

DOT POINT

VCE RELIGION AND SOCIETY UNITS 3 AND 4

◦ Howard Clark ◦



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Science Press

Unit 3 The Search For Meaning

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3.1.1.33 Comment on texts as an aspect of religion.

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3.2.1.12 Describe spiritual experiences as an aspect of religion.

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3.2.1.14 Describe symbols as an aspect of religion.

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3.2.1.15 Explain the role of symbols in responding to the search for meaning.

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3.2.1.16 Describe texts as an aspect of religion.

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3.2.4.12 For the Conservative denomination of Judaism, explain how particular beliefs and behaviours are intended to engender and nurture meaning.

3.2.4.13 For the Reform or Liberal denomination of Judaism, explain how particular beliefs and behaviours are intended to engender and nurture meaning.

Sikhism

3.2.4.14 For a selected denomination from Sikhism, explain how particular beliefs and behaviours are intended to engender and nurture meaning.



3.3.4 Interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material to analyse the influence of a member's religious beliefs on their interpretation of a significant life experience.

3.3.4.1 Interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material to analyse the influence of a member's religious beliefs on their interpretation of a significant life experience.

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Unit 4

Religion, Challenge and Change



Science Press
ISBN 978-0-85583-8676

4.2.2 Analyse a significant challenge faced by a religious tradition or denomination in a religion-state relationship.

4.2.2.1 Analyse a significant challenge faced by a religious tradition or denomination in a religion-state relationship.

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4.2.3 Discuss the interactions between religions and nation states and their effect on society.

4.2.3.1 Identify the variety of relationships that exist between religions and nation states.

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4.2.3.2 Describe the variety of relationships that exist between religions and nation states.

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4.2.3.3 Explain the relationships that exist between religions and nation states, particularly in Judaism, e.g. Israel.

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4.2.3.4 Explain the relationships that exist between religions and nation states, for example in Christianity, e.g. Malta (Roman Catholicism), Greece (Greek Orthodox), England (Church of England), Denmark (Church of Denmark), Norway (Evangelical Lutheran), Tonga (Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga).

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4.2.3.5 Explain the relationships that exist between religions and nation states, particularly in Islam, e.g. Pakistan, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia (Sunni Islam), Iran (Shi'a Islam), Yemen (mixed Sunni and Shi'a Islam).

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4.2.3.6 Explain the relationships that exist between religions and nation states, particularly in Hinduism, e.g. Nepal prior to 2006.

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4.2.3.8 Explain the relationships that exist between religions and nation states, particularly in Sikhism, e.g. multireligious India.

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4.2.3.9 Explain the relationships that exist between religions and nation states, particularly in multireligious countries, e.g. Indonesia (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism).

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4.2.4 Evaluate how religion responds to challenges from a nation state.

4.2.4.1 Investigate, describe and evaluate the ways in which religion has interacted with the nation state through the example of Judaism in Germany up to 1945 or Hinduism in India pre- and post-Independence (1947) or Buddhism in Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Tibet or Vietnam or Judaism, Christianity and Islam in Israel and Palestine since 1948 or Christianity, e.g. Roman Catholicism in Poland, especially in the 1980s or Christianity in a Latin American country or Islam in Egypt, Indonesia, Iran or Turkey, or your own choice.

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4.2.4.2 Investigate, describe and evaluate the ways in which religion has interacted with the nation state through the example of Australian government legislation and the involvement of religious institutions regarding: Australian Aboriginal peoples and spiritualities; Torres Strait Islander peoples and religion.

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Answers



Science Press
ISBN 978-0-85583-8676

Unit 3 The Search For Meaning

3.1.1.1 Identify belief as an aspect of religion.

Belief is defined as a state of mind where one accepts as true something which cannot be proved by normal experiences or evidence.

3.1.1.2 Describe belief as an aspect of religion.

Belief as an aspect or characteristic of religion is associated with the transcendent realm which is held to be true by a specific group of people called believers. In general, these beliefs are about the nature of the god or deity, the nature of the transcendent realm, the process of creation, the process of interaction with humanity and the concept of some end time.

Beliefs determine what was originally written in the sacred texts and over time these writings themselves determined the beliefs of later generations. It is often accepted that the sacred texts and writings are revelations from God and therefore God's word or instruction to his people.

