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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

I feel a little bit shy. But the topic that I've somehow decided to think to talk about tonight because it's not something I know much about. And you'll find out soon enough. And it's one that I've been shy to talk about, you know, it hasn't really occurred to me much to talk about this particular topic, because it hasn't really hadn't been a really interest me that much. But somehow it's surface to top of things now interests me to talk about little bit, partly because I feel like it might be interesting for a lot of people here to who are grappling with this theme, to hear a little bit the Buddhist perspective on it. And I can certainly offer that I can offer the Buddhist perspective, what the Buddha had to say or the Buddhist teachings had to say, on this topic. My opinion, I don't know if it really counts for much. I don't know I don't know if we'll come out this evening

versus building

I thought I talked about God. What do you think of that is a topic? Good. It's a good topic. You haven't heard me say anything yet.

So

one of the one of the little catalysts for talking about this was yesterday, I was driving up highway five of the Central Valley. And there was not accept a bumper sticker because it's much bigger than bumper sticker, but it said, Jesus is God read the Bible. And so I asked my friend, you know, what's that about? Jesus is God. And, and she reminded me about the, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. And, and I asked her, what's that about? And she's, you know, she said a little bit about it. And as What's that about? And she was raised as a Catholic, went to Catholic school and, you know, a little bit, you know, studied, studied a lot of these things, these ideas. And she finally said, Well, you know, it's a mystery. It's a mystery. So then you don't say can say anything. It's a mystery. So,

and I, myself am not particularly interested in this topic, because in the sense that I don't really think it has much to do with Dharma practice. Some people feel is very intimately connected to the Dharma practice, but I don't feel like it has much to do with it. So why would I want to talk about it? And people are welcome to be theists and believe in God or not, not doesn't really matter. And actually, I find a certain delight to know that someone has come here to work come to Buddhism, mindfulness practice or meditation practice, and have found that it helps them or reconnects them in a healthy way or helps them with their, maybe perhaps their native religion, that somehow, by practicing mindfulness, it help brings in this gives them the skills, the abilities, the self knowledge that helps them connect to their sense, intuitive sense, or whatever, of God or whatever it might be. I'm delighted by that idea.

And in thinking about the topic of God, I'm realizing there's so many different definitions or ideas of what God is that anybody who wants to talk about it in any broad in non dogmatic ways, just say, this is how you know, you know, isn't going to be in trouble very quickly. Because there's some because of all the different concepts and ideas and But one of the one of the common ideas about God, please, historically is that God is a Creator God. And God created the universe, the world, humanity. And we find in ancient India, this idea existed also in certain corners of Indian religion. And the Buddha didn't really address this to directly this topic. But occasionally he mentioned the idea of a creator god, he never talked about it in supportive or interested terms. We did talk about how sometimes the idea of a Creator God can lend itself to problems, wrong views, and one of them would be any kind of idea of pre determinism. If there's if everything's pre determined by God, if that you know, by a Creator God, then it could lend itself to some people saying, well, I could doesn't matter what I do then it's all predetermined and I can just, you know, if I want to go rob the bank That's, that's pretty determined. I can't help myself. And then someone else would say, well, it's predetermined that I put you in jail. The other so he didn't specifically address that kind of theistic idea, Creator God, he also addressed the issue of, of the fact there's evil and suffering in the world. And if you have a predetermine situation that God is predetermined, how things are going to turn out, which is one of the ideas they had in ancient India, then the Buddha concluded that then it's a wicked God and evil god, because why would pre-determined Why would he or she have it? suffering? There are little hints, you know, the Buddha addressed this issue. But however, it seemed like the Buddha more often than not wanting to it or have this issue, wanting to make fun of it, the idea of a creator god and now he's not a not a Jewish and Christian creator god that he's criticizing making fun of because he didn't know that one particular One. And, and you know, there are other ones, you know. So there's a lot of them in the world, he just happened to pick up the one that he was familiar with, in India of his time. And he explained that it was a misunderstanding, the whole thing of the Creator God. And so you want to hear the story of why it was a misunderstanding. In Buddhist cosmology, it was cosmology is kind of interesting. And if you, if you like, like reading, Greek mythology and the cosmology of the Greeks, that was contemporary time with the Buddha, you get a sense of maybe, you know, look at the Indian cosmology, it's been 2500 years ago, what they believed in the gods and the shape of the world. For example, they believe that ancient Indians in ancient Indian Buddhists believe that the Earth was flat. So if you want to accept what is cosmology, you have to accept that. If you don't accept that, then maybe the rest of his

