

2008-02-11 God And Buddhism

Sat, 8/1 10:19PM • 44:55

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

buddhism, people, god, gods, buddhist, brahma, buddha, called, theistic, notion, world, realms, idea, mahayana buddhism, universe, question, reborn, dharma, belong, religion

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So those of you who are here last week, I know that there was a question about the relationship of Buddhism to God. And the person who asked is not here.

There you are. Okay.

And I said tonight that I will talk a little bit about the topic. But I thought that before I talked about Buddhism and the issue of God, that perhaps you would help me along a little bit by letting me know why this interest you? Because I know Jeff is interested because he asked the question, but last week, I said one of the reasons I don't talk about this topic much I didn't think people would be interested. And then I asked how many people are interested in this overwhelming majority raise their hands with enthusiasm. I was a bit surprised so I'd be curious to find out before I get my talk, why is this such an interesting topic? So we have

if I gave a talk on Buddhism and monetary policy that would be okay to

be of interest.

Anything I have to say okay.

In the back there.

Personally I find myself just within my family and friends

They're coming from a theological, you know,

place where there is the belief in God. And that's I come from a tradition that comes, that approaches that issue as well. It comes from that theological position as well. So I've been married, practicing for about a year and I find myself benefiting greatly from it. And I often find myself unable to explain the benefit or the position of mindfulness and Buddhism and so anything you can say that might help to those conversations. Yeah, and those conversations that can get a bit tense and awkward and so any, any comments around that go

because you're vo in Buddhism is kind of left to Theo's theological, idealistic theistic fold. It's kind of feels kind of people feel like you're kind of doing something you shouldn't be doing. I want to I was a TA at Stanford for an undergraduate class in Buddhism. And there was this freshman from Kentucky. And

she's looked pretty innocent to the world. And I mentioned in the discussion that from Buddhist point of view, you can be a Buddhist and Christian at the same time, and our eyes went wide. Like this is a radical idea. Because because people think that Buddhism and you know, people think that the West with Christianity and Judaism, Islam, you kinda have to belong to one and not the others. This idea of belonging to religion is so centrally important. And Buddhism doesn't have that kind of idea of exclusivity. And from Buddhist point of view, it's fine to belong to different religions. It's almost as if Buddhism is a different domain of life. Then the kind of domain of life that people are belonging to Christianity and Judaism. So you don't really care too much if your dentist is Republican or Democrat, right? If it's a really good dentist. So if it's a really good path to liberation, you don't care. You know, as a Buddhist there was a Christian doesn't really matter from a Buddhist point of view. So, a couple of more, why do you want to hear about this topic of God?

My interest is that I've had friends from different

Buddhist, I don't know sect is quite the right word, but

like someone was into Amitabha

Buddhism, if that's kind of the Buddhism, but it's, you know, that was a god. And then we've read or people have told stories of Buddha that had powers when he was flying through the air and seeing into people's minds and that sounds godlike, and I guess I would be interested, just a little clarity that, you know, we're coming from one little slice of Buddhism where it doesn't seem to be a God at all. But Buddhism is kind of like Christianity. There's all these different flavors and I've just for clarity sake, it'd be interesting to understand where is Buddha more godlike or not godlike. And within? Okay, thank you. Let's see, in our household, if you were to ask, if any of us believed in God, the 50 somethings would say yes. And the 20 somethings would declare they were atheist, largely. And I don't know but I suspect that the, the apparent polarities that you might fill this this territory in And that there's actually much more that connects us and Seems on the face.

So and then you might ask and your family the 20 year, the 50 year olds and the 20 year olds, what function does believing in God or believing in atheism have? What's the function? behind you?

I almost had some hesitate to say this. Last week when you asked the question, if we wanted here, it was a minority one, I think who didn't? I actually I've been showing up on Monday night for so long. I heard you get this once and see me.

I don't remember.

