



ACROPOLIS

Volume 5, Issue 5

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About New Acropolis



New Acropolis is an international non-profit volunteer-run organization with a philosophical, cultural and social approach. It was founded in 1957 as a school of Practical Philosophy in the Classical Style, to promote the ideal of timeless values towards human development.

In over 60 countries where New Acropolis is present, this vision is implemented through an eclectic range of teachings, practices and activities, inspired by Classics of both Western and Eastern global cultures and ancient civilizations. Our programs, based on philosophy that is practical and active, combine theoretical and practical education with expressions in the fields of Philosophy, Culture and Volunteering. With over 20,000 volunteers of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and social levels, New Acropolis emphasizes principles of Coexistence, Fraternity and mutual collaboration beyond cultural, sexual, or religious differences.

We at New Acropolis all over the World are greatly inspired also by the timeless principles of the Ancient Classical Indian Culture, Arts and Philosophies. New Acropolis in India, same as in all our centers worldwide, seeks to take inspiration, knowledge and best practices from the rich artistic, spiritual and cultural human heritage in order to enhance both individual and collective human development.

Connect with us:

Visit our website www.acropolis.org.in

To know more about our international activities: www.acropolis.org/en/

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Indiranagar: Message on 96638 04871

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Editor's Note

"Life's not about waiting for the storm to pass...It's about learning to dance in the rain."

Vivian Greene

Dear Reader,

The Monsoon season is upon us and with it brings us an invitation to pause a while to enjoy the rains and contemplate **LIFE** with a hot cup of chai. More than any other phenomena, the rains bring to the foreground elements of nature and how they embrace it with an open heart. Be it the frog that wants to be its croakiest best or the insect that wants to spread its wings and fly as high as it can or the trees that look happy getting their annual wash top to bottom, there are many beautiful sights to behold in the wettest season of the year.

In this edition, we have curated some special articles that provide a unique & philosophical perspective on the wisdom of Life and Nature. We hope you are inspired by the thoughts and ideas shared here.

We also invite you to experience our foundation course "Living Philosophy" and our other events if you are inspired to take your enthusiasm for life deeper.

Happy reading!

Jyothika Lobo

Editor - ACROPOLIS

My Friend, the Insect

Carlos Adelantado



One night, like most nights, I was reading while lying in bed. It was a book of lectures by Professor Jorge A. Livraga.

It was the end of the day, darkness all around, silence....

By the light of the small lamp on the bedside table, my intellectual activity extended into the moments before sleep.

Reading, reflection, peace in my heart... Everything was perfect.

Suddenly, he appeared, a tiny insect. Bothersome, indifferent to my presence and incapable of sitting still.

I tried to get him away from my book, but it was useless; he kept coming back. Then I wanted to get it out of my mind, but I couldn't do that either. It was already an active part of the discomfort that penetrated me. The furtive guest would appear on the page I was reading and every time I turned the page, it would enter the scene again with a slight jump. Ufff, it was insufferable.

It was so annoying that I decided to give it my utmost attention.

That little creature had come to me attracted by the light of the little lamp. Of course! For him it was the right place to go, the only place. And I thought of all the beings who go towards the light, of all those who travel the long road of Life.

At that moment, the little insect became the representative of those attracted by the beautiful and the true, by the good and the just. For an instant, the omnipresent law of evolution was revealed in its most authentic expression.

So, by mutual agreement, the insect and I shared Professor Livraga's wisdom. Time passed, I cannot say exactly how much time, and just as it had arrived, the insect disappeared.

I looked for it among the pages of the book, truly fearing that it had suffered an involuntary accident. I didn't find it.

I looked around me among the sheets. It was not there.

I saw it no more. And I felt a kind of sorrow. For those who one day leave the presence of light and immerse themselves in dark unfamiliar places. For those who have marched by our side and one day, suddenly, cease to do so.

I can assure you that this tiny insect, a gigantic reference in its smallness, will be with me for a long time. In fact, several months have passed since we met, and I have not managed to forget it. Nor do I want to.

It is of great help to me to remember that living beings are always moving towards the light, and that on that path of realization we will never be alone.

