

## The Interplay of Final Values across World Religions and Philosophies

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### Abstract

The criterion of proof and good argument ultimately coincides with one final value or another. Philosophers and psychologists pick out from five to twenty known final values (reasons to live, final goals, final goods, human life ends). Each religion can be considered as the art of realizing a certain final value. Final values are the prisms through which we look at the world. Each value reveals and reflects a different dimension of being, a different aspect of life and personality. Final value defines a view of the world, and does not follow from a predetermined world picture. Complementarism is the recognition that different worldview systems are simultaneously true and complement each other. Any final values can tactically contradict each other simply because they are different. But strategically, most of them complement each other. The world is multidimensional, and all world pictures are projections of a multidimensional figure onto a particular plane. These projections may be very different and even seem incompatible, but they all reflect the same thing. In one aspect the Creator is visible, in another not, in a third it does not matter, in a fourth there is uncertainty on the matter, and in a fifth it is impossible to even ask the question. So, in any dialogue, especially in a dialogue between different worldviews it is important, before putting forward and colliding various arguments, to make sure that the corresponding positions do not reflect different dimensions of being and therefore do not complement each other.

**Keywords:** religions and final values, objective list theory, value pluralism, onto-epistemological pluralism

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### 1. Disagreements and values

The most profound disagreements, the basis of all other disagreements, are disagreements in your supreme values. Such values not only define your way of life but also are the ultimate criterion for proof, selection of information, etc.

What is proof in general? The criterion of proof ultimately coincides with one final value or another. In today's culture, proof boils down to "it works." "Works" means that on the basis of this or that knowledge you can do exactly what you planned. This is the value of power/control. But this criterion is not applicable, for example, to personal relationships. If you have learned something about the other person that allows you to manipulate them, it does not mean that you have really got to know that person. In this area, only that knowledge is true that will allow you to establish relations with him or her, apart from any manipulations.

Philosophers and psychologists pick out from five to twenty known human life ends (reasons to live, final goals, final goods, final values) that cannot be reduced to one another. All existing lists of final values somehow reflect a single list. Each item proposed by this or that author is an aspect, a step, a shade of some real final value. There is a correspondence between different religions and final values (final goals, human life ends).

When you choose one of the final values as the one you are willing to live and/or die for, the final value becomes your supreme value. This does not mean that you have rejected all other final values; it's just that they are now somehow subordinate to this chosen one.

An important distinction: final values are those values that can be chosen as supreme values. Selecting a supreme value results in a hierarchy of values, so that all other values, including final values, become instrumental values for that one. Outside of this selection, the final values are equal.

For example, you have chosen your supreme value to be love. This means that all other values, including final values, are now seen by you as means of love. Pleasure, respect, and life itself are now only as valuable to you as they contribute to love.

Different value hierarchies, that is, the same values arranged in a different order, form different ways of life, different life ideals, and strategies. If you choose pleasure as your supreme value, your ideal of life will be very different from what it would be if your supreme value were health. Sometimes these ideals are so different that their holders not only do not understand each other but also are barely able to get along with each other. For example, the utilitarian ideal of well-being may be perceived as philistine or even as repugnant and unacceptable in terms of other ideals.

How can proponents of different value systems engage in dialogue if they even have different criteria of proof? Decades of religious field studies have led me to formulate seven principles of existential diplomacy:

1. take an interest in and respect the views of the other person, whatever they may be and however unacceptable they may seem to you;
2. try on the views of another person on yourself, try to be imbued with them at least for a while;
3. speak to another person in the language of their views, or at least in a neutral language, but not in the language of your own views, even when it comes to themselves;
4. never suggest to another person to change their views or even more so, to give them up;
5. never directly invite another person to accept your views;
6. offer solutions to problems that are relevant in the context of the other person's views;
7. consider your views as a possible complement to the other person's views.

In this paper I would like to examine the latter principle. What does it mean to treat different views, especially religious views, as complementary? This is a very nontrivial task, and the answer to it is a whole concept that can be called Complementarism.

Complementarism is the position that different worldview systems, including those called religious, are methodologies for realizing final values, achieving unique, irreducible final goals, and that most of these methodologies complement each other, revealing different aspects of being.