cosmology is like, Well, how do you sort that one out, though, but the traditionally 220 500 years ago The Earth was flat. And, and the and there was a huge mountain in the middle of this flat square. And in the south that Square was jumbo depot, which is the apple rose country, which is now what's known as India. And Bhutto's can only be born in jump with visa. And, and then if you go up this big mountain of Nero then as you get to the higher elevations of it, you get to the six lower God realms. And there are six realms of Gods with a gods are very close to being kind of like humans, they have all kind of very similar characteristics to humans and, and, and they're the ones interact the most with the human world, but they're kind of in this Heaven, this high up there and just kind of realm and this high mountain. If you imagine the mountain going kind of coming together at a point At the top of it, it's kind of like a pyramid, that then there's an inverse pyramid that comes out from the top of that. And that's the kind of the unseen world of further heavens and further gods. And above the first six realms of gods that kind of belong to our realm. There are something like

I don't know how many but 33 realms of Gods beyond that. And there's one category of Gods which are called the gods of form, which correspond to the form jhanas absorptions. And then you have the formless gods, which have no form have no body have, and somehow are disembodied spirits. And they correspond to a very you know, the formless, the deepest absorptions the gods at the lowest realm. This is interest you. Okay, everyone, hopefully, hopefully this isn't just for this part of interest. Other parts will, but this stuff with so at the lowest realm, you know that those gods are in the human kind of domain wrapped around that the very bottom realm, they only live for something like 9 million years, the highest realm within our realm, the highest heaven. They live some like 90 99,000 million years. And then it goes up from there, the highest heavens, they've lived phenomenally long period of time. The thing is about the gods in this cosmology is that they all die eventually. They might have, you know, phenomenal length of time, that they're going to be gods, but sooner or later they die. And if they're really high, they can only go one way or the other. I think you'd be born if you're had the luck of being born at the highest possible realm of formless gods. You know, you live there for you know, 90 billion years More in sooner or later you die. And there's only one way to go. And that's the go down to a lower realm. And depending on your car on your activity or what you've done your life and the karmic karmic momentum of your life you go, you know, lower depends with Miko really low, you might end up going into hell for a while, because Buddhist cosmology also has hell, which also has layers. And, you know, you certainly wouldn't want be born in the worst layer, the bottom layer, which is, you know, they have hills of ice and hills of fire. And you know, they're awful. The advantage of Buddhist hills is that they're also also temporary. And if you happen to get reborn in the bottom most held the worst, most awful, which also is a long time of suffering. When you die there, and you get reborn, you get to go up a little bit. So it's not all you know, it's not, you know, it's not a lost cause. And kind of in the middle of all this is the human realm and the human realm is considered to have a combination of both bit of everything, a little bit of you know divine qualities and little bit hellish qualities, and depending on your state of mind, but but the human realm because it has a little bit of all all of it, the right balance of it is considerably to be the best place to practice for liberation. If you're the gods, it's so blissful. There's gods, that there's no reason that they're not motivated to go to do anything else but enjoy their bliss. So I've been told, like I've been told by Dharma teachers that people who live in Hawaii when they try

to schedule like one day sittings and different Dharma events in Hawaii, people don't come. They go to the beach. So you know, if it's too blissful, you're not motivated. But if it's hellish your life it's really too difficult, then you don't have the ability or the interest or the use, or too many hindrances. to, you know, to give give you the time and the ability and the mental state to be able to practice. So the human realm is kind of a balance is ideal. So you won't be very careful that you keep getting reborn as a human. Because if you do too many bad things, then you go in hell and too many too many good things, which is kind of nice. It's not terrible. It's not terrible to do good things. But, you know, in Buddhism, it's a little bit you know, it's like, you know, it's nice to be born up there, but it's really second best. So, okay, so you following this little bit, so. So, add to this huge cosmology, the yo yo theory of the universe, that the universe is it just goes on forever, no beginning of it. But it just expands and contracts. And when it all contracts, all the matter in the universe somehow evaporates or disappears or becomes this kind of liquid or something, and, and all the beings, on the animals and people and gods, they all get temporarily reborn in a very high realm of being a formless God. And they hang out there until the expansion begins again.