Along we go, the great and the small, the cyclical and the perennial, the slow and the swift, the conformists and the rebels, the sedentary and the adventurous, the elements and the potencies... everyone and everything!

The great symphony of life.



The Challenge of Change

Gilad Sommer



"You Cannot Step Into the Same River Twice" – Heraclitus

One of our main challenges as human beings is to grasp the continuous and constant change everything goes through.

Everything evolves. Some things change more slowly, others more quickly, but nothing remains the same, even for one second. People change, society changes, the world changes.

Our political reality, for example, constantly changes. There are countries on the world map today, that in reality no longer exist. Usually, there is a lag in realizing things have changed.

It is hard for us to accept that what I know now about people, about society, about the world, will be false in a relatively short while.

To accept this requires a constant effort to renew ourselves, our ideas, and the way we do things. It is much easier to rely on temporal knowledge, that is, knowledge about the circumstances of a certain moment in time.

We take a "snapshot" of reality at a point in time and from a certain perspective, and we keep that "snapshot" as a reference and as a secure base to stand on, and even though very quickly it is no longer relevant, we keep living our lives based on that "snapshot"

We fortify an idea of the world and make it permanent in our minds, even if it's no longer true.

In some fields of human experience, this is very clear. In the digital world, we are required to continuously update our operating system, so that it can function well with all the new software. Windows 95 used to be one of the most advanced operating systems out there. Yet, few are those who still use it today.



When we speak about the way we see the world, however, we find it very hard to update our operating system. We tend to go to one of two extremes, either to get stuck in an old operating system that does not keep up with the world, with new discoveries and new understandings, or to throw away the old system, and repeatedly invent a completely new operating system, which doesn't take in account all the experience that was accumulated by using the old one.

That is why we continuously see a battle between generations. One generation who works with an old operating system which refuses to update, and another generation who invents a new one from scratch, which one day will be itself obsolete and derided by the next generation.

The solution is to never stop updating our "operating system", while continuously learning from the efforts and experience of those who developed and programmed it to the point where it is now.

This is something we can do if we recognize that there are universal, timeless principles, which do not change, because they are not things, they are not of this world.

The principles of mathematics do not change, for example, at least not in the scale of human time.

These are the archetypes the ancients spoke of, the principles of the Good, the Just, Beauty and Truth.

If we rely on these principles as our stable and common ground, we can build continuity, and not get stuck nor believe that our world view is the ultimate and the best one.

The Wisdom of Trees

Manjula Nanavati



Trees are sanctuaries. Whoever knows how to speak to them, whoever knows how to listen to them can learn the truth. They do not preach learning and precepts, they preach, undeterred by particulars, the ancient law of life.”

– Herman Hesse(1)

There is a relative uncertainty as to when our earliest human ancestors evolved on earth. But it is certain that by that time, a myriad variety of plants and trees had already been thriving on the planet. The very structure of a tree, with its trunk segmenting into branches, twigs and leaves, is a physical manifestation of the philosophical concept characterizing the relationship between the universe and the One; multiplicity from Unity. The tree’s concealed roots further extend the metaphor, of unity springing from a hidden origin or source. Even those of us who do not share this perception cannot help but experience a sense of awe, perhaps even an intuitive reverence, in the presence of a forest of these majestic giants clothed in their silent, steadfast, resilient beauty. Older than man himself, trees have been integral to myths and folklore in almost all cultures as symbols of solace, strength, abundance, and immortality.

Could the ubiquitous presence of these symbols across so many cultures and traditions suggest an affiliation between human beings and these arboreal beings that transgresses time and geography? Is there a synergistic and collaborative relationship in the fact that while they can consume carbon dioxide and give off oxygen, we do the exact opposite? Living as we do in cities of cement, steel and glass we may be losing our appreciation for the immense contribution trees continue to make to our lives, in terms of shelter, food, medicine, fuel, while balancing the very ecosystem of the planet we call home.

