Leadership and Spirituality
Geoff Boyce, May 2007

> "I'm not religious…but I am spiritual!"
>
> This paper considers the growing acceptance and understanding of spirituality within the context of the work of chaplains at Flinders University who work cooperatively within the rubric *nurturing spirit, building community* while also working individually representing diverse religious faiths. A recent development has been the emergence of the idea of the faith-friendly workplace – that faith contributes to the life of a secular organization and therefore should be nurtured within the organization.

Introduction

Thank you for the invitation to share with you some of the challenges of being a University chaplain and some insights relating to leadership and spirituality.

At this time we are celebrating 40 years since Australia first legally recognised its indigenous peoples as equal citizens of this country. I acknowledge and pay my respects to the Kaurna people, the original custodians of this land on which we meet.
May we walk together in harmony.

"I am not religious…
I was appointed by the Uniting Church to be chaplain to Flinders University in 1997.

My initial dilemma was that I was a symbol of what most within the university had rejected.

"I am not religious…" was not just the opening line of many individual conversations with staff and students, but seemed to be the stance of the University *per se* in its understanding of being "secular".

At my initial meeting with the then Deputy Vice-Chancellor, now Vice-Chancellor, I came straight to the point. In my opinion chaplaincy as it had traditionally been practiced at Flinders now seemed completely marginal and irrelevant to the university. I was talking about a *religious* chaplaincy, where it was assumed that chaplains from each of the Christian denominations would essentially cover the religious and spiritual needs of the whole campus by each meeting the needs of their own denominations. Clearly this model was now defunct! If we were to have a chaplaincy that was going to contribute to the life of the university, it needed re-invention!

…but I am spiritual!"
This conversation took place the day after the "Bringing Then Home Report" of the aboriginal "Stolen Generations" was presented to Parliament. Flinders has an indigenous centre on the campus. Intuitively I ventured to the Deputy-Vice-Chancellor, "how can we understand aboriginal people if we don't accept that there is such a thing as spirituality?"

Ever since, the cornerstone of our professional relationship has been the mutual acceptance of the fact of spirituality and the assurance of my commitment to contribute to the life of the university through a

re-imagined chaplaincy, "no longer pretending to be a privileged insider, (but) no longer willing to be a trivialised outsider" (Brueggemann 1993).

The Leader evokes the spirituality of the enterprise

How to re-invent a useful chaplaincy with staff and students in a secular institution, who, by and large, have no time for organised religion, when I am the very symbol of it? Is there a way of being faithful to the command to love God and neighbour, which is the Christians' commission, while not being "religious"?

My Spiritual Director pointed me in the direction of Harrison Owen, a management consultant in the US. A former Episcopal priest, Owen has used classic theological categories to provide a perspective on dynamics for transformation within secular enterprises.

(1) Organisations have spirit.
Owen's premise is that organizations in their essence are spirit. (Owen 1987)

I had been a teacher for thirty years and I knew about school spirit. What is school spirit? Well we're not sure, but we know when we've got it and we sure know when we haven't! And I've seen school spirit change almost overnight when there's been a change of school principal.

If the University had spirit I would begin to look for opportunities to lift peoples' spirits. This was what a chaplain could do – nurture spirit! I would take notice of morale, and be there to listen and support spirit.

(2) Organisations have a myth.

Owen suggests that myths are the primal stories about "how we do things round here"…stories about how we survived the last depression, or the way things were when "so-and-so" was boss… (Owen 1987)

I asked myself, what is the Flinders myth?
Didn't Flinders start as the kid brother of Adelaide University? Didn't Flinders lead the Vietnam War Moratorium and the Anti-Apartheid protests against the visiting South African rugby team? The myth of Flinders exults social justice. Flinders gives the disadvantaged a 'fair go'.

> "Myth is neither true nor false, but rather *behind* truth…myth is not just "any old story", it is *the* story, which gives shape and focus to Spirit, and makes everything make sense…it is the eyeglasses through which a given people perceive and interpret their world. It is the vantage point from which, or by which the *true* is judged to be true…" (Owen 1987)

But myth is also dynamic.