Yeah, he did. I think we were probably over in the friends, you know, on those room, offloads, okay. And

didn't seem to me that either your heart was in it or anybody else was it just always seemed to me and irrelevant. topic. I've been coming up. I've been coming here for so long for Mondays. I just show up anyway.

But he almost didn't come today.

Monday so I'm in town going

I think I remember you're saying well, the fourth thing Jim has never ask a Buddhist one Do you believe in God? Could you believe there's no God? Three Do you not believe in God and four, do you? Not not? So

it seemed to me that for all of us, God was totally irrelevant to Buddhism. But go for it.

Okay, well, fiddle kind of encouragement

So,

so the topic is the relationship of Buddhism to God, God notion of God, the idea of God. And it's a difficult topic to talk about for a variety of reasons. One is the primary primary one is that it's so hard to decide what God is. There are so many different definitions or ideas about God, that sometimes I wish humanity would just drop the word and come up with some other word or some other definition because when people use the word God, many times people assume that they're talking about the same thing. When they're very radically different, all the different ideas that people have. And down down through history there have been like certainly in the West in Christianity and Judaism Islam holds a whole history of the development and evolution of the concept of God that historians can write and the natural history of God, the ideas of it. And you have gods in Hinduism and most religions have a gods, most people in the world believe in God. But what do they believe? And I don't know, you know, there's, I've read a little bit with this topic, it seems to me that might be two very broad definitions of God. One is that God that has some qualities of being a person, some independent, some kind of some kind of looks a little bit like human beings kind of anthro centric, anthropocentric kind of view of God, with a God as being a being that has intelligence, being that has powers, being that is able to perceive and see what's going on. And being able to intentionally create things create the world for us. And the Old Testament thicker really shows that this being in the Old Testament has a lot of emotions as well. And so you can get this emotional life of God, which is very interesting to write about, because it was so rich, back then. And then you have this whole kind of what I would call maybe the anthropocentric idea, the idea that the being and then there's all kinds of ideas about God, where God is not a being, but rather more like a principal or, or a pervasive reality, or a force that exists somehow in nature in reality in the universe. And so, you know, commonly that's not common, but there's some people have defined God as love, the force of love. Some people define God as the interconnectedness between people. It's an or between everything. It's somehow in the nature of interconnectedness you find God. And, you know, I'm not so conversant about all these different principles are forces that people will attribute to God. But there are many. And so when you talk about what's the relationship of Buddhism to God, you talking about the anthropocentric God or the idea of a God as a principle that permeates the universe? That's an open question. In terms of most people, however, when they talk about God, without any further explanation, I think that they, especially if God has a capital G, they have the idea of a creator, Creator God, as someone who has created this universe that we're in and so, does Buddhism have anything comparable to a creator god and it does not. However, Buddhism does have the answer the ages definitely from the very beginning. The notion of Gods in the plural in the Indian languages are called Devers. Usually. Some other words for them as well. And these and there's a pantheon of gods Pantheon, up there. There's many, many layers 26 or 33 different layers of heavens. Each of these heavens has a different kind of, kind of kinds of gods that live in them. The closer the heavenly realms are to the world, our Earth, the coarser the gods are, the shorter their lifetimes. And the higher up you go further away, more ethereal, they get more trouble hearing you okay? Okay. The higher up you go in these realms, the more ethereal and formless these gods become. And one of the aspects of this pantheon of gods is that they have lifetimes, they don't live forever. And so it's pretty long. The shortest

lifespan Of God of gods is 9 million years. And that's short. And it goes on from there, you know, vast eons of time, their lifetimes, whoever they was also the idea that