In roughly the same way, we treat different professions. Different professions may contradict each other in their requirements. For example, the art of confectionery may be in conflict with the art of healing—because they have different tasks, different end goals. It does not follow, however, that one of these arts is false. They are both true within the limits of solving their tasks. The recognition of their truth does not oblige us to be pastry chefs or doctors, or to use both of them permanently, or never to use either of them.

Understanding the worldview and even more so religion as a method is unusual for a modern person, especially a person of Western culture, so it is necessary to dwell on this in more detail.

## **2. Different arts of solving different problems**

Every religion is first and foremost a way of life, not a set of beliefs. Views about the structure of the universe are always secondary there. If they are present, then in a minimal form, they are only a consequence of a certain practical attitude and have an instrumental significance. The model according to which people first somehow form a world picture for themselves, and then draw some conclusions from it, is usually false. At the beginning, there is always one or another final value, and all the rest is just the art of its realization.

No final value belongs to any particular world picture. Final value remains so regardless of the circumstances. If you were pursuing some final value, but at some point circumstances changed so that it was either no longer final or no longer a value at all, it means that it has demonstrated its limitations. If you have spent your life on such a value, and at the end of your life circumstances change dramatically, your whole life is in vain. You bet on the wrong value. If a value can cease to be final due to a change in some circumstances, this may mean that it is a particular case of another final value, its form for these circumstances. Thus, wealth and an administrative career are forms of control for certain circumstances. Independence from circumstances means that a final value retains its significance in all possible worlds. This property was substantiated by Roderick Chisholm (1972, 2005). For example, power or pleasure does not depend on this or that arrangement of the universe. No matter how the world works, power and pleasure will still be important to you.

This is best seen in Buddhism. Buddhism recognizes itself as a method of liberation from suffering. In this method, the final goal is primary, and everything else is a means to be discarded as soon as it has fulfilled its purpose or shown its worthlessness. The same applies to metaphysics. The world picture is conditioned by the state of our consciousness and, above all, by the objectives through which we look at everything. Every belief is but a tool (a skillful means, *upaya*) and, in this sense, a convention.

Even Christianity, the most intellectualistic of all religions in human history, is usually limited in terms of required knowledge to “the Trinity in God and the duality in Christ” (in some cases not even that). You can think what you want about anything else. Or think nothing at all. The world is round or square, blue or coffee, hard or soft, young or old, solid or flaky, finite or infinite—better leave those questions to scholarly metaphysicians. In Judaism, for example, how many attempts have been made to create a dogmatic code following the example of Christianity—all of them have remained a bundle of optional variants.

The dogmas themselves are nothing more than a generalization of religious experience. Yes, religious life has its own special way of knowing—mysticism. But this way is very specific; it can hardly be said that it produces knowledge that is abstracted from the way of life, of the individual or of the community. In Christianity we are talking about a worldwide gathering of communities, when the prayerful, mystical, ritualistic, polemical and other experiences of its representatives over several generations are harmonized. Even in Christianity, action, behavior, choice, precede their intellectualization.

We must also not forget that dogmas as a stable and obligatory intellectual system exist only in Christianity. In other religions, one or another religious norm or practice may be associated with a bundle of some vague variant ideas, but none of them is mandatory. Many questions that require an answer from the perspective of

Christians (or bearers of Christian culture) are completely ignored. “How do you solve the problem of the existence of evil in the world?”—“We dance.” The Buddha answered some of these questions with the famous “thunderous silence.” The vast majority of religions are primarily orthopraxies, not orthodoxies. But even the separation of orthodoxy from orthopraxy in Christianity, when dogmas are suddenly thought in the manner of mathematical axioms, is a later distortion, probably four hundred years at most.

The difference between religions is not in randomly formed world pictures or belief systems. Their main difference is precisely in the final values that underlie them.

Final value defines a view of the world, and does not follow from a predetermined world picture.

If a final value depended on a pre-given picture of the world, this would mean that it does not retain its significance in all possible worlds and under all circumstances.

For example, if the world has a three-part structure, you strive to get to the top tier and consider this your supreme value. But suddenly, many years later, you discover that the world has no such structure at all. Either you were wrong, or the structure of the world has changed— either way your life is wasted. At the same time, the desire for pleasure, for health, for power, or for respect is not connected with any structure of the world.