You as the expansion begins the earth, all the parts of the universe begin to reconstitute themselves. But before the earth gets reconstituted, the more ethereal kind of heavenly realms get reconstituted first and one and so slowly gets formed, at some point. the heavenly realms of the human realm, human kind of domain, get reconstituted in first thing that happens is that Brahma, the great God, of the kind of the Overlord of these six heavens in the kind of human realm, his palace and throne gets made, because that's just what the universe does. And, and then and then at some point, one of these formless deities high up in these highest heavens dies because they die eventually. So the first one dies as the expansion begins, and he is he, but he gets reborn in Brahmas Palace on his throne. She's the first one there. He looks around. This is nice. And he thinks I'm kind of lonely. It would be really nice if there were some other gods. Coincidentally, when he has a thought, and other one of these formless beings happens to die and get reborn in his palace with him. And he concludes, this is the misunderstanding right? He concludes that he was responsible for the And this being by having a thought wouldn't be nice if they were there. Because he doesn't remember that he used to be a formless being. He doesn't have memory doesn't carry him over well enough. So he then he has more thoughts like that they just happens as the world is expanding more as his palace gets more more populated. And then he thinks there's something like blogging. Yeah, it's kind of nice here. But it'd be nice if there was more entertainment. We don't have television yet, but they have, you know, let's have we can have this, you know, human realm down there. That's very entertaining. And just happens to be that that moment, the universe is expanding enough that the heat that the earth kind of gets consolidated in humans appear, well, first, humans don't appear, but just the earth. Now it happens. That one of the people, one of the gods in his palace, who was born, they stay when they pick born there, they said, What happened? Where'd that come from? And he said, Well, I created you. I had this thought and you appeared and I created you. I'm the creator. And then I had to stop. gotten this earth down there appeared. And so one of the people in, God's in his palace dies. It gets reborn as a human and be reborn as a human that person practices meditation, and gets into very adaptive meditation, very great ability to concentrate. And one of the abilities that said traditionally that you can,

you can develop it through deep concentration is the ability to remember past lives. So this guy remembers his past life as a monk with Brahma. And we brought him members of Brahma told him he was the creator. So Oh, yeah, so he's the creator of the universe. It's Brahma, he told me. But his concentration is not that good. So he doesn't remember his lives before that. All the numbers just goes, he goes back one. And so that's how the notion of in India at least, of a creator god arose and it was Miss misunderstanding.