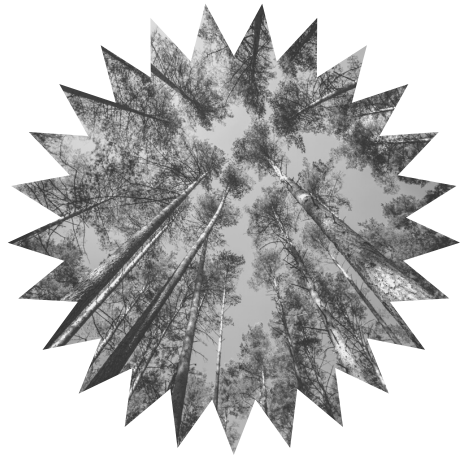
Well before Shinrin-Yoku, or forest bathing, developed as a therapy to boost the immune system in the 1980's, the benefits of spending time among trees was well documented by philosophers and poets. Walt Whitman saw them as 'an unheralded source of moral wisdom.'(2) Herman Hesse called them the 'most penetrating of preachers.'(3)

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks." – John Muir(4)

A single tree is usually home to a universe of life from roots to branch tips. Yet they themselves can give the impression of being separate, silent sentinels. Scientists are only now beginning to discover that trees can see, learn, communicate, and display social behaviour, forming alliances to nurture and protect damaged or dying neighbours(5). If consciousness is defined as the quality of sentience, the capability of sensing and responding to the environment, then these magnificent entities certainly qualify. If the level of consciousness depends on the ability to process, differentiate, integrate and communicate information, then it is evident that consciousness is not exclusive to humanity(6). And if we believe that age and experience can contribute toward wisdom, then trees with lives that span hundreds and even thousands of years, perhaps have much to communicate about life, if we could but learn to listen.

A Sense of Time

In those latitudes that trees shed their leaves to hibernate for winter, how do they differentiate between an unseasonal warm spell and the definitive arrival of spring? Scientists working on fruit trees have documented evidence that they wait for a certain amount of consecutive warm days, before beginning the process of 'awakening'. Beeches, for example, start growing new leaves only when there is at least thirteen hours of daylight a day. This astonishing evidence suggests that trees can "see", or register the presence of light, and use some kind of memory to compare day lengths and count warm days!(5)



Information Exchange

Trees "speak" to one another quite clearly through scent, warning of danger. Scientists in the African Savannah found that Acacia trees that giraffes were feeding on, began pumping toxins into their leaves as a bitter and effective deterrent, while releasing ethylene gas to warn neighbouring trees. The fore-warned trees begin to pump toxins into their leaves, in turn warning other trees down wind. There are trees that can recognize the saliva of different attacking insects, fighting them off by producing compounds to "call" specific predators to devour the harmful insects.

Communication can also take place underground. The roots of a tree can extend far beyond its crown, criss-crossing, and intersecting with those of its neighbours. In 1990 Suzanne Simard discovered that fungi attach themselves to root-tips releasing thin filaments, or hyphae, that penetrate through the soil, weaving through miles of root-systems of forest, creating a network capable of carrying signals from one tree to the next, in an exchange of information about insects, drought, or other dangers. Over centuries, a single fungus can network an entire forest, which prompted the journal *Nature* to dub this phenomenon the 'Wood Wide Web'(5).



Seeking the Light

Trees in suboptimal conditions adapt to make the most of the available light. With plenty of elbowroom, trees will branch out laterally, growing a wide canopy. But the same species when close to its neighbours will grow straight upwards, developing a longer, thinner trunk in an effort to reach plentiful light at higher elevations. Some species adapt by bending and twisting themselves over time as they reach towards the light.

With available sunlight, chlorophyll in the leaves allows a tree to photosynthesize – capture sunlight in the presence of carbon dioxide and water to produce needed sugars, while releasing oxygen back into the air. As sunlight and water become scarcer, deciduous trees save energy over the winter, by breaking down the chlorophyll, and loosening the grip of the leaf-stem to the branch. As the green chlorophyll fades other dazzling pigments become visible: the brilliant yellow of xanthophyll, the flaming orange of carotenoids, and the resplendent reds and purples of anthocyanins, that lay invisible under the green cloak of chlorophyll(7).