that one day for God one day and night for this one be somebody God's is equivalent to 50 human years. So somehow, I don't know how that does with does with time, but they have a kind of different time that they live in. The, so there So, there is a notion of Gods in Buddhism. And the role of relationship with these gods in plural to Buddhism is that they get generally depicted as supporters of the Buddha, supporters of Buddhism. And sometimes like, in the time of the Buddha, they would be depicted as coming down and worshipping the Buddha coming naturally. Questions and in some ways, some ways being spiritually on a lower plane than the Buddha. So whereas rather we sometimes think of Gods as being a higher spiritual plane, in Buddhism, even though they're higher cosmologically in terms of spiritual development, they're much lower than enlightened people. And, and sometimes in Buddhism, there's a little bit of poking fun. The glitter would poke a little bit fun at the notion of these gods or he's got some of these gods a little bit arrogant, or some of the gods were a little bit foolish. And so these little stories about these gods, kind of like the Zeus Pantheon, Greek pantheon of gods, you know, they're kind of some of their mischievous, all kinds of different things. So in that sense, even though the gods are kind of supportive of Buddhism, they're not really that centrally important for the enterprise. For the practice of Buddhist practice, then you know, you can easily do a Buddhist practice in Buddhist teaching. Without any reference to these gods, from the earliest time in Buddhism, but you can't say there's no Gods because are these gods? Now, none of these gods in the Buddhist understanding, were our Creator gods that you know the Creator God was Buddhism doesn't believe that there was a being that created the universe. Rather, Buddhism believes that the universe has no beginning that the beginning of the universe, or actually, technically what the Buddha said, the beginning of the universe cannot be found, cannot be discerned. It's more or less understood to be the Buddhist you can find the beginning just going on forever. Like you can't miss to find the end of space, I suppose. And that's okay to say that kinda as the physicist I know there's some problems but anyway, there's no beginning what what Don't know what Buddha says you can't know the beginning of. And so and but it certainly doesn't posit that as a being that started at all, some God. However, at the time of the Buddha, there was some people who believed that there was such a god. And this God was called Brahma. And Rama is one of the more ethereal planes of God realms. And there's a lot of Gods called Brahma, but some of them are more supreme than others. And the Buddha folk will have fun at Brahma various times. And one of the ways he poked fun at it was to explain how Brahma came to the misunderstanding that he created the universe. And the misunderstanding occurred this way. There's no beginning to time to creation however, the Buddha idea of cosmology is that kind of like the yo yo theory of the cosmos, that there is periods of expansion and contraction of the universe. And, and during periods of intense contraction, all the living beings end up going and kind of hanging out for a while and in the spirit, the highest of the formless realms is that there are real realms, but there's no bodies just these kind of disembodied spirits. And then as the world expands, again it takes form again, become solid again the kind of whatever way universes takes solidity. Then after the Big Bang, then the these beings from this formless beings begin being, they die up there, and they get reborn in these coarser realms, first to get foreign gods lower gods and lower gods and finally they get born on the earth and so forth. So after one of these periods of contraction the Big Bang happened. And it was time for these beings is formless beings to die get reborn good with lower, the first one died

and it was reborn in Brahmas heaven as the first one we explored is Brahma. And he's reborn in this Brahma heaven. It's already all made with Ramos palace. It's a wonderful place, but it was nobody else there. And so he after a while, he got lonely, and a thought occurred to him. Boy, it'd be nice if there were some other people here, similar gods. Coincidentally, at that moment, another one of those formless Gods died and was reborn in his entourage. And he thought he took credit. I created that and

it turns out there Brahma because he was the first one there, he had really good karma. So his lifespan was really, really long, much longer than ones that followed him. So they died, you know, after a while, and he's still there. So like, he must be pretty, you know, all powerful and eternal and all these wonderful things. And then some of those who died in his room ended up as humans, and some of those as humans could remember their past lives. And so they remember being and BrahmMos and entourage, were Brahma said, I'm eternal, I created the universe. And therefore, people believe that this Brahma created the universe to resolve the misunderstanding.