So, you know what to make of, you know, the Buddha telling the story? I don't know. But this he just, you know, who knows why he told the story that's the story he told. So, now, the other notion in Buddhism about theism is that in a general sense, theism in British tradition in the modern British tradition is sometimes seen looked upon favorably, not because Buddhists are believing, or theistic, in terms of believing in a Creator God, Buddhists are polytheistic they have all these gods right. And what the modern scholar says that Buddhism is actually trance polytheistic because Traditionally in Buddhism, ancient Buddhism, they believed in this huge pantheon of gods. But it wasn't such a good deal to get born as a god. Like, you know, you really wanted to go beyond even the gods. And a Buddha is someone who's gone beyond the gods as a human being who has never stopped being a human. But he's gone beyond the gods, these Indian Gods at least. And, and the Buddha doesn't worship the gods, the gods worshipped the Buddha. There's another story. There's a monk who goes, who has this I had this question is Where did the four elements cease? Where does Where's nature and where does all the experience of Earth water fire and air where does it end? So this monk has a great concentration abilities is able then to kind of go visit that is concentrated meditation, Brahma Brahma, you can ask different different gods and Gods as Brahma. He knows that Breathing and Rama still under the illusion that he's the Creator. So he says, He proclaims, I am the creator of all I know everything omniscient, I'm the dictator, I'm the greatest of the great. He's kind of full of himself. It's kinda like the Greek gods are kind of, you know, full of themselves, not kinds of ways. So the Indian Creator God, he was kind of a little bit too proud. So, they went to this guy went to Brahma to ask him this question, Where are the four elements sees? And Brahma replies, I am the great Brahma the ultimate gram Brahma, the creator of all the knower of all, the victor supreme one. The monk asks again, where does this four elements end? And he gets the same, it's like a politician, right? You don't get the right answer. I am the great, the wonderful, the most spectacular, I know everything. And so the monk asks a third time This time promises come here, it pulls them aside. This is rather embarrassing. All my people in my my heavenly realm realms here, they look up to me as being the great creator and the knower of all and told them this is the case. And you know, I don't really know the answer to your question. And you're a Buddhist monk and you really just is really inappropriate of you coming and coming ask me and making this you know, embarrassing situation for me in my court. You have to go to ask the Buddha. So the monk goes back as the Buddha and gets an answer. So there are these stories in the Buddhist traditions about God, this the Indian God, then the then so the idea of being a Creator God doesn't seem to get a lot of good press in the Buddhist tradition. The idea of you kind of the idea that I think sometimes exists is that everything arises out of something else, but there has to be a first cause out of Which it doesn't arrive without first cause doesn't come from anywhere else. And so God has to be the first cause God doesn't come from anywhere. But in the

Buddhist tradition, the Indian Indian idea is that the world has no beginning and no end. It's just endless cycles of expansion and contraction. So they're not they don't have to come up to this conclusion that there is no no no first cause Exactly. A little while in case any of you are getting tired or bored of all this, because I'm a little bit self conscious. But talking about this as you is, I will end with a Zen story.

You find it, especially in Sri Lankan Buddhists in modern era, writing a lot about Buddhism and theism, because I think because Sri Lankans more than men any other form of Asian Buddhists had to really contend with Christian missionaries. The portrait Were there for a long time and the English I think, I'm not sure what history but and the Portuguese and English and for about 500 years I think, and 400 years maybe. And so they had to contend with these powerful missionaries who would come. And so they wrote a lot about how they want to often distinguish Buddhism from Christianity, mostly. And they often talk about how you know, Buddhism doesn't doesn't have a god or just non theistic and, and one of the things that Sri Lankan people would like to like to say is even the idea of God being kind of like a godhead or source of being are a universal principle. There is not compatible with the Buddhist teachings of impermanence that everything's impermanent. In Thailand, the great greatest one of the greatest Thai teachers of the last century, John Podesta, who wasn't contending with missionaries didn't have you know, Or the political, military difficulties of the oppressor,

colonial colonialists,

he was much more kindly disposed to the God idea. And he said, Great, he read the Bible great. And he said, oh, God is the same thing is what we Buddhist called dharma. And so he wanted to make an equation there. And Dharma is is not a permanent thing, in a sense that Dharma is a principle of law of cause and effect law of causation. And one of the reasons why theism is not seen as a wrong view, is because theists usually live ethical lives. And one of the reasons why some people want to believe in God is the only field only between their belief in God can there be the motivation to live an ethical life. So like Woody Allen was With the families having a sub Shabbat dinner, and sometimes have a certain amount of ceremony part of that dinner. And it seems that in some American Jewish families, a part of the ceremony or the ritual is to argue about how long the ceremony should be. And so there was a the fathers, the patriarch, or the family wants to full blown ceremony and the progressive liberals daughter who wants to do as little as possible, and they're arguing about this. And finally, the daughter says,