To a philosopher, here are some wondrous lessons from trees. Firstly, underneath veils lie mysteries waiting to be uncovered. We need to dare to go beyond our comfort zones to discover something new and beautiful waiting to blossom...if only we let go of the familiar, to discover who we really are. Like trees, can we too turn away from darkness and orient ourselves toward the light? And finally, the wisdom that loss need not be looked at with regret, but as a portal, to resurrect and and renew ourselves.

“Of all the seasons, Autumn offers the most to man, and requires the least of him.” – Hal Borland(8)

I Am Because We Are

Each tree in a forest grows in a unique location, and growing conditions like soil, water and nutrients can vary greatly over even small distances. This should make for variations in strength, and health measured by the rate of photosynthesis of each tree. However, students at the Institute for Environmental Research at Aachen discovered that in an undisturbed Beech forest, the trees shared nutrients through the fungal network intertwined within their roots, so that the rate of photosynthesis was the same for all trees. This means that “stronger” trees in rich growing conditions were giving sugar and water to those who were more deprived, ensuring their survival. But why would they do this? It seems to be in contradiction of the Darwinian principal of survival of the fittest.



In fact their much longer life spans seem to allow trees to experience time in a different way than the relatively short-sighted human view. The principle at work here seems to be that by losing weaker members of the community, everyone loses. Through gaps in the tree cover, the hot sun can dry out the moist floor, swirling winds can disrupt the formation of nutrient-rich humus, and turbulent storms can infiltrate, causing destruction. In hurricane force winds that can blow tree trunks dangerously past their flexion point, every tree plays an integral part to protect its neighbours. Minute differences in the unique characteristics of the trunks and branches, allow the trees to sway at slightly different speeds, gently hitting each other's crowns lessening overall sway and angle of bend. But this is only possible if the trees are positioned very closely together. So, disadvantaged or diseased members of the community, regardless of species, are protected and supported with essential nutrients from richer neighbours, contributing to the strength of the whole forest(5).

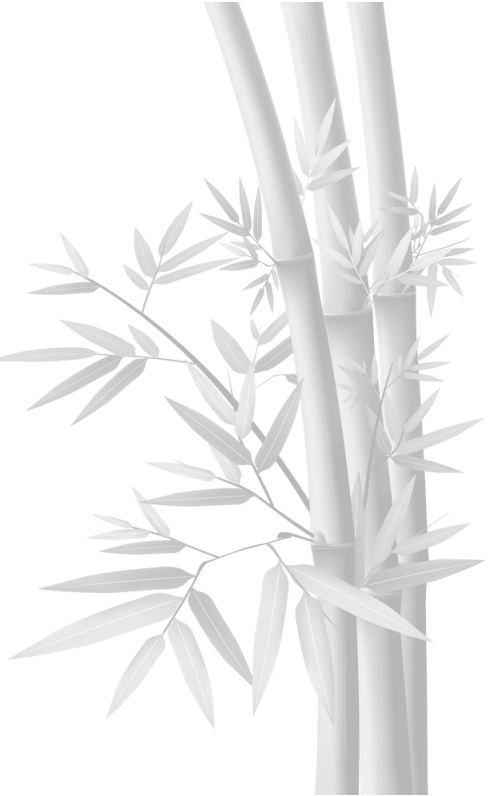
How much would humanity have to gain if we could truly perceive the wisdom of this: To be able to see beyond separation, to perceive that we are all part of one web of life, and that everyone ultimately loses when we compete, because in the ONE life of which we are all a part, a wound to one damages the whole.

This unity is hard for us to comprehend, but clonal forests serve as emblematic examples. Pando, also known as the Trembling Giant, is composed of 47,000 genetically identical trees spread across 106 acres in Utah. Aspens reproduce by sending up shoots from their roots, instead of seeds. They rise through the soil and grow into fully mature trees. What may look like a forest of individual trees, is really one giant organism, connected through a complex subterranean root-system. Though each individual tree lives to be 130 years old or so, Pando is estimated to be 80,000 years old!(9)

Just as we must look below the surface to understand how these aspens are all connected to each other, so too must we look beyond the visible, if we are to perceive how all human beings are connected. Many ancient traditions emphasize that we all come from the same source, that we are all part of a universal consciousness. But until science is able to catch up and perhaps develop the tools to explain what appear to us as indecipherable mysteries, we can take our cue from the wisest, ancient sages and philosophers, who all urge us to look deep into nature, for it is in understanding her laws, that we may comprehend life.