3.1.1.3 Comment on belief as a fundamental aspect of religion.

Belief is the fundamental basis of religion and every activity within a religion is predicated on that belief or helps to support it. The aspects of religion: beliefs; sacred stories; spaces, places, times and artefacts; texts; rituals; symbols; social structures; ethics; and spiritual experiences relate to each other and are all integral to the expression of belief or the support of belief. Belief determines one's behaviour, actions, interrelationships, hopes and expectations. Belief supports a spiritual world extra to and interrelated with the world of reality and so is an integral part of any spiritual concept. Beliefs further determine the rituals appropriate for interaction with the transcendent realm. Beliefs therefore determine all religious behaviour or attitudes and this behaviour reinforces the knowledge and understanding of new generations of believers. This maintains continuity within the religious community.

3.1.1.4 Identify ethics as an aspect of religion.

Ethics is the study of the determination process of individual decision making about what is a morally correct or a worthy action. Ethics is the word used for the reasoning behind why certain behaviours or attitudes are considered right or wrong and religion has traditionally played an important role in determining this. Sometimes various ethical guiding statements are explained as the will of God, other times they are used to bring about maximum good in a society or to allow an individual to become more like God in behaviour.

3.1.1.5 Describe ethics as an aspect of religion.

Religious ethical statements take on the status of belief statements and become expected behaviour for followers of particular traditions. They often extend from the writings and therefore the beliefs of the religious community and are used as social rules and determine whole of society expectations and so maintain accepted behaviours within the religious structure. In some societies, there are social punishments for non-ethical behaviour and in some countries there are laws set up to mirror religious ethical behaviour. In modern Australia, for example, the fundamental rules against killing and stealing are based on the Judeo-Christian rules set down in the Torah thousands of years ago.

3.1.1.6 Comment on ethics as a fundamental aspect of religion.

Ethical teaching is developed in association with the sacred stories and texts and from the fundamental beliefs of a religion. How humans react to other humans, the living world and the rest of creation is part of the main belief structure followed by believers. Sometimes decisions are made without direct guidance from the ancient texts but these are focused and guided by comparing historical precedent and the theological wisdom of teachers from earlier times as well as the present day.

Sometimes associated rites and rituals are based on ethical decisions. One example is marriage which is an important rite of passage associated with a specific public ceremony. One of its roles is to allow for ethical sexual practices within a relationship, ethical care of children produced from relationships and ethical distribution of wealth obtained during a life.

When ethical teachings follow on from the beliefs described in the sacred texts and writings, sometimes the rites or rituals are also described in the text.

3.1.1.7 Identify rituals as an aspect of religion.

A ritual is a religious ceremony or special activity. In this context, ceremony simply refers to a collection of special behaviours performed in the formally appropriate or correct manner. In religious traditions, they are often divided into life cycle rituals and calendrical rituals. Calendrical rituals occur at specific times of the year and life cycle rituals occur at special occasions of a life.

3.1.1.8 Describe rituals as an aspect of religion.

Rituals, both life cycle and calendrical, are based on beliefs, supported by the sacred stories and specifically relate to special spaces and places. Calendrical rituals occur at certain times of the year and life cycle rituals occur at special occasions of a life. They have their own set of symbols and artefacts, and enhance social structures, ethical decisions and spiritual experiences in a religious community.

Rituals and ceremonies have importance beyond the actual physical activities. They allow members of the faith to transcend from normal life into the spiritual therefore it is important that the correct process is carried out. Sometimes this process is described in the texts and developed over time through historical traditions.

The core beliefs of Muslims are associated with submitting to Allah and accepting Allah's rule on Earth so one's soul, after death, can be in paradise for eternity. The life cycle rituals support these. For example, when a child is named not only is the child given to Allah but also named to be remembered by Allah. The family expect the child to be taken to Allah at the end of their life because Allah will call him or her by name as one of the chosen. When the father or family elder whispers the words of the Shahada and call to prayer into the baby's ear it focuses the child on Allah and Islam (submission) from the very start of life. This act is also important to the father as it supports the first of the Five Pillars of Islam. A celebratory feast is shared with the poor and this activity acknowledges the great value of the gift given to families by Allah of this new child and the charity gifts to the poor support the Ummah or community of faith. The giving of charity is believed to be even more blessed by Allah if the birth and subsequent charity occurs in the month of Ramadan.

Judaism

Sacred life cycle rituals of Judaism include brit milah (circumcision), bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah (coming of age), ketubah (marriage contract), get (divorce contract) and funerals. Regarding the rite of passage of circumcision (bris or brit milah) for all males, circumcision instructions come from the sacred text and religious writings of Judaism as part of the covenant that God made with Abraham. God said to Abraham, 'Every male among you shall be circumcised. ... and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you'. The circumcision process by a mohel (circumciser) is carried out on all male converts and healthy male Jewish children on the eighth day of life. The child is normally held by a sandek (support person) who is usually a grandfather or rabbi. Blessings are said, including a blessing associated with the drinking of wine, and a drop of wine is placed in the child's mouth. The bris ceremony is also used as a naming ceremony with the child then being given a formal Hebrew name.