So, you know, who knows? You know, maybe he you know,

so,

no, but more. And the Buddha what I didn't really address too much the issue of theism or God or Creator God. They did say Simple things like if there was a God who created this world, this universe, he must have been a really bad guy. Because there's so much suffering and if he was are omnipotent and omniscient, and this is what he ended up creating so much suffering in this world, he was really almost been a bad person. So it was kind of like saying that can't can't really be that couldn't have been a god. And certainly we find in theology, theological circles that tremendous exploration try to deal with this issue of evil and suffering in this world and how could it just God allow this to happen and why it's necessary. It's a big quandary for I think people who believe in God

another time within the kind of the early Buddhist scriptures when they're poking fun at Brahma. Brahma parents, they were a little bit puffed up at times, thought that he was he would go around saying I The all knowing one, the great one, the greatest, the most superior, the most wonderful, I'm just the best. But one day a monk, Buddhist monk went up to see Brahma to ask him a very profound question in these Buddhist terms is profound. The question was, where do you find the end of earth, water, air and fire, earth, water, air and fire are the four elements which makes up the experiential world, this world that we live in. So where do you get come to the end of the world? And so, he was up and asked Brahma, and Brahma announces, oh, I'm the most wonderful, the most special and the most all knowing and the greatest and kind of the monk asks, oh, well, where's the end of the four elements? And BrahmAs responses. I'm the most wonderful and the best and the greatest and they'll know everything. Amongst says but whereas end of the four elements, oh I am the best and the greatest and the most all knowing and you know, and then the guests again. Then Brahma says come with me. He takes him aside whispers to look all these other gods in my entourage they believe that I'm all knowing and powerful and strong. And I don't know the answer to your question. So give me a break, leave me alone. And what are you a Buddhist? Fuck, you shouldn't be coming to me You should go to your teacher, the Buddha. He's the one that he's the one who really knows the answer to that question. I don't know that. So

so the simple answer to the question of, you know, God bless you, God brought God to Buddhism is that there are gods in the traditional, traditional teachings of Buddhism. Those gods have very little importance in terms of practice.

They,

and they, whether they are kind of in the background, and the clearly there is no Creator God still belief in a Creator God in Buddhism. So in that sense, you know, there's none. So then the question is aside from the idea of, you know, kind of being as a God, or is there something in Buddhism that points to a kind of principle or force or from pervasive kind of reality in the in the, in the world, which, you know,

qualifies God as comfortable to God. And in doing kind of inter religious dialogue, there have been Buddhists who have suggested that the number of Buddhist teachings or principles are comparable to the idea of God. So, one of the most common one is the idea of dharma. The Dharma is saying, This guy is a saint, you know, seen as God. And so that begs the question what is Dharma, the Dharma is seen as the principle of causality of cause As an effect of interrelated interrelatedness interconnectedness that Buddhism puts a big value on. And so in this Dharma, this principle is this. This is patterns of cause and effect, unfold in a particular law for ways, particular patterns that are so ultimate, and nurses have so much sense of intelligence to it in a kind of way, that maybe some Buddhists like to say, well, that's, that's God. So that's one common place to see people try to make a comparison. And, you know, there's a kind of a real need for sometimes to try to find a comparison to common ground, because some people hold to the notion of God in a very, very strong ways, very opinionated ways, where it's actually dangerous not to believe God when you're around them. So there are some countries in the world where there are Buddhists, side by side with other people of other religions, where the other religions are actually quite Almost violent towards people who they think are atheistic. And if Buddhism sometimes has a reputation of being a theistic religion or non theistic religion, it's, you know, there's a lot of animosity that can exist. I traveled to one of these countries and, and I was reluctant to tell people that I was Buddhist, because they would tell things, they would say to me things like, you know, atheists should be killed. And so, you know, oh, in Buddhism as atheists, they would say, Okay, I'm not gonna let people know that so. So it's sometimes it helps in certain countries to find some common ground where you can say, Oh, yes, the Dharma is the same thing as God. And so we kind of have that belief as well. In the time of the Buddha, there were people who wanted to be reborn as Brahma as a Brahma and the Brahma heavens. And they would ask the Buddha, how do we get reborn up there? What's the technique, what's the way and he will tell them that there was a path The one of the characteristics of the Brahma realms inhabited heavenly realms called the Brahma realms. The Brahmas. People live constantly, is their states of mind are characterized as,

