

Hello, and welcome.

Today, we're going to look at the concept of nontheism. It's a broad umbrella term that helps us organize other scattered, often unrelated ideas that concern religion and the study of religions. One category that is included in the broad term nontheism is non-religious beliefs. They also play a role in religion and religious studies. We'll talk about some of these as well.

As usual, in the study of religions, we come across terms and ideas that avail themselves to many different interpretations. For example, even the positive term theism. It's not always clear which religions might fit best into this category. The belief that there is no God, this is a nontheistic belief. Atheism is a committed position ascribing to the belief that God doesn't exist. So we can put it securely under nontheism. Agnosticism-- this is a position that often refers to the idea that the existence of God has never been proven and/or admits of the impossibility of ever knowing for sure about the existence of God. So this would also be a nontheistic approach.

Another more formal method of thinking about religious beliefs is religious scepticism. This might be harder to group clearly into one camp or another, theism or nontheism. A religious skeptic would like to subject certain religious beliefs to rational scrutiny, perhaps even his own beliefs. So he/she might be a believer, a faithful adherent of one religion or another.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, skepticism employed the tools of reason and science which really knew no bounds. If there was doubt, it often had to do with the notion that God was personally involved in human lives and individual personal lives. For this reason, many Deists were religious skeptics, questioning and exploring new possibilities with regard to the web of religion and philosophy and social political life.

When it comes to specific religions themselves, there are many that don't honor or worship a particular deity. Confucianism, Taoism, and many schools of Buddhism are good examples of nontheistic thought, nontheistic religions. They generally fit more clearly into nontheism.

Although it doesn't have a god who is worshipped in the way a Hindu god is revered and worshipped, Buddhism's founding principles are nevertheless related to ideas of the non-material and ideas of the sacred. In other words, its focus is on consciousness and the spiritual life that allows for integration of matter and spirit and the possibility of transcendence. For this reason, Buddhism has historically been approached and interpreted from a variety of angles.

Now we can review and summarize. Nontheism is a very broad category, and there are many nonreligious ways

of thinking that can be grouped under it. And there are also many religions that can be considered nontheistic, and our example for that was Buddhism. Nonreligious thought that can be grouped under nontheism are agnostic, atheism, and religious scepticism. However, we pointed out that one can be an adherent to a particular faith and still be a religious skeptic. It just depends on your particular orientation philosophically, et cetera.