

RICHARD STEEL

Art in Community – Community as Art

Karl König's Therapeutic Impulse
for the Illness of His – and Our – Time

Karl König Institute for Art, Science and Social Life

Aberdeen, Scotland · Berlin, Germany · Chatham, New York



Karl König's play for the festival of St. John (June 24th) on the meadows of Camphill Schools, Aberdeen, 1954

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Roots in Europe's cultural cradle

In his youth Karl König (1902–1966), who was born in Vienna, experienced very strongly how humanity was suffering through the First World War and how Europe – particularly his home in the Austro-Hungarian Empire – was being destroyed. How could he offer a healing impulse? At an early age he was burning with empathy and a deep feeling of responsibility for his times: «historic conscience», he himself called it. Born into a Jewish family, he was always moved by the words of Christ: «What you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done unto me.» On the one side there was the cultural richness of Vienna – theater, music, literature, painting and the sciences – on the other side there was poverty, war and the decay of society.

König saw three possibilities to be of help for the future of humanity: he was an artist in various fields, but particularly a gifted musician who wanted to study piano, conducting and composition. Music can be such a path to peace and a bridge between nations and cultures. Or he could become a farmer and give his work directly towards the earth. Or he could become a physician. He chose this, seeing the task of healing for the human being, for society and for the earth as one whole and interconnected task. He studied medicine in Vienna and was then assistant for Ita Wegman in the early days of anthroposophic medicine and curative education in Switzerland.



Karl König with John Jephson, Camphill 1953

Rejected on many levels:

König the refugee

Karl König was politically outlawed because he was of Jewish descent, was no longer part of the Jewish community because he had turned to Christianity, was not allowed to practice as a physician in Germany under the Nazis, was endangered because of his connection to people with disabilities and because of Anthroposophy, was expelled from the Anthroposophical Society because of his very individual approach and because of his connection to Ita Wegman, became an «enemy alien» in Britain as all German speakers were under suspicion of spying when the war began. He even had to face some opposition after the war in the diaspora. His young friends in Vienna – the youth group that had gathered around him – were mainly Jewish, were artists and medical students. After fleeing in various directions and often dramatic ways from the Nazi occupation of Austria, they were able to meet again in the North of Scotland, where they were offered an old, disused manse as a starting point for the new venture. They were strongly motivated to live in accordance with holistic, anthroposophic ideals, taking a seed of central European culture to plant where it could survive destruction by National Socialism and the forces of the Second World War.



«The Pioneers» in Scotland 1939

Early beginnings:

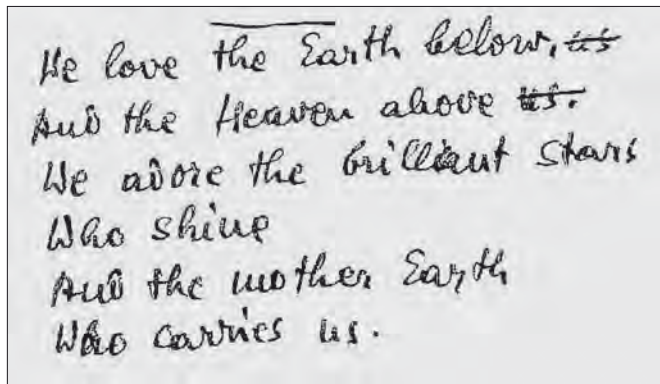
Refugees helping refugees

From March of 1939 the group of refugees from Vienna found their way together at Kirkton House, in the North of Scotland, which they opened officially at Whitsun (May 28th) that year to take in children with special needs. From that time onwards and through the war years, many of the children came out of a Jewish background in Europe – some on the «Kindertransport» organised by the Quakers and the Church of Scotland. Most never saw their families again. From the beginning Karl König and his wife Tilla trained the young helpers to create a family-based healing haven of culture, art, education and therapies around and with the needy children – and adults, who were themselves traumatised.

The «Youth Group» and founders

Amongst König's young friends who found their way to Scotland were a number of artists:

Anke Nederhood, who was undoubtably on her way to fame, dancing with Grete Wiesenthal. During her long life in Camphill, Anke created, taught and performed many dances for festivals and other occasions.