“Nature is the source of all true knowledge.” – Leonardo Da Vinci(10)

As extraordinary exemplars, trees show us how to have the courage to persevere against the harshest of circumstances. They teach us how to stay grounded even as we soar upwards towards the light. They demonstrate that flexibility is not a function of how much the trunk can bend, but rather how to stay rooted, so that even as we bend, we can come effortlessly back to our centre. They show us simply and authentically, how to give abundantly, and how to align to the rhythm and cycles of life. These wisest of teachers speak to us not in voices, but in elegant metaphors of not only how to live, but how to die, and how to ceaselessly strive to be the best we can be. However, if there is one overarching precept that humanity can take from these magnificent beings, it is this: to respect and protect all life because we are all essentially an interconnected, interdependent and integral part of one unified web of life.



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Through 18 weeks that include experiential practices, you will be introduced to philosophical ideas from different cultures and civilizations.

The course combines ideas conceived by important philosophers spanning from the east to the west. It aims to make ancient philosophy accessible to the one who seeks to build himself and his future by cultivating a philosophical approach to life.

Each class is designed to help you reflect, introspect and bring these ideas alive in your daily life.

We invite you to attend the free introductory sessions that will give you a glimpse into some of the topics covered in the course.

Courses starting

@Indiranagar centre

Wed, 1st Nov | 7:30-9:30 PM
(Trial classes 1st Nov & 8th Nov)



@ Jayanagar centre

Tue, 21st Nov | 7:30-9:30 PM
(Trial classes 21st Nov & 8th Nov)



This course introduces the essence of ancient philosophy as a tool for the person to build himself and his future.

Philosophical life makes it possible to reveal the mysteries of man and the world, to deepen the view of reality and move in the world with more authenticity, inner confidence and happiness.

Over 19 sessions of lectures and practical exercises, you will be introduced to ideas from different cultures and civilizations. Each class is designed to help you reflect, introspect and bring these ideas alive in daily life.

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Meet yourself through perspectives of different cultures

How can we get to know ourselves better? How can we live in greater closeness to who we really are? What are the values we can work with? Through perspectives from the philosophies of ancient civilizations across the world, we deal with questions around purpose and meaning, happiness, ethics and freedom. This section brings Insights from Bhagavad Gita, the Stoics, Aristotle, Buddha, Confucius and ancient Egypt.

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Knowing yourself is essential for your inner development. In this session you will learn about the development of inner values through the seven principles in man and nature according to Greek and Indian philosophy.

BHAGAVAD GITA: REVEALING OUR INNER HERO

Developing inner strength to do the right action and becoming a peaceful warrior.

BUDDHA: PATH OF TRANSFORMATION

Learn about the roles of challenges and crises in our lives through the life and wisdom of Buddha.

MYSTERIES OF TIBET

Drawing inspiration from the teachings of ancient Tibet, investigate how control of the

mental is a major key for human development and spirituality

GREEK- ROMAN PHILOSOPHY: ABOUT HAPPINESS AND BEAUTY

Deeper meaning of these values through the teachings of Plotinus and Aristotle

FREEDOM TO BE: LESSONS FROM STOICS

Be inspired by the Stoics' understanding of human reality to take responsibility for your own life.

ANCIENT CHINA AND EGYPT: LIVING MEANINGFULLY

About justice and our ability to discern, inspired by the "Weighing of the Heart" from ancient Egypt and social order according to ancient China.

MEETING WITH THE TEACHER



PART 2: How can we live together?

We are here, together, this is our story. The society we live in is us! In this section we will look at the relationship between man and society and at navigating the challenges of living together without losing our personal freedom. Discover how the fabric of society is created, find your place by drawing inspiration from Plato's Republic, the wisdom of Pythagoras and more.

PLATO'S ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE: AWAKENING THE SOUL

Practising to see the reality as it is and the role we have to support each other in liberating ourselves

BUILDING A JUST SOCIETY

Principles of life together and practical tools to bring about real change.