> "Myth communicates the moving quality of the human Spirit as it seeks to become whatever it was supposed to be…it doesn't just communicate *about* Spirit…but in some way manifests that Spirit in experiential terms; you can feel it." (Owen 1987)

The myths of organizations, whether they are embodied in its founder, or constructed through circumstance, are the ground from which its values and beliefs are articulated and actions taken.

But Universities are in a changed situation. The buzz of student life of the 60's and 70's seems to have gone. Increasingly, students can do their work on-line. If they do come to lectures they soon leave for their part-time jobs. Staff rarely venture out of their offices for a cause. University has become a

business and everyone seems to be 24/7 busy with little time or energy for communal action (Cain and Hewitt 2004).

Nevertheless, if Owen is right, a Christian chaplain, attempting to be true to love of God and neighbour, should not only engage in acts of thoughtfulness and kindness to lift peoples' spirits, but look for opportunities to reinforce the positive values that arise by evoking the myth - creating space for marginalised voices to be recognised and heard, identifying, seeking out and supporting the disadvantaged…

I like the idea of Adelaide educationist, poet and activist Erica Jolly, who has suggested that in Australia we might replace the word 'myth' with the word 'dreaming', with all its aboriginal depth. We are close enough to the "Aryian myth" of Hitler and fascism, with all its powerful will for dominance, for "myth" to be anything but dangerous, based on a lie.

We do well to acknowledge that all systems - religious, political or scientific, may be turned against humanity, that 'spirit' may be nurtured to more effectively achieve cynical ends, that myth may be constructed to galvanise armies of destruction.

First steps in a re-imagined chaplaincy
The time of East Timor's vote for independence in 1999 was a watershed for our chaplaincy at Flinders. We were getting news of militias, supported by the Indonesian army, killing innocent civilians. You might recall the outrage in Australia - and eventually Australian troops were sent in.

How were Indonesian students on campus feeling? What was their spirit?

I began to email Suparto, the President of the Muslim Students Association, who was Indonesian. "What is happening in East Timor is terrible," he said, "Islam condemns this violence!"
I visited the Asian Studies staff who were deeply troubled by these events, not least for the possible disastrous impact on Australia's relationship with Indonesia - a relationship in which some had invested their life's work.
I heard rumours of victimisation of Indonesian students on campus. A campaign to picket Garuda Airlines was underway: understandable but not helpful reactions by Australian students seeking a channel for their outrage.

What should the chaplain do? What does leadership require of me?

I decided to ask the President of the Muslim Students Association to join me in a public meeting to give opportunity for the Indonesians to have a voice; to create an opportunity for Australians and Indonesians to express their grief at what was happening in solidarity with each other against the murder that was occurring.

But I also thought it would be a good opportunity for Christian and Muslim to make a public statement about religion and violence, and all the better if we did it together. This was well before 9/11 when Islam wasn't on the public radar.

The leaders of the conservative Christian group on campus opposed my decision. But the Student's Association, previously lukewarm to me, jumped into action to make posters and advertise the meeting.

On the day of the meeting the Asian Studies staff came with many of the Indonesian students. It was wonderful the staff came, speaking fluent Indonesian, consoling them. The Professor of Asian Studies opened the meeting. Tears tumbled down his face as he explained what was happening, helping Australian students see that blame should not be dumped on fellow Indonesian students. The Lutheran

chaplain read the Beatitudes and an Indonesian read from the Koran. We had a time of silence, to pray for peace in our own way. To conclude, the President of the Muslim Students Association and I each lit a candle, made a statement condemning violence, and carried our candles out through the meeting. Everyone was given a candle as they left, to keep lit during this difficult time.

At the end of this hastily convened meeting, the Academic Rights Officer of the Students Association, whom I had thought was highly sceptical and not at all supportive of chaplaincy, bowled me over by saying "you've got to keep doing this!" So we did - each day at noon, for a week, the different religious communities took turns to lead a short public meeting to light a candle and pray for peace. This was our first multifaith activity - and a religious sceptic inspired it!

As I now reflect on this event I can see Harrison's Owen's schema in action. Staff and students previously unconnected to chaplaincy, lukewarm or rejecting of religion, supported this initiative. Why? I suggest they did so because the Flinders myth was evoked; it felt "right", concurring with the mythic 'fair go', both for the innocent civilians of East Timor, and closer to home, for the Indonesian students.