It is interesting in this regard how the structure of the world and the state of the world relate to each other. The range of states of the world constituting one or another final value must be applicable to any structure of the world, including its fundamental constants, etc.

Final values are the prisms through which we look at the world. They highlight certain aspects of things, principles, and relationships. Whichever final value you set as your supreme value, that is how the world and yourself in it will appear to you.

Each value reveals and reflects a different dimension of being, a different aspect of life and personality. In fact, every final value is a whole world.

The same object appears to us quite differently in the light of different final values. A pen is a use-value and exchange-value in terms of control, a thing pleasant or unpleasant to the eye or touch in terms of pleasure, evidence of social status in terms of social harmony, a weapon in terms of the fight against evil, and so on. We can look at any person and any story in terms of various final values.

There is a well-known expression by Maslow: “If the only tool you have is a hammer, it is tempting to treat everything as if it were a nail.” (Maslow 1966, 16) This is even truer for the final value. If cooking becomes your supreme value, the whole world appears to you as a gigantic kitchen, and if health becomes your su-

preme value, then the whole world turns out to be a gigantic pharmacy for you, and so on and so forth.

In this sense, metaphysics can also be intrinsic to the professions, if the relevant professional practice is elevated to the level of art. Every art has its canon, mysticism, philosophy, traditions, rites, and divine founders. Without all this, you cannot become a true master, a true artist of your craft. All art is a sacred action, a methodology brought to the level of religion.

Suppose you are a skilled calligrapher. When you do your work, you immerse yourself in it, you feel divine inspiration, you talk to the canvas and brush as if they are alive, you contemplate Cangjie, the first calligrapher and the deity of calligraphy, pray to him for your success, try to imitate him and merge with him. When you draw a character, it is as if you are recreating it. At this moment you see the world through the eyes of Cangjie, and he is embodied in you. Nothing else exists for you, except what hinders or helps you in your calligraphy.

What is the difference between worldviews and professions? Obviously, their tasks. Professions solve tasks that are not always needed and/or not for everyone. For example, the art of trading is very important, but you only need it if you want to buy or sell something. If you are not a professional trader, you only need it from time to time. You may even go your whole life without using it. Unlike professional arts, confessional arts are focused on tasks that are important to everyone and almost always. For example, getting along with others or keeping your dignity. Of course, a person may reject such goals/values, but he or she will never stop needing them.

There are also borderline arts that are extremely difficult to judge and this is debatable whether they are professional or confessional. For example, the art of healing or the art of peacemaking. For many modern people, medicine is a regular profession and pacifism is one of the social positions. However, the Taoists and Nathas made medicine a religion, and the Jains made non-violence their religion.

### 3. Choosing goals

If the goals that the confessional arts pursue are universal, does this mean that everyone is obliged not only to recognize them but also to practice them? Or should he choose for himself only one such final goal and reject all others? For example, should a Christian, rejecting hedonism, also reject the very task of not being tormented, feeling fairly well, and even enjoying life? Should he then also reject the bliss that faith and communion with God give him, and even more so the eternal bliss that is promised to him in paradise? Certainly not. As a rule, the choice in favor of this or that religion means building a hierarchy of tasks. For example, a Christian chooses love (active love of neighbor, *agape*) and, accordingly, the art of realizing *agape*. All other tasks, however important they may be, are subordinate

to this chosen one, and in case such a person is faced with the choice of love or health, love or pleasure, etc.—he will choose love.

At the same time, however, quite often, if not most often, one or another final value is chosen as a supreme value precisely because by virtue of some experience you consider it the key to the realization of other values. For example, you see someone else's example or experience in your own life, or at least in a dream, that the exercise of control necessarily leads to the realization of pleasure, health, good relations with others, and so on.

Similarly, Christians often believe that the main thing is love and everything else will follow, so in some ways Christianity already has everything, and the Christian does not need anything else. Often this leads adherents of a given art to perceive it as a universal, all-purpose art, which is oriented almost towards all the important goals at once. In this way, for instance, Christianity suddenly turns out to be the art of pleasure, the art of knowledge, the art of family well-being, the art of healing, and whatever. However, as shown above, the final goal defines all art, and if you dissolve the original final goal into others, everything else is affected as well. Trying to achieve everything at once, you achieve nothing.