Part of a verse in König's handwriting, written for the children in South Africa on his first journey there 1957

Thomas Weihs, a talented young doctor who began his work in Scotland by developing the farm. He also became known for his sculpture.

Peter Roth, a medical student who then became a priest working within the Camphill Movement. He was an ardent painter and writer.

Alix Roth, a photographer in the Viennese studio of Trude Fleischmann,

Carlo Pietzner, a painter, writer and photographer who later wrote a number of stories, pageants and plays in Camphill communities and created many stained glass windows around the world. He had been connected to Oskar Kokoschka and Robert Musil, Wittgenstein and Handke.

The name Camphill becomes symbol for a world-wide movement

At Whitsun 1940, just one year after the official opening, all the men were interned as «enemy aliens» – most of them went to the Isle of Man, where they transformed imprisonment into a positive creative force that perhaps already then and certainly later rayed out into the world.

There was constant study and artistic work – and most of the Jewish people who had been allowed into Britain had a relevant training and profession – physicians, professors, artists!

Karl König opens Camphill in Ireland
Glencraig, near Belfast, 1954



On June 1st of that year the women and children nevertheless braved the move to the much larger *Camphill House*, which was close to Aberdeen and had land for further developments. Only later did they find out that this land was part of a large estate managed for decades by a group of very early refugees from Europe – Knights of the Order of the Temple, who had been persecuted in the 14th Century by the Catholic church but found haven in the North of Scotland!

When the men were released and could return one by one, they were also followed by some friends they had made in internment – artists and scientists who stayed for varying periods in the new community. Amongst them were the musician Ferdinand Rauter (the Ferdinand Rauter Prize for composition is still presented annually in London) and the Goetheanists Ernst and Maria Röschl-Lehrs.

Karl König continued his own path of artistic creativity throughout his life, finding his very specific and imaginative style for drama, writing 14 plays for the festivals and writing, conducting and encouraging music. From an early age until his last months of life, König wrote almost 400 poems and verses, seven short stories and lectured frequently on art and art therapy, researching and experimenting in many areas. His coloured drawings still inspire many people towards an artistic and imaginative approach to the path of human life between nature and the cosmos.



Composer Edmund Pracht
who developed the present-day lyre.
Here on one of his many visits to Camphill

Holistic healing surroundings:

Art for social life – and social art

From the beginning it was the striving of the young community to create holistic healing surroundings – it could be called a holistic social artistry, a *social «Gesamtkunstwerk»* including all areas of social life, from the healthy daily, weekly and yearly rhythms «rituals» and celebrations, to the incorporation of the arts in all aspects of life, including the enhancing of everyday objects, from architecture and landscaping to furniture, lighting, fabrics and appliances. Everything was to carry the ideal of making social life itself, the encounter of one human being to another, an artistic, cultural and also healing experience. One of the strongest advocates for this ideal of «social art» was the multi-faceted artist and social innovator Carlo Pietzner.

This cultural impulse soon attracted many artists for visits, some of them becoming long-term «artists in residence»; for instance in the USA the author, poet, painter and ceramic artist M.C. Richards, who lived and worked in Camphill Village Kimber-ton Hills; and the painter George Kalmar, who lived and worked in Camphill Village Copake, where Helen and Carl Wolf continued the stained glass work started by Carlo Pietzner; and in Scotland, the painter and sculptor Hermann Gross, who created a large volume of works now archived by a special trust.



Camphill Hall, main entrance (built 1962)

Karl König had a strong connection to the writer and dramatist Paul M. Allen¹, who had taught with Michael Chekhov in Moscow and New York. After König's death, Paul and his wife Joan joined the Camphill Movement, where they stayed – in Britain, Norway and the US – for the rest of their lives. Joan was an architect who added to the tradition of architecture and design in Camphill that began with Hungarian architect Gabor Tallow and sculptor and architect Paul Bay, who had been part of the building team at the First Goetheanum in Dornach. Even during the war years and with very modest resources, König had started with building and design in Camphill Scotland. With Joan de Ris Allen², the group «Camphill Architects» took up work that continues today.³

Georg von Arnim, a pediatrician who had worked together with König, developed what he called «curative architecture» for the special school Camphill Föhrenbühl in Germany, where every detail of the building was designed to enhance and aid the specific steps of child development.⁴

¹ See: Russ Pooler, A Rosecrucian Soul. The Life Journey of Paul Marshall Allen. Lindisfarne Books, 2009. P.M. Allen wrote a number of books himself, some together with his wife Joan, and introduced and edited many too.