If you What would

you rather have God or truth? And the father says God, because without God, there be chaos. So the idea of people silver is one of the justifications or reasons why some people want to have the notion of God is because it seems to be a kind of an ethical motivator for how we live our lives. And if we didn't have that, then things would be in trouble. And living ethically is a very high ideal in Buddhism. So if

you create good karma, but By living ethically, and if you're a theist, if you believe in God and live an ethical life, you can get reborn in one of those really great heavens. It's really, really good karma for yourself. So just believing in God is not doesn't cause bad karma for you. It's your behavior, your actions, how you live, that's important. And when I was a kid, these Mormon missionaries would come to Italy where I was living, and, you know, we'd have these conversations, and by God and stuff when I was about 12, or 13. And I remember my understanding, you know, without having read the Bible or anything, I said, I couldn't understand why God cared about the Christian God. Why, you know, why we care so much whether people believed in him or not? It seemed like what was the big deal? I thought, you know, he probably really liked it if people live ethically. And I was into the idea of being living ethically, as well as long as something ethically there is a God he's probably delighted. In other words, it's enough. So but then I found out later that that's apparently in the Bible, it says other things.

And then and then I studied religion in college and graduate school. And it's very interesting just to study religion in graduate school, it's very challenging for people who have very fixed ideas about what their religion is, because one of the things you realize is the tremendous diversity of belief systems that human beings are capable of having. And when you put your particular belief system, in the, you know, in together in this amazing spectrum of all these different kinds of beliefs, it becomes Well, you know, how do I fit them? How does this fit in here? And, and the notion of God is one of those and because so many Amazing different kinds of definitions, ideas and concepts of God. And that's not to say that any one particular one is not the right one or the true one. But you have to contend with his tremendous diversity. And so even if you can kind of bracket and put aside your particular notion of God, the question is, well, how can be all this true diversity of notions of God out there? And then what the social scientists who study this, in the last hundred 50 years have come up with some of them at least, is that it seems that notions of God have a lot to do with the projection of human ideals and hopes and human images onto this figure. And, and Durkheim was a great social scientists who kind of started this notion. So he actually thought it was it was a collective projection. And it's very important function for society, to have this projected kind of reference point that people circulated around. For him, it was still a projection of the mind often. So what do you So? So, you know, so it's not a criticism of any particular one, but it's very interesting to see the great spectrum. So then the Zen story,

the famous Zen master mate named chouchou. And a student comes to you and says, The 10,000 things returned to the one. Where does the one return to? So maybe in western translation, if we could say, the 10,000 things are all things all the diversity of life has its origin in God. Where does God come from? Where does God returned to What's the origin? What where's all things at the origin in God?

what's the

what's what is what was the origin of God? So the 10,000 things returned to the one. Where does the one return to? And chouchou says when I was in Qingdao

I made myself a hemp grow hemp robe that weighed seven pounds.

All Things have their origin in God. What is God comes from?

This afternoon this morning, I was able to install a new light in my basement ceiling

So how do you understand that? As an answer? It's a it's, it says bold to try to answer a colon that is trying to talk about God. But

I think the colon is pointing towards this moment here, this the present moment. And the only place that's the beginning and ending of anything for us in our experiential, immediate life is right here and now. Everything returns to the present. And there's something very precious something amazing something of experience of grace something. experience of the Divine experience of emptiness, experience of liberation. experience of the ultimate somehow gets reduced is found in the present. It's present. And then you can say, well, it's some great in the press Yes, it's in the present which is fantastic, amazing mystical experience of oneness with Brahma whatever. This morning I was able to put the light in my ceiling basement. It doesn't have to be something amazingly mystical. There's a miracle in being alive. It's a miracle in sensing and feeling and thinking and being conscious in this very moment sitting here and I believe that some of the Christian mystics will point to God is existing right here. My sense of Buddhism Buddhism actually is not an interested in God. Say, give me an opinion here. My little the contact I have with Christian mysticism. Is that you empty yourself, there's at least one tradition of Christian mysticism you empty yourself of everything, even your notions of what God is. And then you can have a kind of experience or union with God. You have some kind of experience. Buddhism doesn't doesn't suit nuts doesn't really state very much what happens but it puts a lot of emphasis in this empty process, emptying yourself of your, of your attachments, your grasping your defilements. And then something happens, something amazing happens when you don't have any of those filters across your eyes. Sometimes it can feel like a mystical experience. And it's very easy then to come to an interpretation and what that experience means or to use the ultimate reference points that we've had with our society gives us and put those reference points on that experience that experience and experience of x because in my society, they are Has it but it's automatic as it can be Buddhist meditation, when you're very concentrated and very still, it doesn't emit it does an amazing thing. And that is, it shows you the moment of when you make an interpretation, and you see it as an interpretation, you see the arising of an assumption, a projection to petition. You have this experience of oneness, which is a, which is a genuine mystical experience of Buddhists, Buddhism acknowledges this could happen to you. But if you are very well trained to watch your mind, see how the mind works. Then as you leave that meditate as you're in that meditation or you leave it, you watch the bubbling up the surface and explosion in the mind that the arising of a thought that says, Oh, this is oneness with Brahma. And you see that, upon what thority do, I have that as being that's the case, just a thought through interpretation. tendency in Buddhism then because of that kind of analysis that detailed watching of the authority of where our thoughts come from, and