Thus, the hierarchical choice is dangerous precisely because of this distortion. Christianity is an agapic art, it is not the art of enjoyment life or the art of the family well-being or the art of liberation from suffering. Some level of solving these problems can be achieved through the exercise of love, but only in an incidental way, i.e. as an optional side effect. If you, as a Christian, suddenly have a problem that is very far from being solved, you can hardly expect Christian practice alone to help you in this particular matter. If you have a health problem, it would be rather strange if you did not turn to medicine. Such an option, of course, is often practiced not only by Jehovah's Witnesses but also by other Christians, but also in most cases it is condemned by the relevant theological authorities. The same applies to many other arts, whether they are purely professional or borderline. The same can be extended to confessional arts.

Although complementarism does not oblige you to practice different confessional arts, it does allow you to do so. In this case, to realize love for others you practice Christianity, consult Christian scriptures, mentors, etc., to realize freedom from suffering you practice Buddhism, consult Buddhist scriptures, mentors, etc., to find good relationships with others you practice Confucianism, consult Confucian scriptures, mentors, etc.

Perhaps a musical analogy might be helpful in understanding this system. If the different ends are notes, they are all present in every worldview system. But each of them has its own tonic, that is, the main note-goal, the jumping-off point, which colors everything with and into which everything is resolved (alpha and omega). All other notes are subordinated to the main one and sound not so bright. The tonic determines the tonality of a particular melody. Complementarism in this case

means polytonality. There are Christian, hedonistic, Confucian, Muslim, Buddhist, and pagan life melodies. But polytonal melodies are also possible.

It is also worth mentioning the so-called binary goals/values, the topic of which cannot be addressed in this paper. Binary final value is the value that results from the integration of two final values. For example, you can integrate pleasure and freedom from addictions. In this way, you would have epicurean ataraxia. According to this final value, you can only enjoy life by being free from addictions, and one you only are free from addictions by enjoying life, which is essentially the same thing. Because of this dual nature, historians of philosophy still cannot decide whether Epicureanism is hedonistic or not, and how to deal with the fact that ataraxia is so similar to the Buddhist upekṣā. Such goals/values give rise to individual arts aimed at achieving them.

The integration of three or more values does not seem to occur. If a culture has three supreme values at the same time, they coexist simultaneously, each occupying its own niche and forming a multidimensional system. An example of such a system is the *San Jiao* (Three teachings) in Chinese culture, within which Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism received their specialization. This is the most striking example of complementarism.

### 4. What Complementarism is not

- *Complementarism is not syncretism.*

Syncretism is a combination of elements of different worldview systems into a new worldview system.

Complementarism is a simultaneous adherence to several worldview systems in their integrity.

- *Complementarism is not eclecticism.*

Eclecticism is a haphazard combination of elements from different worldview systems. Complementarism is a super-system within which each worldview takes its own place.

- *Complementarism is not pluralism.*

Pluralism is the recognition of the equality of worldview systems in achieving some common goal.

Complementarism is the recognition that each worldview system has its own unique goal, irreducible to the goals of other systems.

- *Complementarism is not inclusivism.*

Inclusivism is the recognition that there is one absolutely true and effective worldview system, and that all other systems are also partially true and partially capable of producing the same effect.



Complementarism is the recognition that each worldview system is absolutely true and effective within its specialty.

- *Complementarism is not ecumenism.*

Ecumenism is the striving for unity among different strands of the same worldview system, primarily Christianity.

Complementarism is the striving for unity between different worldview systems on the basis of a clear distinction between their specializations.

- *Complementarism is not dual faith.*

Dual faith is the confession of one worldview system under the guise of another, most often one religion under the guise of another.

Complementarism is the simultaneous confession or acceptance as true of several worldview systems.

- *Complementarism is not dialectics.*

Dialectics is the recognition of different worldview systems as successive moments of general development.

Complementarism is the recognition that worldview systems are both true and complement each other.

- *Complementarism is not dialogue.*

Dialogue of worldviews is an attempt to bring worldview systems closer together by finding common ground.

Complementarism is the delimitation of worldview systems by determining their unique specialization.

- *Complementarism is not multiculturalism.*

Multiculturalism is the coexistence of worldview systems on the basis that their bearers tolerate each other, if only out of the last resort.