² Joan de Ris Allen: Living Buildings. Aberdeen, 1990

³ <https://www.camphillarchitecture.com/>

⁴ Georg von Arnim: Das Haus der Kindheit (The House of Childhood). Föhrenbühl, 1971. See also D. Haarnagel: Der Föhrenbühler Bauimpuls. Heililgenberg, 2015

46/ Das vierfache Heilen:
 auf das Ich wirken Minerale, d. ist Dichten
 auf den Astralleib die Pflanzen, d. ist Musizieren
 auf den Asthmal Leib die Tiere, d. ist Plastizieren
 auf den phys. Leib der Mensch, d. ist Architektieren
 Das aber heißt: den stummen Stein zum redenden Brücken,
 die plastische Pflanze moralisieren.
 das musikalische Tier erlösen
 den Menschen verwandeln, transsub-
 stanzieren.

Karl König, note about four-fold healing in connection to poetry, music, sculpture and architecture (from his diary, 1932)

Apart from the healing qualities of artistically created social environments, as physician and therapist König was particularly interested in exploring the specific therapeutic qualities of the arts and he developed innovative principles and methods with music, colour, singing, speech and movement and the new art of eurythmy. Collaborating with many experts, König also laid foundations for new therapies with colour and coloured shadows and for music therapy, which have developed further into present times.

After the end of the Second World War, many artists moved from various countries to Scotland and subsequently to the expanding Camphill Movement, because they saw a new chance and new challenge to work with the arts in community. To name a few, there were the sculptor and writer Hans van der Stok; and Johanna Spalinger, Christof-Andreas Lindenberg, and Hans-Heinrich Engel, who developed music therapy training in Switzerland, Ireland, Holland and the US (The «Dorian School of Music» still exists in Pennsylvania); Susanne Müller-Wiedemann, who led a training in the therapeutic use of eurythmy; and Ursula Herberg led therapeutic speech training in Germany. And since 1990 an art college including persons with special needs has developed in Ireland (KCAT ACrt enter in Kilkenny).⁵

Kaspar Hauser
Stonework by Greg Tricker
(Collection of the
Karl König Institute)



Collaborative art projects of the Karl König Institute today are forging new partnerships, for example with painter and sculptor Greg Tricker, playwright, actor, author and Kaspar Hauser researcher Eckart Boehmer, and art historians Brigitta Waldow-Schily and Prof. Dr. R. J. Fäth. The Institute's work involves ongoing workshops with drama, music, poetry and creative writing. (See www.karlkoeniginstitute.org)

Finally we must point out that this short overview of art within the original impulse of Karl König and its outcomes cannot pay sufficient tribute to the role of art and artists in the Camphill Movement today. This would need its own presentation and overview, as it is a very diverse and fluctuant subject.

Books on Karl König's Art within the Karl König New Edition:

An Inner Journey Through the Year. With 52 colour sketches. Floris Books, 2009

Plays for the Festivals of the Year. Floris Books, 2017

Stories Poems and Meditations. Floris Books, 2020

In preparation: *From Music to Music Therapy.* Floris Books, 2021

Related works:

R. J. Fäth: *Dornach Design.* Futurum, 2011

R.J.Fäth+David Voda: *AENIGMA – 100 Years of Anthroposophical Art.* Arborvitae, 2015

In the internment camp 1940 Karl König drew pictures with coloured crayons to illustrate each of the 52 verses that Rudolf Steiner had given as weekly meditations («The Calendar of the Soul»). This is the picture for Michaelmas, the last week of September.

These 52 pictures have since been framed and are exhibited regularly around Europe and two volumes of the Karl König New Edition are dedicated to this work: «An Inner journey Through the Year» and «The Calendar of the Soul – A Commentary», both with Floris Books, 2010.





Developing artistic therapies: Here «colour light treatment», Camphill Schools Scotland, 1951. Children would be seated in front of a screen, behind which movements to speech and music created coloured shadows.



Carlo Pietzner began the first Camphill Community outside of England, near to Belfast, Ireland. For a local church he made stained glass windows.