Another important example is the ritual of bar/bat mitzvah. The first time a boy/girl participates in the synagogue service as an adult by reading the Torah, is on the occasion of the ceremony of bar/bat mitzvah (son/daughter of the commandment). From now on, the young person takes on the responsibilities of an adult within the congregation along with all the obligations/commandments of the Torah. Traditionally this was restricted to boys who simply participated from the age of 13 and more recently ceremonies with blessings and parties have supported this rite of passage. Within Reform and Liberal congregations, similar rites occur for girls, as daughters of the commandments (bat mitzvah) when they turn 12. Within rabbinic philosophy, humanity is believed to have two senses of morality, an evil inclination (yetzer hara) and a good inclination (yetzer hatov). This rite of bar/bat mitzvah signifies a move from childhood where the individual now has sufficient knowledge and ability to use yetzer hatov to control yetzer hara.

Sikhism

Key Sikh rituals relate to lifetime rituals, rites of passage, worship and festivals.

For birth rituals, Sikhs follow the procedures as set out in the Rahit Marayada, the official Sikh code of conduct for birth and naming ceremonies. When the baby is born the Mul Mantra prayer is whispered into the child's ear and a drop of honey is placed inside the mouth. After giving birth, the mother visits the gurdwara. On this visit, the Guru Granth Sahib is opened randomly by the granthi (priest) and a hymn passage read. The name of the child is then determined by using the first letter of the particular hymn. The name is announced to the congregation and the granthi will add the names Singh (lion) as a surname for a male baby and Kaur (princess) for a female. Karah prasad which is a sweet dish made from semolina, sugar and ghee, is given to all members of the congregation.

Amrit Sanskar is the initiation into the Khalsa. The rite itself was introduced by Guru Gobind Singh at the commencement of the Khalsa concept in 1699. A Sikh can go through the initiation process as soon as they reach the age of adult understanding. The ceremony takes place in a gurdwara in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, and also five other initiated Sikhs. Hymns are recited or sung, prayers are said, and the principles of Sikhism are affirmed for each other and the new member of the Khalsa. Amrit, which is a mixture of sugar and water stirred with a double edged sword, is prepared as an initiation drink. The ceremony ends with the eating of karah prasad, a sweet tasting food.

Anand Karaj is a sacred wedding ceremony conducted in the presence of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib and it spiritually binds a man and woman together for life. The granthi (priest) opens a page of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib at random and reads the first Shabad (verse) on that page. This is called taking the vak and it is believed that this verse chosen by God will be a personal message for the marriage day and for the life of the couple. The lavan is a central part of the wedding ceremony. Called the Ceremony of Bliss, it includes singing of Shabads at the same time as the couple proceed around the Guru to connect the marriage union within the spiritual context of union with God.

The Ardas prayer is a general prayer and is said before or during any significant spiritual activity or human activity with spiritual significance. It is also recited after morning and evening Banis (prayers), and on any occasion when scripture is read or hymns are sung. Ardas is often said before and/or after eating a meal. The prayer is a supplication prayer to God asking for help and support in the particular activity. For weddings, the support is requested for the life of the participants in the marriage. As well as being a petition to God, the main features of Ardas include creating calmness and inner strength, supporting humility, reminding the supplicant of the importance of dedication, strengthening links with the Gurus of the past and supporting the community of Sikhs.

Information on this topic can be obtained from various sources including: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/rise-of-islamic-conservatism-throws-indonesian-democracy-off-balance-1530178201>.

Iran is a Shi'a country. Shi'a Islam is often divided according to whether followers believe there were five, seven or twelve divinely ordained leaders who were descendants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatimah and his son-in-law Ali. Such believers are referred to as Fivers, Seveners or Twelvers. The majority of Iranian Muslims are Twelvers and this is the state religion. The Islamic Republic of Iran is about 90% Shi'a Muslim and 9% Sunni Muslim. The constitution of Iran also recognises Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism as official religions because they make up about 1% of the population. The believers of these religions are labelled as People of the Book and they are theoretically allowed religious freedom. Unfortunately, the treatment of different religious groups in Iran is not in accordance with its stated constitutional ideals and there is discrimination against and abuse of these religious groups and in particular those members of unrecognised religions such as members of the Baha'i faith.