Although life on the campus has changed, the Flinders myth remains a powerful script, influential, and never far below the surface.

(3) Organisations have rituals.

> "Rituals put the words of myth into form, motion, music…ritual is acted myth." (Owen 1987)

Rituals may be as formal as a funeral or as everyday as a "hello".

A few years ago a member of staff suicided and a small group of colleagues, one of whom discovered the body, were immediately and profoundly affected.

When I visited the Head of School to offer support, her immediate thought was that she couldn't think of any staff who were "religious", who might be recipients of such support, and neither was she. Four years into my chaplaincy and I was still a symbol of the "religious"!

But I was impressed with her honesty and candour.

I offered to attend morning tea each week should anyone want to talk about it. She was happy enough to agree to my offer, but I could see she thought it was inconsequential. No one did talk with me about the suicide at morning tea, apart from one staff member who had decided to resign lest he capitulate in like manner. But every Wednesday morning, I attended morning tea. A ritual.

Gradually, the Head of School began to look forward to me popping in to say hello after morning tea.

One immediate issue had to do with a divided staff - some (younger) staff wanted to talk openly about the suicide, to air their grievances and fears, as well as question what might have contributed to their colleague's death. She felt that if she convened an open discussion it might get out of control and be destructive. Older staff stoically wanted to forget it and move on.

The more I listened the more I could tell that her intuition was telling her the incident could not be ignored. She was worried about how to handle it constructively. My role was to act as a kind of mirror so that her intuitions might be voiced, put out there for her to look at, as it were. Eventually she found a way for the suicide to be discussed, led by an external consultant.

Although it was never spoken, I could tell that, as Head of School, she felt responsible for the conditions that might have contributed to this person's death. She decided the culture of the School needed to be changed to create a better work – recreation balance.

So I continued my weekly ritual of morning tea in the staff room as an assurance to staff; and my occasional 'poppings-in' to the Head became a professional friendship. I encouraged her to take notice of her intuitions. As she took notice and acted on them, she began to celebrate her achievements toward her goal with me and I was able to affirm her courage in leadership.

One of her strategies was to refurbish the tearoom to use it to celebrate milestones, welcome guests and so on, with wonderful, generous morning teas – rituals that reinforced the culture she was working toward. It took a couple of years until she felt she had achieved her objective. Independently we both recognised this when the rejuvenated social committee had organised an end of year barbecue for staff and their families. We signed off, as it were, to the sound of a jazz band.

The chaplain as leader evokes the spirituality of the enterprise, by identifying and reinforcing its myth and facilitating its rituals. The quest of leadership that recognises spirit is transformation - the search for a better way to be.

The leader engages the spirituality of the individual.

Recently I had the good fortune to be invited to a select breakfast seminar with Prof. George Vaillant, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard and visiting Nimmo scholar at Adelaide University. Prof Vaillant is in his mid-seventies. He is looking back on a lifetime of medical research to direct his attention to what he thinks really matters in his field.

His first slide looked very familiar.

> Lord, make me an instrument of your *peace . . .*
>
> Where there is hatred, let me sow *love.*
>
> Where there is injury, let me sow *forgiveness*;
>
> Where there is doubt, let me sow *faith*;
>
> Where there is despair, let me give *hope*….
>
> Where there is sadness, let me give *joy*;
>
> O Master, grant that I may not so much to seek
>
> compassion but to give compassion . . .
>
> *"The Peace Prayer of St. Francis".*
>
> *Attributed to: Father Esther Becquerel (1912)*

The last of the highlighted three, faith, hope and joy, provide the title of Vaillant's soon to be published book on spirituality (Vaillant 2007).

These qualities – peace, love, forgiveness, faith, hope and joy – Vaillant calls 'positive emotions'. In so doing he establishes terminology that allows spirituality to be embraced within the behavioural sciences.

Advances in neuroscience show that these 'positive emotions' are located in the limbic area of the brain. This is a primitive part of the brain, common to all mammals. One implication of this fact is that spirituality is genetically hard-wired into us. All human persons are born spiritual.

On the other hand, says Vaillant, religion is located in the cognitive part of the brain, the cerebral cortex. Religion is essentially rational. Religions, like all systems of knowledge, are humanly constructed to make sense of our lives. My rule of thumb definition is that religions are organised expressions of spiritualities.