as being as living in what's called the Brahma viharas. And the Brahma vihara 's that are called the divine abodes. So their mind is suffused and pervaded with either loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity. So it's very powerful states of mind. Imagine just from the hearts who's boundlessly, full of love and all this. So when people ask the Buddha, how do I get reborn these realms, he would teach them the path the practice of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. So do this meditation practice in love. And if you develop these meditation practices to a high degree, so that you're all the all the forces of Defilement all the forces Have clinging and attachment in your heart fall away even temporarily. Because the love is so powerful. And there's nothing else that would characterize your your heart, your mind, state of your mind, but love, then when you die, you get reborn in that realm. So the Buddha taught them that practice. And this is how you how you do it. And it might have been a little bit of a kind of a both both in Buddhist point of view, maybe something that was actually possible, but also a little kind of redirecting. Rather than directing them towards focusing on God. They started he focused them in this lifetime here becoming like a god, having love that's like, these great gods, and then it becomes kind of irrelevant. Or it's kind of like the people who taught inner city gang kids, barber violin kids Akito in order to teach them how to be better killers. And by the time they finish going through, went through a course of Aikido Last thing they wanted to do was kill anybody. So, you know, it's like redirecting people to do this practice meditation practice, if you're interested in being reborn as a god, by the time you finished meditation course, doesn't really matter anymore. And so what we find isn't here in the West, some people who will talk about Buddhist divinity, the idea or divinity, but the idea of a divine in Buddhism. And usually when I've heard people talk about the idea of the Divine in Buddhism, they're talking about these four states of love, loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Because these four are, they're called divine because they belong to the gods of these heavenly realms, and we kind of

suffused ourselves in these states. Were kind of kind of incomparable states to those gods, it's kind of divine. So there there's kind of an overlap with with the theistic kind of ideas because we're talking about something divine in Buddhism. not seem to be ultimate liberation is ultimate. So the, from a Buddhist point of view, you don't want to stop there. You want to kind of be able to go beyond even, you know, infinite love. Even though it might seem pretty good, partly because if you get reborn as if you have infinite love, you'll get reborn in these Brahma realms, and you'll live there for a lot of millions of years. But sooner or later, you'll die and come back. And so if you don't want to come back, or you want to kind of be free of the cycles of attachment, you want to step out of it. So we can understand that also here in this this law, this life, that as wonderful as divine love might feel. It's still a conditioned phenomena. It's still a phenomena that belongs to the conditioned, impermanent world, and it has some instability to it. And if you want to discover something that's stable, and lasting, you want to discover liberation, not love. So

