questions: Can a person's mental state be detached from external circumstances? If so, how does a person do it? Is this kind of detachment necessarily temporary? Or can a person detach from external circumstances consistently and even permanently?

Making Connections

6. According to the Dalai Lama, bringing about discipline in our minds is the key to opening the heart (par. 20). Choose one or two of the following texts from Chapter 4, "Can We Make Ourselves Happier?": Rubin's "July: Buy Some Happiness," Hill's "Living With Less. A Lot Less," and Jose, Lim, and Bryant's "Does Savoring Increase Happiness?" Do the author's claims or views offer practical ways to "bring about discipline" and "open our hearts"? How so?
7. Sonia Lyubomirsky analyzes relationships between bodily pleasure and happiness. Assess her claims in light of the Dalai Lama's thoughts about this subject and decide for yourself: Does pursuit of bodily satisfaction or performance have anything to do with real happiness?
8. In "Ah, But the Breezes . . ." (p. 261), Noelle Oxenhandler writes, "In Buddhism, the *but* of suffering — the old man, the sick man, the corpse — is met by the *but* of the path" (par. xx). How might the words of the Dalai Lama help us to understand this quotation and the three paragraphs that follow more fully? And conversely, how might Oxenhandler's essay — with its narrative about loss and recovery — help us understand the Dalai Lama's words more deeply?