Our confusion over the relationship between spirituality and religion occurs because religion has always embraced spirituality. But the western world, in particular, disenchanted with much of organised religion, is separating the two and discovering spirituality per se. And if the neuroscientists are right, this separation of spirituality from religion has some physical, scientific validity.

Nevertheless, I suspect they are closely related.

The Secular
One of the many factors promoting this shift to spirituality has been the insistence in the West on the so-called "separation of powers" – the separation of 'Church and State'; the establishment of so-called *secular* institutions. Far from using the word 'secular' to mean 'godless', the intention of the secular was to preserve freedom of religion among its constituents. In SA this was particularly the case because its free settlers were escaping religious oppression in their native homelands (Pike 1967). Our forefathers did not want the English model where the Church of England was hand-in-glove with the government and the monarchy. That model resulted in the oppression of all who would not submit to the Church of England. The *dissenters*, as they were known, found a new life in South Australia enshrining the right to freedom of religion as a prime value.

The secular asserts that no one religion may have dominance over another. I would like to think that this understanding of a sense of equality, of respecting the rights of others to their beliefs, and 'fair go' for all, is still with us. I wonder whether our reticence to talk about religion in the public sphere is because of our presumption about the separation of "church and state", that religious talk is to be separated from the public sphere.

On the other hand we seem to be more comfortable talking about peace, love, forgiveness, faith, hope and happiness, Vaillant's 'positive emotions'. And if spirituality is separated from religion, we have established a potentially peaceful way for people to keep their faiths at a respected distance from each other while still sharing spirituality.

Multifaith Chaplaincy

When the first non-Christian chaplains were appointed to Flinders University in the late 90's, we had to choose whether we would work independently and competitively, or work cooperatively, while maintaining difference. We had no hesitation in choosing the latter and became one of the first multifaith university chaplaincies, possibly in the world, with this collegial model. Intuitively we chose *nurturing spirit, building community* as the rubric within which we would cooperate. That is, while maintaining difference of religion, we embraced the commonality of spirituality. This allowed us to engage with people of other faiths or no faith, on the grounds of spirituality, at the human level. We may bring the insights of religion positively to our engagement, as I have already illustrated. But human spirituality has been the ground for our living together as a chaplaincy, in harmony.

In working with people of other faiths, I let them know that I don't know much about their faith and would like them to tell me if I create any problem for them in my ignorance. I am interested in how

we might better live together across our differences, not try to make 'them' into 'me'. I am enriched by their difference. In fact I *need* them in their difference for me to be fully human.

Organising the meeting during the East Timor crisis was very hurried, achieved mainly with a flurry of email. During the meeting we were also going to pray. As I walked into the meeting room with my Muslim friend by my side, I suddenly realised that I had no idea how Muslims pray! Walking down the isle through the meeting, I lent over to Suparto and whispered in his ear "How do you pray?" He lent over and whispered back, "Just follow your heart, Geoff, follow your heart". And we did. Tears were shed together, and new bonds that came "from the heart" were established between those present.

The common element was spirituality - the desire to work for peace. Peace, love, forgiveness, faith, hope, joy and compassion – all were experienced across religious divide.

So it is not necessary for me to know all about Islam, for example, to begin to work together with Muslims, if one has a sense of a shared spirituality. 'Knowing about' is cognitive – in the cerebral cortex. But when we 'follow our heart' we are working with 'positive emotions' in the limbic. Of course as we do things together, we learn. We are whole persons, rational as well as spiritual.

What is spirituality?
I don't claim to know what spirituality actually is.

Giving the Flinders Investigator Lecture in 2000, the cartoonist Michael Leunig described how one frosty morning, traveling from his home in the country to his work in Melbourne, he was captured by a particular scene, as he drove his car over the brow of a hill. It was the light, the mist hanging over the road… and, if I remember rightly, a cow! Leunig told how his heart leapt, he felt uplifted, there was a sense of the numinous, the transcendent. That scene just bowled him over!