Information on this topic can be obtained from various sources including: theconversation.com/why-is-islam-so-different-in-different-countries-51804

Islam is the major religion in Turkey (about 97% mainly Sunni) and a significant minority are Sufi. The rest of the population practises various forms of Christianity. Turkey was until recently a strongly secular country and the military has often guarded the secular system, even getting involved in politics to do so. The state has no official religion and the constitution recognises freedom of religion for individuals. It also states that religion cannot be a part of the political process or education so religious parties and faith based schools are banned. However, religious sensibilities are generally supported through conservative parties. Recent political changes have led to increasing conservatism and a rise in Islamic nationalism. Previously Turkey had prohibited the wearing of religious headscarves and other religious/political symbolic clothing for both genders in government buildings, schools, and universities but like in Egypt, expressions of Islam are becoming more expected, public and acceptable. A useful religious person to research is Jalaluddin Rumi, see for example: www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/art/rumi_1.shtml.

4.2.4.2

Investigate, describe and evaluate the ways in which religion has interacted with the nation state through the example of Australian government legislation and the involvement of religious institutions regarding: Australian Aboriginal peoples and spiritualities; Torres Strait Islander peoples and religion.

Since 1788, the reaction between the dominating Christianity and Indigenous beliefs has seen periods of attempted destruction, assimilation, and syncretism. Aboriginal people have a relationship with the natural world and while this provides the advantages of survival and life it also imposes the responsibilities of preservation and education. In land, Aborigines can experience the Dreaming. Stories which tell of ancestors or give an account of creation of the land describe the actual physical landscape or world where people lived traditionally. This is not just a spiritual story, it exists in the real world and gives significance to the land and environmental landscape. In Western society, land is a commodity to be bought and sold, like any other material good and there is not the belonging to the land which is part of Aboriginal spirituality. Aboriginal art work, songs, dances and ceremonies are all placed within the context of the natural environment. The recent changes in the Christian response to this understanding of Indigenous people, meant the legislative acceptance of Indigenous people through Mabo, Wik, Yarmirr decisions and the range of Native Title Acts, was also supported, and in many cases forcibly argued by Christian denominations. Today, many denominations have specific ministries to Indigenous people, acknowledging their unique place in the Australian religious community. They include the Uniting Church's Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and the Catholic Church's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council.

Some useful references include: Nicola Henry and Karolina Kurzak, Religion in Australia, part of The Australian Collaboration 2012, from: <http://www.australiancollaboration.com.au/pdf/FactSheets/Religion-FactSheet.pdf>; Nerelle Poroch, et al, *Spirituality and Aboriginal People's Social and Emotional Wellbeing: A Review*, Discussion Paper Series No. 11, Co-operative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2009, from: https://www.lowitja.org.au/sites/default/files/docs/DP_11_spirituality_review.pdf; Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress: <https://uaicc.org.au/>; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council: <https://www.catholic.org.au/organisations-in-formal-liaison-with-the-acbc/national-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-catholic-council>.

Glossary

22 June (Christianity) Anniversary of the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia. On 22 June 1977, the only Australian Church was created from the union of three Protestant denominations: the Congregational Church, Methodist Church and Presbyterian Church.

Aboriginal spiritualities Australian Aboriginal spiritualities have an oral tradition supported by song and dance and art. In this spirituality, the Dreamtime legends underpin the belief structure and it is all literally grounded in the earth.

Abraham (Judaism/Christianity/Islam) Name given to Abram after making an agreement with God which involved him worshipping God and following his instructions.

absolutism Promotes the idea that one thought or set of beliefs is absolutely true.

Acknowledgement of Country While not a religious statement, Acknowledgement of Country is an important acknowledgement of the original inhabitants of Australia. It supports the idea that when early settlers and more recent immigrants arrived in Australia it was not an empty land but one which had been inhabited for thousands of years by people who had an integral and ongoing spiritual relationship with the land.

Acts of the Apostles (Christianity) Gospel according to Luke Vol 2, the book of Acts provides a bridge between Jesus and the Holy Spirit coming to the disciples and the birth and development of the early church.

adhan (Islam) Call to prayer.

Advent (Christianity) The first festival of the Christian year begins with the fourth Sunday before Christmas and continues to Christmas Eve. The name means 'to come' and Advent is a time of looking forward and waiting for the birth of Jesus. The four weeks are celebrated with candles and the expectation of hope, love, joy and peace.

agape (Christianity) Greek word for a type of love without expectation of a response. One of the Greek words for love but specifically it is the type of love that God grants to humanity and humanity is expected to offer to each other.

ahimsa (Hinduism) Defined as: 'do no harm', ahimsa or non-violence is the underlying ethical behaviour concept of Hinduism. Following ahimsa will always lead to good karma.