I think in the West, if you look at the history of the notion of God, certainly, you know, God with the Creator God, back 3000 years ago, whenever it began, the, you know, it was a person of being. And so there's been always ever since that, I think, in the West, very strong tendency to associate the word God with some kind of being. And it's, you know, the idea that we're made in God's image or God's made in our image is, is, you know, exists there. So the idea of this guy with a white beard or whatever, you know, some idea of a being and in that sense, religion in theistic circles, tends to be either call it God centered theory of centered theocentric, or you call it anthropocentric in the, in the fact that the being kind of resembles a human being. But it's kind of as a person. And so a lot of Western religion or theistic religions. A big part of it is having a relationship with this thing called God. And so, you know, it's like a relationship you have with a person. And so some people have, you know, talk to God, God talks back. Some people love God, God loves them. Some people are quite devotion to devoted to God. Part of the great advantage of having a spirituality that involves your relationship to someone is that it's often much more captivating for a concentration than our breath. And so people can have this tremendous love or commitment or put so much yearning and hope and the notion of God that they can really get focused on it. The Buddhism in distinction to that, perhaps be called not theocentric but Dharma Dharma dharmic centric, Dharma centric, where there is a reality centric perhaps, where rather than positing, you know, a creator created the world or a being that has Omniscient and Omnipresent and omnipotent Buddhism, the center of Buddhism is reality is principles of reality, and the principles of cause and effect. So, what does it focus on the natural order the natural cause and effect patterns of life, and that's where that's what's at the center. Human beings are the center, a god is on center, which is the center is the pattern of life, the pattern, what's called the Dharma and the relationship Buddhist have is to the Dharma for the Dharma is not so personal. It's not like a being. So it's it can't have the same kind of personal give and take relationship as you can with a being. And, and so it's a very different notion of spirituality, which some people find very strange, because for many people in the West who think that spirituality is about having a relationship with something outside of yourself, some a greater power, some greater force of God, in the day you wouldn't do that wouldn't have that as your spirit spirituality. It seems very strange. And when I started off last week was maybe the reason why Jeff asked the question was I distinguished between the beginning of the Bible Genesis, where God is the beginning of it all, versus the beginning of kind of the beginning of the Buddhist scriptures were the emphasis put on the mind and they all starts with the mind, the mind So. So Buddhism, in a sense, has a very different beginning point to practice. It's not focusing externally to a God, but it's focusing in internally to the forces in our own mind, that keep us in, in bondage to suffering, or allow us to liberate. Then what happens when you start getting orders? Okay. So, early Buddhism, that IMC is kind of part of the there's this notion I've been telling you now about Gods. And the Buddha was clearly understood, understood to be a human being, but not a not an ordinary human being a radically kind of radically, kind of radically transformed human being. So much so that you can almost not call him a human but

he wasn't a god. You know, just that it was called an liberated human being and enlightened human being. If you're interested, one day, I can give you a talk. It's on Buddha In contrast to theology, you know the nature of the Buddha, nature of a Buddha. And,

and, but there's nothing exceptional you know that you know that required him to be supernatural or superhuman. as often happens in religious traditions, the Buddha is the founder of Buddhism, slowly over the centuries, got his stature became more and more in grandest, he became you know, eventually he became deified. Some Buddhists wouldn't say that for some practical points of view, he became like a god and transcend, transcend it kind of eternal being, who was Omni omniscient and omnipotent, and, and all kinds of qualities that we expect of a god and there are Buddhists, then who will prey to these notions of God. So as I mentioned, the Amitabha Buddha, the Buddha, the Influence light, which is a big part of Mahayana Buddhism. There's the there is a Medicine Buddha, which is very important in some schools in Mahayana Buddhism. And this more theistic idea of God belongs mostly in Mahayana Buddhism. It's a big part of many, many forms of Mahayana Buddhism. And there's a whole pantheon of these gods. There's also a pantheon of Bodhisattvas, which are not quite Buddhists. And they also are celestial. They're called installer circles. Scholarly circles are called celestial Bodhisattvas. And for practical points of view, they're kind of like these more than angels. They're more like, you know, kind of gods who are floating around in heavenly realms, they intervene and we pray to them and, you know, seems like gods. The early the Theravada tradition or the early Buddhist tradition, doesn't believe in this kinds of Buddhists. They see as being later myths that arose and developed over time. But it's there and certainly Buddhist traditions and very, very big Buddhist traditions. And because religions change and develop over time, it's not shouldn't be a surprise for you to find out that there are some people who took these ideas of theistic kind of Buddhists, and then at some point to redefine them. And so you find in Japan, for example, the city of Amida, or Amitabha, Buddha, some people reinterpret him that it's not really a person. It's really the, the, the, the fundamental nature of reality or the Dharma, of liberated reality. And so it's the same as Nirvana, kind of for the mind or the mind or the reality that's in touch with Nirvana. So they kind of try to kind of bring it back to the kind of similar ideas we had in early Buddhism, but it has this kind of kind of this devotional slant because even though they do that, it's still kind of has the remnants of a person being and so people kind of worship Pray to this principle, this idea of this reality that's there. And one of the schools of kind of theistic schools of Buddhism, that's very popular in Japan. And was the first form Buddhism to really take root here in the west of America over 100 years ago, is called Pure Land Buddhism. And there's a beautiful temple in Lewis street in Palo Alto that belongs to the Japanese pureline sect. And it's a pretty interesting tradition of Buddhism, it's has both have some pretty sophisticated analysis interpretation or what this Amida Buddha is. But one of the notions of this, this particular theistic form of Buddhism is the distinction between self power and other power and so it's in so Power is a practice of liberation you do on your own other powers of practice liberation, that in other power does for you. And so immediate, immediate Buddha is just other power. And so the belief in pure land Buddhism is that, through history, we've kind of ended up in the degenerate age, where none of us can have any hope to practice anymore. Do personal practice on your own. It was okay in time of the Buddha, but that's a long time as long gone. And so we can't do it for ourselves, we can do is we can rely on this Amida Buddha, the grace of Amida Buddha, and if you pray to Him, certain kind of way, express your faith and belief in him, then he will grant you His grace, and you will somehow be saved. And so it's kind of they've done away with a works, practice and replace it with grace. Have you heard this before somewhere? salvation by grace, not by works. So it's kind Very similar to Lutheranism, and so in Protestant religions, the way it is in Japan,