My Buddhist colleague tells how in his youth he attended a Methodist Youth Camp in the Flinders Ranges. One night the leader asked everyone to go outside and just look at the stars for twenty minutes. That night under the stars he realized he was a contemplative. This transforming experience set him on a journey that now finds him as a Buddhist monk. The simple act of spending time beneath the night sky, looking at the stars! Many people tell how the cosmos, or the land, or animals, or poetry, music or art, speak to them, lifting their spirits, providing a deep sense of connection and affirmation about their selves.

A sense of our selves in the cosmic universe, a sense of respect and awe for something outside of our own worlds, moments of inexplicable wonder, the joy of a new birth, the stirring of a piece of music, the singing of a national anthem when medals are presented … these are some of the colours of spirituality. They may be 'positive emotions' but they derive from moments of experience beyond us.

Leaders that look outward to be life-giving to others will be instruments of peace, and enhance love, forgiveness, faith, hope and joy in others as they live it with integrity themselves. Transformation, the quest for a better way, starts with us!

The leader respects religious diversity

We talk a lot about religious diversity, but look at what various religions all say about what is central to them - what has become known as "The Golden Rule"…

Christianity
In everything do to others as you would have them do to

you, for this is the law and the prophets. *Matthew.* 7:12

Islam

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother
that which he desires for himself. *Hadith*

Judaism

A certain heathen came to Shammai and said to him, make me a proselyte, on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand, on one foot. Thereupon he repulsed him with the rod which was in his hand. When he went to Hillel, he said to him. What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour that is the whole Torah; all the rest of it is commentary; go and learn. *Talmud, Shabbat* 31 a

Hinduism

This is me sum of duty: do naught to others which if done
to thee would cause thee pain. *The Mahabharata*

Confucianism

Tsekung asked. Is there one word that can serve as a principle of conduct for life? Confucius replied. It is the word shu - reciprocity: Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.
Analects 15.23

Zoroastrianism

Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others.
Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29

Pagan

Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfill,
An' it harm none,
do what ye will.
Blessed be to thee. *Wiccan Rede*

Buddhism

Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.
Udana – Varga

Jainism

A man should wander about treating all creatures as he
himself would be treated. *Sutrakritanga* 1.11.33

Baha'i

And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou choosest for thyself. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, 30*

Isocrates (436-338 BCE)

Do not do unto others what angers you if done to you by others.

African Traditional Religions.

Yoruba Proverb (Nigeria)

One who you think should be hit is none else but you. One who you think should be governed is none else but you. One who you think should be tortured is none else but you. One who you think should be enslaved is none else but you. One who you think should be killed is none else but you.

A healthy spirituality creates good religion. Bad religion poisons spirituality.

Enlightened corporate leaders are beginning to recognise the need to be proactive in nurturing positive values, by providing 'faith-friendly' workplaces that affirm the spiritualities of their employees while remaining secular enterprises. They recognise the contribution of healthy spiritualities in the workplace, the positive values of honesty, integrity and care for others. Such leadership doesn't just accept the value of religious faith in the workplace as a source of spiritual values, but actively promotes conditions for its sustenance and opportunities for inter-faith dialogue within the ambit of healthy spiritualities (Benefiel 2005).

Faith Friendly Australia - *A Charter for Developing Faith-friendly Communities*

Flinder's Professor Norman Habel and I, supported by the Flinders chaplains, are putting forward a vision of a "Faith Friendly Australia". It builds on the work of David Miller at Yale in the US, who has coined the phrase "faith friendly workplaces", to describe initiatives of leaders in such corporates as the Ford Motor Company, who have recognised that the religions and spiritualities of their workforce contribute positively to the enterprise (Miller 2006).

We are proposing that Australian corporate leaders may want to sign on to a charter as a means of developing respectful and spiritually-nurturing workplaces.

The Vision

> **That Australians work towards creating faith friendly communities in which peoples of all faiths are open to each other, support each other and respect each other.**

The Context

> **This charter recognises the character of the current Australian context:**

1. **Many faiths**
   Australia is designated a multicultural nation. Within Australian society there are many diverse faiths, variously designated religions, denominations, spiritualities, values and traditions.

2. **Faith as Private**
   It has been typical of Australian culture that Australians are expected to keep their faith private and not to 'wear their faith on their sleeve.'

3. **Faiths in Tension**
   Nevertheless, tensions and conflicts have arisen between faiths both within the faith communities themselves, within the wider community and within the work place.