Complementarism is the integration of worldview systems, which leads to the fact that people are imbued with each other's worldviews and cease to be strangers to each other.

Examples of Complementarism include San Jiao, as well as the life and work of Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle (Jesuit priest and Zen Buddhist roshi) and Henri le Saux (aka Swami Abhishiktananda; Benedictine monk and Hindu sannyasi).

## 5. Contradictions and how to overcome them

The obvious objection is that a combination of the arts is impossible because they contradict each other.

There are two levels of final values interaction—tactical (situational) and strategic. Final values may contradict each other at some point or over a period of time, but they may complement each other in general, in relation to your life as a

whole. Conversely, final values may well complement each other tactically but strategically exclude each other.

For example, at some point you may be faced with a choice between pleasure and health. You are given a delicious cake, but you know that eating it means a great deal of harm to your health. Or you are given medicine that will save your life, but taking it makes you feel pain. However, in general, a pleasant life is healthier than an unpleasant one, and a healthy life is more pleasant than an unhealthy one. Or you may find that in certain circumstances your belligerent intransigence has contributed to peace. But in general, a belligerent life is full of aggression and utterly alien to peacefulness.

Any final values can tactically contradict each other simply because they are different. But strategically, most of them complement each other.

Consistency of final values is a second-order value that is sometimes included in lists of final values themselves: 'harmony and proportion in one's own life' (Frankena 1973, 87), 'integrity' (Gómez-Lobo 2002, ch. 2; he defines it as 'the inner harmony of a human being who does not let her thoughts, attitudes, desires, emotions, utterances, and actions go asunder but brings them into fundamental consistency').

There is a popular thing called 'the life balance wheel,' which goes back to bhavacakra and is designed to help you overcome contradictions and distortions in the realization of your final values and their corresponding areas of life. This is a difficult task, but it is achievable because most of the final values belong to the complementary circle.

The complementary circle is a set of final values, each of which strategically complements the other final values. Any tactical contradictions between them can be overcome. This circle includes health, pleasure, knowledge, control, self-actualization, social harmony, relatedness, freedom from addictions, dignity, and creativity.

Mutual complementarity means, in particular, that their respective teachings, including religious teachings, complement each other. All the contradictions between them are either tactical or seeming, since these teachings reflect different aspects, different dimensions of our being. This, in particular, is the basis for 'multiple religious citizenship.'

Outside the complementary circle, but close to it, so to speak, are borderline final values. These are, above all, final values that could well be included in the complementary circle, but that strategically contradict one another. These are peace and victory over evil.

This group also includes final values, which may strategically contradict some complementary circle values and complement others (speed and chaos) or be in an ambivalent relationship with all final values (wisdom).

Finally, a completely non-complementary final value, that is, a final value whose realization strategically excludes the realization of other final values, is non-existence.

For some reason, the modern person of Western culture is primarily interested in the contradictions between world pictures. Here is a picture of the world where God exists, but here is a picture of the world where there is no God—how can they be reconciled? As was said above, world pictures are only functions of certain ways of life, they are revealed as aspects that are highlighted through the prism of this or that final goal. If your final goal is to cook delicious food, the whole world appears to you as a huge kitchen, and if your final goal is to build houses, the whole world appears to you as a construction site. So is the world a kitchen or a construction site? Obviously, it is both, as well as many other things. The world, like the person in it, is multidimensional, and all world pictures are projections of a multidimensional figure onto a particular plane. These projections may be very different and even seem incompatible, but they all reflect the same thing. In one aspect the Creator is visible, in another not, in a third it does not matter, in a fourth there is uncertainty on the matter, and in a fifth it is impossible to even ask the question.

Much more important is overcoming the contradictions regarding practical requirements.

First of all, it should be noted that it is not uncommon for proponents of some religions to ascribe some requirements to other religions when there are none. Many religions have popular practices that are not at all obligatory. For example, paganism does not forbid the worship of the Creator of the world, nor does it necessarily require the worship of someone else as gods. There is the distinction between paganism, idolatry and polytheism.