seeing perhaps a little authority that can actually be that substantiates It is to be content with leaving those kinds of interpretations alone. And being content with becoming free. And that experience of freedom can take it's can feel like experience of grace can feel like an experience of the Divine or can feel all kinds of different ways. For Buddhism, the important point is is freedom. And whether you become free as a theist or you become free as a non theist, Buddhists don't care as long as you become free. So now it's your turn to Little bit worried what's gonna happen now next? So, comments, questions, objections? Yes.

Rabbi at the temple, giving a series of talks about God. And I wanted to find out what he had to say. And the most important thing that he said was not only do we need God, God needs us.

At that point I comprehend that why is all knowing all see

will need us and I didn't get the rest of it, but that I didn't go back and

I'm not in any way qualified to respond to that.

But I mean, you know, they, you know, I have a lot of respect for, for, for Christians and Jews for many reasons, a lot of respect deep respect and appreciation of those traditions that you know. And, and I've met people who I feel their their spiritual spiritual life is very, very deep and very profound and very transformed ways. And, and there are ways of understanding God, the notion of God, which inspire me. And there ways that don't do anything for me. The ministers are soulless this church here. You know, we're Christian ministers who believed in God and they spent a lot of time tuning into God's will. And, in fact, when we bind this, I like to say respectfully, we would like to say that there were three parties in the negotiation. There was us, the ministers and God and, and I was really inspired by these people who were not doing things in in, you know, materialistic ways are you kind of agreed or retuning into something larger than themselves and kind of getting really quiet and very still, they in their mind become very, very quiet and then stillness, intuiting or sensing some deeper kind of truth.

That was beautiful.

And so there's so many different ideas of God, that we have to be very careful to when we have trouble with someone's notion of God don't understand it, to go back to them and kind of really hear them out. Because it could be if they explicate what they're talking about, that he realized why this is just like the Dharma. Maybe God is Dharma, or maybe not. Yes.

The sort of the concept of God as a creator god, being a fixer of things that people pray to Him or never ask for intercession of some sort. And, to me, that's strikes me and I've done it in the past and during times of

But I, it seems to me this pretty serious form of self delusion, to

worship or to pray to

a divine being or home

or Buddhists do it too. We have you know Buddhism in traditionally in Buddhism they have all these gods and have In addition, later on after some centuries after the Buddha, they had these godlike figures called Bodhisattvas. And Buddhists pray to those all the time. So,

illusion that somebody can change something for you.

I think I think it can be unhealthy can be unhelpful, but I I'm loath to want to make make some, you know, I can be willing to say yes sometimes is unhealthy, but I'm very loath to make any categorical statement. Partly because I, my preference is to respect everyone and their beliefs. And if someone actually comes to me with a belief, and I'll try to listen to it and see Is there some some way in which people are holding this belief that keeps them in their suffering? And then I try to maybe try to help them understand how maybe keeping their suffering. But if it's not, I mean, you know, I took back prefer just to respect it and honor it and give it some kind of benefit of doubt. That's on your head

to say about intercessory prayer, you will be reading lots, not not many westerns with this recent trip to Japan and I saw a lot of Buddhist temples, and every one of them had some arrangement for physical prayer. Sometimes there was a rope tug, gone and get the Buddha's attention and said something or whatever these little graphs were the title of paper strips with prayers written problem. And people were using those variable. See you mean activity, including samples. So this was tying your wishes onto the tree.