Picture frame made especially for this photograph of Karl König by Jens Holbek from Denmark who studied architecture and design with Paul Bay and moved with him to Camphill. There he was a therapist and curative educator. Artistically he concentrated on carving household articles and picture frames.



Book shelf, made around 1950 by Paul Bay, a Swiss architect, sculptor and illustrator. He had helped build many buildings in Dornach, Switzerland, that Rudolf Steiner designed. From 1920 he was particularly interested in designing furniture. 1948 he moved to Camphill in Scotland.

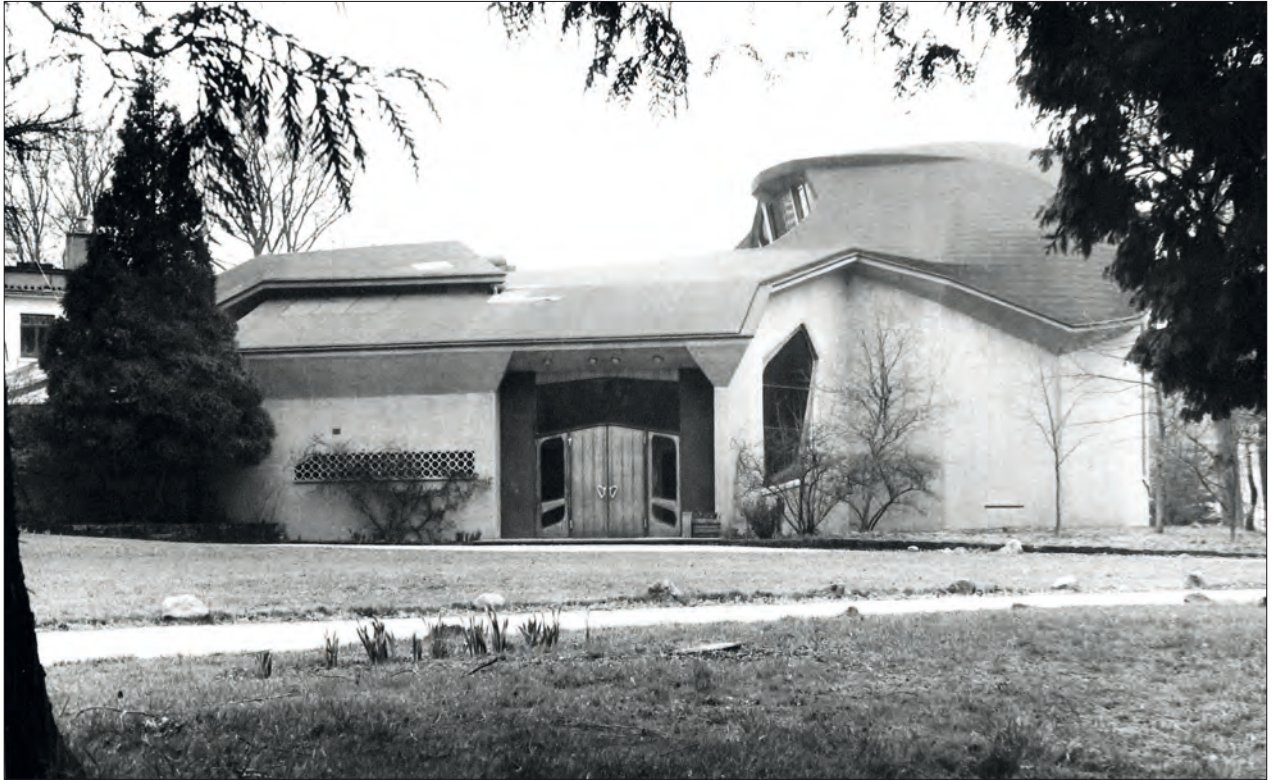




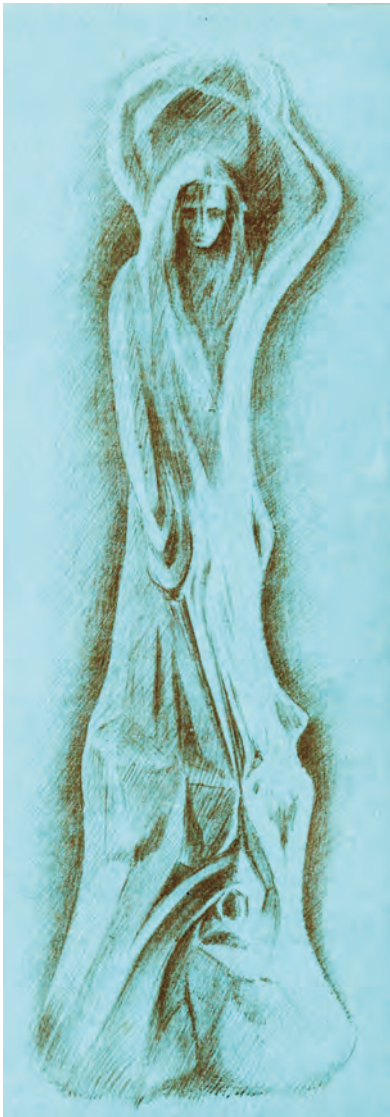
A play in Camphill Hall in the auditorium looking towards the chapel



The first performance of Karl König's play «The Book of Kells» in Camphill Scotland, 1959. The stage setting and costumes designed by Günther Lehr. The play was written in commemoration of the catastrophic events of the first atomic bombs, August 1945.



Camphill Hall, the first hall built in the Camphill Movement; first sketch by Karl König and architecture by the resident architect, Gabor Tallo. It was opened in 1962 and was especially designed for Karl König's lectures and particularly for his plays for the festivals, it has a threefold floor-plan: On one side of the auditorium is the stage, on the other side a chapel.



Hans van der Stok. This is a sketch made for a wood carving for the chapel in Camphill Village Newton Dee, Scotland.



Cover for the first Camphill journal – «Leaves from Camphill», which was published quarterly. This cover, for Christmas 1952, was designed by the graphic designer Günther Lehr who lived in Camphill (Scotland, England, Switzerland, Germany and Austria) from 1951. His wife, Marianne, was a painter.



Paul Bay, Salt container to be used for festival meals



Pendant with tourmaline, designed by Karl König

Hermann Gross. Apart from painting with oil and watercolours, Gross also specialised in the use of aluminium.
This is Saint Michael, made for Camphill Hall in Scotland.



Thomas Weihs next to his sculpture «Pieta» in Camphill, Scotland. In 1961, when he was asked to help with design questions in the new building, Camphill Hall, he also began to develop his skills with sculpture. At the bank of the River Dee where one of the children drowned, he formed «Praying Man» out of concrete.
«The Pieta», out of copper stands in the Rose Garden in Camphill Estate, where Karl König's ashes are buried (amongst others).



Whitsun. A blackboard drawing by Armin Volckmann for religion lessons in the Camphill school Föhrenbühl, Germany (about 1982)