Paganism is a worldview centered on the kin (people, clan, tribe) and on the family in general. For a pagan, this is the meaning of life. There are forms of paganism that do not involve either idolatry or polytheism. Of course, a pagan relies on his kin, on an ancestor, or something like that. But kin can also be thought of as the whole of existence, and the first ancestor can also be thought of as the Creator of the universe. Idolatry is giving the status of a deity, that is, the master of your destiny, to someone who does not possess the proper perfection for it, that is, who does not possess all the possible perfections. It is possible to worship strictly one idol, such as the idol of kin, as in henotheism. That would be monolatric idolatry (kathenotheism) or, for example, mono-demonism. Polytheism is a willingness to worship anyone who seems stronger, nicer, closer, more benevolent, and so on. It is the attitude that there are many candidates for your gods, you can worship several different gods at once, and you can change gods. It is an orientation to the conjuncture of the supermarket of gods and religions, to see how the wind blows.

'God' (or 'goddess') is a status. You can confer this status, that is, deify, on the Egyptian pharaoh, the Roman emperor, the Russian tsar, the American president,

your boss, as well as the ocean, wind, money, sex, hearth, war, wisdom, humanity, yourself, nature, science, progress, and so forth. In monotheistic religions, this status is given to a transcendent all-perfect Being Who is at the same time the Creator of the world, and it is forbidden to give this status to anyone else: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2–3).

This status means that the one you endow with it is the source of your destiny, and you serve her so that this destiny is successful in one way or another. Who to consider as your god is everyone's personal choice. Worship is giving someone or something the properties of the source of the most important benefits for you, relying on her as the decisive benefactor of your life, admiring her greatness, power, wisdom, and so on, voluntarily submitting to her, serving her, and dedicating yourself to her. This kind of subordination comes from experience—when you suddenly realize that this being, this element, this phenomenon is the most important thing in your life that everything depends on it.

Likewise, Buddhism does not forbid the worship of "worldly gods," although there are authoritative texts that show the harmful effects of such worship or the very idea of the Creator of the world and worship of Him.

Further, in most cases, the norms of various confessional arts only appear to contradict one another because of their homonymity or relevance to different aspects. For example, the prohibition to worship anyone other than God does not contradict showing reverence for parents, elders, ancestors, righteous people, or spirits, even though all of these are sometimes called a cult. And the requirement to pray at a certain hour is not in conflict with the requirement to meditate at the same hour, because these can be different aspects of the same action, just as the requirement, for example, to stand and listen at the same time. You can pray while meditating and meditate while praying.

If, after checking for homonymity and relevance to different aspects, the norms do indeed require different things about the same thing, the principles of their complementation are as follows:

- a) a stricter norm absorbs a less strict one; for example, a ban on tobacco absorbs all restrictions on its consumption;
- b) a categorical norm absorbs less categorical ones; for example, the prohibition of polygamy absorbs all recommendations of monogamy;
- c) following mutually exclusive norms is distributed over relevant situations; for example, the performance of military duty is relevant to wartime and nonviolence is relevant to peacetime;
- d) if mutually exclusive norms are not distributable, that is, universal or related to the same situations, an urgent norm is preferable; for example, if the doctor has prescribed alcohol-containing drugs and fasting forbids them, then it is better to

follow the medical requirements and then somehow make up for the fasting requirement.

If the urgency is equal, which is extremely rare, all that remains is to find the right combination of versions of the practiced confessional arts. Within every art, whether confessional or professional, there are always many schools and trends that often argue and even antagonize each other. If, for example, Islam prohibits alcohol but, as a Christian, you are obliged to practice communion, you can choose a version of Christianity that allows that practice communion with grape or even pomegranate juice.

Critics of Complementarism sometimes argue that if a combination of the arts is possible at some low level, at the level of the laity, it is no longer possible at a higher level. There seems to be no basis for such an assertion. For example, the requirements for monks of different religions are quite compatible.

In all cases, it is important to remember that strategically the respective arts do not contradict one another. And if there are no contradictions in the main, all other contradictions can be overcome. Undoubtedly, in the case of prolonged mutual complementation, the respective arts will change, getting rid of those features that for some reason cause mutual aversion.

## Conclusion

In any dialogue, especially in a dialogue between different worldviews, including religious ones, it is important, before putting forward and colliding various arguments, to make sure that the corresponding positions do not reflect different dimensions of being and therefore do not complement each other.

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