but when in zen, they so they call themselves other power based in zen, they called self power, because then you're sitting there doing it yourself. But as people kind of get into these two practices in

deep way, what they say is the notion of self and other falls away. And so at some point, these you know, Zen and pure land Buddhism, the distinction between them falls away because it's kind of like two sides of the same coin or two kind of temporary distinctions that are used to find your way. Sometimes you say light is a wave, sometimes it's a particle. And so which is it? And some point just, you're just happy to lights on. So at some point, this distinction between self power and other power falls away because you're so happy that you're free.

So

that's probably enough. So I saw some people leave. So I thought I would either bore people irritate them in the rest of your polite. Hang in here. So, said, Okay, so a little bit of sense of history and how it all fits. And I'm not really qualified to talk about much about God, kind of theistic kind of terms that I haven't studied that much. And what I had it what I have studied about it is mostly anthropological. And what it how anthropologists have tried to make sense of it. Because, you know, no one wants to anthropologist to analyze their own belief in God. But when you see all the different ways that people believe in God through through history and all over the world, it begs all kinds of anthropological questions. What are they doing and what's the function and how does how does it function and you know, What's going on? So then I'll end where I was actually thinking of beginning and I forgot. I wanted to say that the notion of God, the belief in God, for certain is the focus for some people's deepest source of meaning, deepest source of value, deepest source of purpose in their life, and deepest, deepest source of hope. And so for some people, the, the understanding of God is so important that they'd rather die than give up the notion of God. So it's so centrally important. And for some people, it's only through coming to some kind of notion of God, that they cope with some of the greatest tragedies that befall a person in life. People who don't, you know, go through the list of terrible tragedies that people befall people and people struggle with very difficult to Mental strategy difficulty crisis's in their lives. And somehow or other. It's the notion of God something that God that actually lifts them out of that they're kind of provide a solution to, to their tremendous, painful, challenging times. So I need to talk about God, I think it needs to be done with respect. And I don't know if I've done that well enough tonight. Because of the tremendous importance this notion has in people's lives. I don't want to belittle that belittle that importance, and almost like the need that people have. But I think that it's very, I think the message of Buddhism is a very much needed one I feel in our society, because sometimes, the theistic ideas of religion seem to be dominant. And, and especially in a time and place like nowadays, religion is such a big part of political culture, really discussion, popular culture, I think that Buddhism has a very important role to stand up and say, Look, we're religion to, and include us at the table. And here, there's other ideas, that he has other notions of what centrally important religion and, you know, you know, we Let's share the table together. And let's be in dialogue, rather than thinking that you can have a monopoly and just assume that this is the way it should be for everybody. So in that sense, I think Buddhism has an important role in society. So I did talk over my allotted time. Maybe I did that's to be safe. So there couldn't be any questions. But if you if you do have questions or comments about this, you're welcome to come up here. Talk to me now. And happy to try to answer Thank you.