4. **Faith Awareness**
   More recently, there has been a growing awareness of the need to understand and publicly support the faith needs of all groups in the work place and the community at large.

The Principles

> **The charter is grounded in the following principles:**

1. **Principle of Mutual Recognition**
   A faith friendly community recognises the right of all faiths to meet the needs of their respective members in any given community.

2. **Principle of Mutual Concern**
   A faith friendly community intends to meet the religious and spiritual needs of its members of various faiths.

3. **Principle of Mutual Understanding**
   A faith friendly community seeks to understand the values and beliefs of each faith in a given community rather than to pass judgement on them.

4. **Principle of Mutual Respect**

A faith friendly community seeks to respect the differences between the values and beliefs of its members.

The Agenda

To achieve the vision of this charter it is recommended that:

1. **Exploration**
A range of representative bodies from the work place, education, institutions, politics and society at large meet to explore this charter and its implications for Australia today.

2. **Endorsement**
Businesses, companies, educational bodies and other institutions endorse this charter and explore appropriate ways of developing policies within their respective contexts that would enable faith-friendly communities to emerge.

3. **Implementation**
These same bodies introduce specific vehicles to enable each faith community to celebrate its respective rites and practices within the relevant work, educational or social contexts.

4. **Support Services**
The necessary support services needed to implement these policies and practices be the responsibility of the company, educational institution or other   relevant community rather than the individual faith communities as such.

Conclusion

"I'm not religious…but I am spiritual!"
We are all spiritual and spirituality is the common language among us.

The leader evokes the spirituality of the enterprise,
recognising spirit within the organization,
drawing on the myth of the organization and
creating space for rituals that affirm the myth.

The leader engages the spirituality of the individual,
nurturing the life of an enterprise by modelling and coopting the language of spirituality while maintaining the enterprise's secularity.

The leader respects religious diversity,
recognising that healthy spiritualities contribute to the life of the enterprise and
nurturing such spiritualities.

Ultimately, faith friendly means everyone friendly!

Postscript

Leadership : spirit, myth and ritual in action.

When Steve Waugh's team won the World Cup in England in 1999 and night had fallen on the celebrations and disappointments of opposing teams, young Ricky Ponting led the Australian team back on to the pitch at Lords and led them in the singing of *Under a Southern Cross*.

I read about it next day in the paper. It was a moment all about leadership and spirit.

> ### An Anthem That Lasted All Night
> *The Sunday Mail, October 10th 1999*
>
> The Australian cricket team staged a secret and very private invasion of Lord's after winning the World Cup.
>
> Four hours after their trouncing of Pakistan, the Australians stormed onto cricket's most famous acreage to crown their triumph in a uniquely Australian way.
>
> "The celebrations went on for many hours in the Lord's dressing room," said Steve Waugh in *No Regrets*. "A singalong with the boys culminated in an experience that was more than just a highlight of our careers – it was one of the greatest experiences of our lives. Ricky Ponting took us all onto the ground and we put the World Cup down on the centre wicket. Punter got on top of Tom Moody's shoulders, pulled out a poem he had written a couple of weeks ago, read it slowly, with much feeling, then led us in one of the most stirring renditions of *Under the Southern Cross* I have ever witnessed. We sang it once, then again, then we stopped and we sang it again. At 8.30pm, with no-one else about, our victory anthem echoed around this temple of sport. A magic moment. I'll never forget the togetherness of the team and the genuine delight we all felt because we had done it for each other. I can clearly remember thinking…it doesn't get any better than this."

One thing that impressed me about this was, not just the charisma of Ricky Ponting, but the leadership of Steve Waugh.

Waugh's own sense of self was not at all phased by Ponting's initiative; he was not threatened by letting Ponting take the lead in the celebration ritual. He felt the 'rightness' of it all within a context of connectedness within the team.

Waugh demonstrated a wonderful kind of leadership that is able to take a back seat to someone else who is the right person for the moment. In the highly competitive domain of international sport, such leadership is all the more remarkable. Put the other way, a leadership that is so ego dependent that it must always lead from the front, playing to the cameras as it were, is not likely to create space for others to thrive! To lead from the back, or even the side, demands spiritual strength. It shows respect, integrity and true humility.

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