LEARNING TO COEXIST

Teachings from Plato's 'Republic'

EDUCATION FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Active process that connects us with ourselves while giving tools to think, choose and act.

PRACTICAL SEMINAR

Know Yourself and put the learnings from these sections into practice

PART 3: Is it possible and how can we influence the future?

We are building the future all the time, the question is how and in what direction. In this section we will explore what is the role of the individual in the cycle of creation? How can we broaden our view? A glimpse into cycles of time, destiny, history and mythology.

LESSONS FROM MYTHOLOGY

Open the heart to myths and their connection to history and connect with eternal wisdom that goes beyond ever-changing history. Learn how myths are connected to our history

CYCLES IN HISTORY: AGES, YUGAS

Natural cycles and the development of humanity through ancient wisdom.

SOCRATIC CIRCLE

Process and practice major ideas learnt from the course

EVOLUTION AND DESTINY OF HUMANITY

About freedom, destiny and role of will power in building our future; inspired by the myth of Prometheus

FORGING A BETTER FUTURE THROUGH PHILOSOPHY

We discuss, share and summarise the 19 weeks together

MEETING WITH THE TEACHER

How to Sign Up?

Attend one of our introductory sessions to know the details and essence of the course. To know more, call us at 9663804871 or register on our website at <https://acropolis.org.in/living-philosophy-course-bangalore/>



UPCOMING EVENTS

Scan the QR code for further details



RUMI: In love with LOVE

Sat, 14th October 6:30-8:30 PM @ New Acropolis Indiranagar



Concentration and Clarity

Sun, 15th October 6:30-8:30 PM @ New Acropolis Jayanagar



Experiential session inspired by Stoicism

Wed, 18th October 7:30-9:00 PM @ New Acropolis Indiranagar

UPCOMING EVENTS

Scan the QR code for further details



The inner hero-Arjuna, Lessons for life inspired by Bhagawad Gita

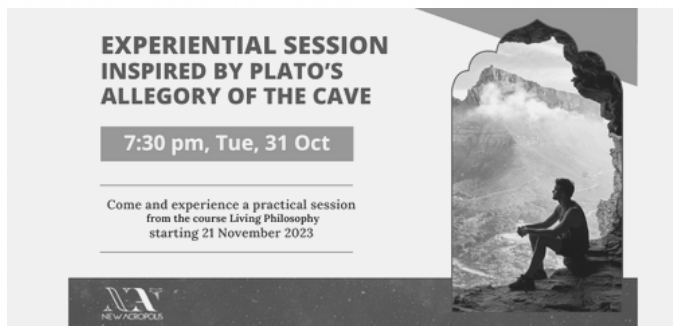
Wed, 25th October 7:30-9:00 PM @ New Acropolis Indiranagar



Decoding Love:

Drawing inspiration from Cupid and Psyche

Sat, 28th October 6:30-8:30 PM @ New Acropolis Indiranagar



Experiential Session inspired by Plato's Allegory of the Cave

Tue, 31st October 7:30-9:00 PM @ New Acropolis Jayanagar

UPCOMING EVENTS

Scan the QR code for further details



In the Eye of the storm:

Timeless lessons about Inner Calm

Sun, 5th November 6:30-8:30 PM @ New Acropolis Jayanagar



Experiential session inspired by Stoicism

Tue, 7th November 7:30-9:00 PM @ New Acropolis Jayanagar



Weighing of the Heart: An Egyptian key to living meaningfully

Sun, 19th November 6:30-8:30 PM @ New Acropolis Jayanagar

On the Cover:

Tropical Rain Flower

"Rain showers my spirit and waters my soul." Emily Logan Decens

As we welcome monsoon in Bangalore, it is a reminder to every philosopher at heart: just as the trees and plants embrace this beautiful natural phenomenon that enables them to transform, here is an opportunity for us to allow the showers to purify our body & soul both literally and metaphorically.

Image credits: By Arand from Getty Images Signature via Canvas

ACROPOLIS

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ACROPOLIS

Volume 5 Issue 5

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Living Philosophy

Connect the dots
Make sense of today's world
Rediscover human connections
Make philosophy a way of life



18 week course | 2 hours once a week



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