And so one of the interesting things I think about the American convert Buddhism, the kind of Buddhism that we're part of is that I've never heard in, in all my many years of listening to Dharma talks, I've never heard anyone talk address this issue. It's really not that it's not as for as a seen as a spiritual tradition. It's not really that, that that significant to really bring up as a topic, because it's the practice which is important. There's other things which are much more important. And I'm not sure where the wisdom of me bringing up today, but I thought some people really would like to know about, you know, what is what is the Buddhist tradition say about this so, I could point you back a little bit to early early tradition for your reference.

David for seven day Christopher retreat, he gave a talk on God and like you do a very controversial talk. He says as he puts on sutures there he said, Who said I have become God

look really strange. It's actually interesting talk that was the basic premise was it's not something you really know God. So you wrestle with it and once you realize you can't know what you're relaxed about the whole thing comes over

to more and then once you stop because

colleges

in this country, God is one of the one of the other things we've polarized around and that divides us.

So it's an interesting subject to bring up here. don't suppose people are one on one side.

And for me,

there's no need for more.

So when I talk to people who are believers in God, I just turned my ears on for a while and try not to react. And I learned a lot that way. And it's some of the things that you've talked about. And also, particularly from elderly people who are at the end of their lives and have had a fair amount of suffering and are releasing that suffering because they believe in a life after and while I don't believe in that, I see how much comfort it gives people who are not allowed no they're facing in their life, and I sort of feel like well,

there certainly are plenty of things that are

negative So

I resonate a lot with you said about not wanting to be part of polarity and that tension. And I would like to think of the Buddhist tradition is not in that game not you know, it's it's not involved doesn't doesn't play the game of, for against this issue and but sometimes some other people put Buddhism in a camp I know when I when I was in Turkey it was you know I learned very quickly I shouldn't tell people I was a Buddhist because people assume that you're an atheist. And if you're a theist, then you were, you know, God fearing and you do evil things. And, and I think some, some I know, I've read Buddhists who are very uncomfortable, don't want to call them be called atheists, but don't want to be called theists, but don't want to be called atheists either, because there's connotations with atheism for in the kind of wider the wider society that sometimes they don't want to go along with so trans polytheistic

Yes,

I want to clarify.

You said that

the first God in the higher realms, that

was the last one because the one that lives the longest.

But then if that one became, then why wouldn't that one die first and

so, we try then. So say there's, I'm not really familiar with, with all the levels and grades and details of the humanly Buddhist heavenly realms, but you'll say it this way. There are in the world system we're in. There are six heavenly realms. Beyond that, there are another 33 realms. The last four of those having Those 33 are the formless realms we live for a really long time. So you're up there hanging out there during the contraction part of the universe. When you get reborn when that first Brahma gets reborn he gets reborn in the top level of this bottom six heavenly realms in our world system. So in other in our world system particularly until it gets consolidated enough and so he's Brahma is in his it's kind of like a top of this six six happens in our world. So and so he's like, the greatest in our world, but there are gods that are, you know, their gods that are greater than him, you know, higher realms. And there's no ultimate there's no ultimate Supreme God just you know, there's all these all these all these guys and gals who hang out that you know, the high Round for a few billion years. So I hope this has been interesting and maybe more, more, more More to the point, I hope it's been helpful in some way or other for some of you. And if this has aroused, some deep concerns or deep questions for you to look at that might be really great. And if you feel like you want to talk with me about this further, I'll stay for a while here and we'll continue the conversation. And I think the, I really do think the best approach is to have a lot of respect for everybody's religious points of view, and then maybe explore together have wonderful inter religious interfaith dialogue.

So

thank you.