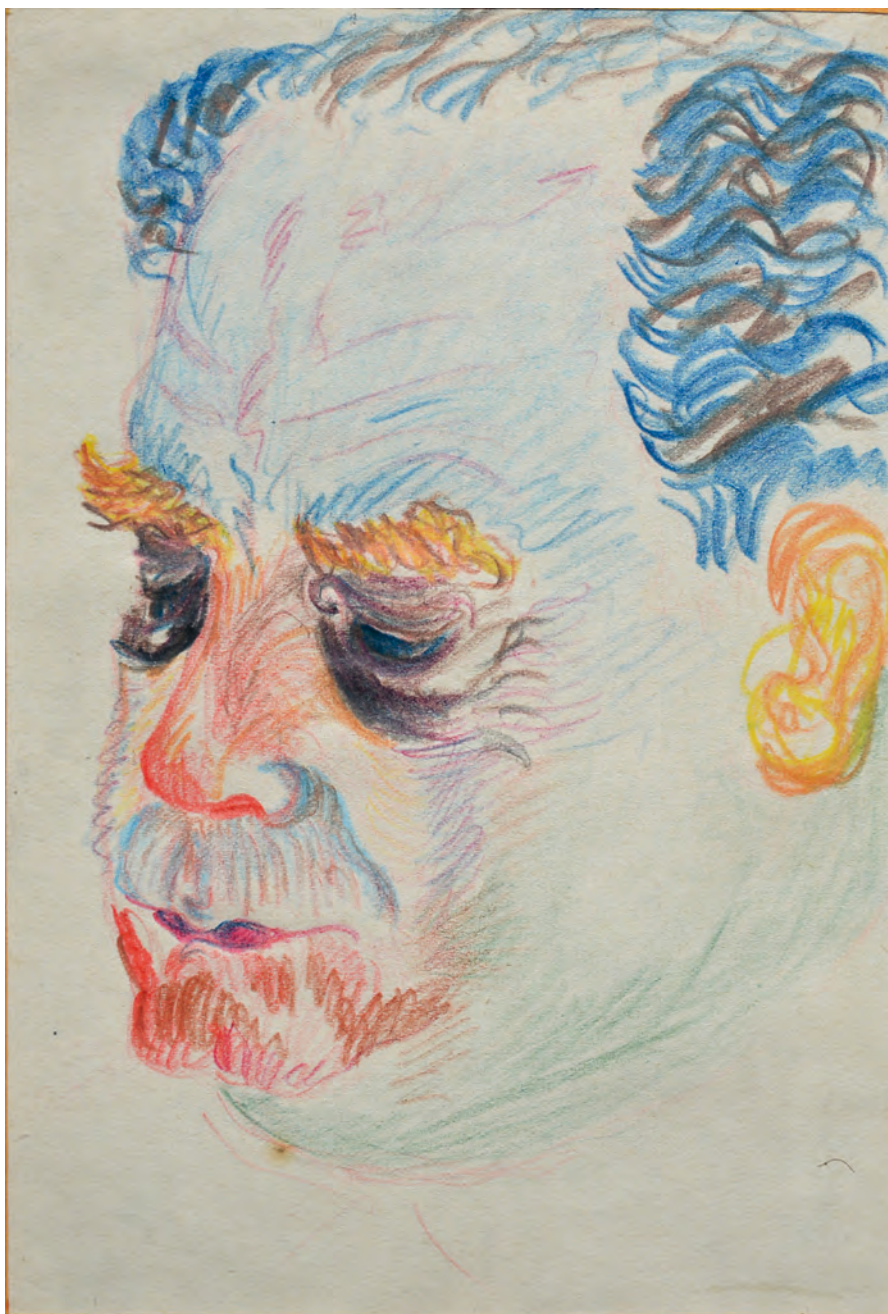
Peter Roth,
untitled dra-
wing, done
in interment
camp, 1940/41

Peter Roth,
untitled dra-
wing, done
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Carlo
Pietzner,
around
1960 this
picture was
painted.
It has a
double
name:
«Faust and
Helena – or
Pluto and
Persepho-
ne».



Peter Roth: This portrait of Karl König was drawn with crayons in the internment camp, 1940.



Carlo Pietzner,
Landscape (around
1970). Watercolour.
Carlo Pietzner painted
often in Italy where
this was probably
inspired.



Carlo Pietzner, «David and Saul» (about 1960)



28 | George Kalmar, *Morning in a Dalmatian Mountain Village*, 1984. Like Carlo Pietzner, Kalmar also studied in the Art Academy of Vienna and spent his later life in Camphill Copake, USA.



Paul Bay, Window and chairs for the chapel in Camphill Estate, Scotland



«Curative architecture»
— the school
(«House of Childhood»),
Camphill Föhren-
bühl, Lake of
Constance,
Germany.
Design: Georg
von Arnim;
Architect: Werner
Seyfert. Each
class-room has its
own architectural
design and colour
according to the
age group.



Serena House for elders, Camphill Village Kimberton Hills, USA. Camphill Architects.



Phoenix Community Centre,
Camphill Village
Newton Dee,
Scotland.
With «Phoenix»
sculpture which
was a community
project.







Michael Chapel, Camphill Village Newton Dee, Scotland. Camphill Architects.



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The «curative educational approach»
should express itself in every field of social work,
in spiritual welfare, in the care for the elderly,
in the rehabilitation of the mental patients as well
as the disabled, in the guidance of orphans and
refugees, of suicide candidates and the desperate;
but also in overseas aid, in the international
Peace Corps and similar attempts.
If we truly still want to consider ourselves
to be human, then this is the only possible answer
we can give today while mankind
dances close to the abys.

KARL KÖNIG, 1965

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