Akhirah (Islam) Life after death.

akhlaq (Islam) Moral conduct or ethics by being virtuous and expressing the morality and social responses appropriate to Islamic theology as prescribed in the Qur'an.

Al-Hijrah (New Year) (Islam) First day of the month of Muharram and it marks the hijrah in 622 CE when Muhammad moved from Mecca to Medina, to set up the first Islamic state. Islamic dates are measured after hijrah (AH).

All Saints (Christianity) Many congregations celebrate the triple festival of All Hallows Eve on 31 October, All Saints' Day on 1 November and All Souls' Day on 2 November. All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day are related, All Saints' Day is a call to live as saints, to remind humanity how to live and on All Souls' Day, the memory of those saints who have gone before is remembered and acknowledged at this, the end of the ecclesiastical year.

Amrit (Sikhism) Initiation drink or nectar shared during Amrit Sanskar.

Amritsar (Sikhism) Holy place for Sikhs.

Amrit Sanskar (Sikhism) Ceremony for initiation into the Khalsa.

Anand Karaj (Sikhism) Blissful union or marriage ceremony.

Anapanasati Day (Buddhism) Presentation by Buddha of his instructions on mindfulness of breathing recorded in the Anapanasati Sutra.

ancestor worship Spirits of past people are somehow amongst the living or can connect and respond to the living.

ang (Sikhism) Page from the Guru Granth Sahib.

Anglican (Christianity) Church of England.

anicca (Buddhism) Impermanence and refers to the idea that everything changes and everything we are or experience and even all that currently exists now will at some time cease to exist.

animism Belief of spirits within animals, plants or other objects.

Antam Sanskaar (Sikhism) Funeral or the final/last rite of passage.

apocalyptic (Christianity) End of time description of what will happen.

Aqiqah (Islam) Slaughter of one or two sheep or goats to celebrate the birth of a child. This celebratory and shared feast also supports the idea of looking after the poor.

Ardas (Sikhism) General prayer.

arhat/arhant (Buddhism) One who has reached the state of perfect compassion and wisdom and therefore will no longer go through the process of reincarnation and samsara or continue the cycle of life and death.

artefact Any human made or found object that has religious or spiritual significance.

articles of faith (Islam) Included in the revelations from Allah to Muhammad are the six articles of faith for Muslims. They are belief in: Allah (tawhid), Angels, Books of Allah, Prophets of Allah (Rusul), Day of Judgement (Akhirah) and divine laws.

Aryans (Hinduism) Aryans are believed to be the authors of the early Vedas or religious writings of Hinduism.

Asala Day (Dharma Day) (Buddhism) Asala puja commemorates the Buddha's first teaching to five ascetics at a deer park in Sarnath, India.

Ascension Thursday (Christianity) Forty days after Easter, this festival celebrates Jesus' ascension to heaven.

asceticism Doing without and the basis of Jainism and certain aspects/behaviours of many religions.

ashramas (Hinduism) Brahmachari – youth develops ethical values, grihastha – homeowner focused on the family, vanaprastha – retiree without social responsibilities, sannyasi – renounced life (only for Brahmins).

Asoka/Ashoka (Buddhism) Emperor Ashoka (304-232 BCE). Buddhist emperor who oversaw the early spread of Buddhism around Asia.

asylum seekers Topic along with immigration, refugees and offshore detention which impacts on religions and forces religious people to consider their role in the debate and the place of religions in the debate.

atheism The belief that God does not exist. Topic along with secularisation which impacts on religions and forces religious people to consider their role in the debate and the place of religions in the debate.

Atman (Hinduism) Soul.

Australian Human Rights Commission For further information see: www.humanrights.gov.au/freedom-thought-conscience-and-religion-or-belief.

Australian Indigenous spiritualities life cycle rituals Birth, initiation and funerals.

Australian Indigenous spiritualities sacred texts Oral stories, art, dance and song.

Avalokitesvara (Kuan Yin Day) (Buddhism) Celebrates the bodhisattva ideal represented by Avalokitesvara, the perfection of compassion in the Mahayana traditions. It occurs on the full moon day in March.

ayat (Islam) Each surah of the Qur'an consists of several verses, known as ayat, and the number of verses differs in each surah. There are 6236 verses in the Qur'an.

Babylon (ancient civilisation) From 2300 BCE. Famous for the legal code of Hammurabi.

Baisakhi/Vaisakhi (Sikhism) Traditional harvest festival.

Banis (Sikhism) Morning or evening prayers.

baptism (Christianity) Ritual of purification by water, baptism can be translated as 'to bathe or wash'.

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