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## TECHNICS AND TIME, 2

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M E R I D I A N

*Crossing Aesthetics*

Werner Hamacher

*Editor*

Translated by Stephen Barker

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# TECHNICS AND TIME, 2

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*Disorientation*

Bernard Stiegler

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## Translator's Note

The general format of this second volume of *Technics and Time* follows that of Richard Beardsworth and Georges Collins's translation of volume 1, except where Stiegler's formatting itself differs from the previous volume, as in the direct relationship between the four major divisions and their subdivisions. Emphasis in quotations follows the cited texts; Stiegler's own interpolated emphases are marked as such.

Though each volume deals with a discrete set of issues, *Technics and Time* is a true multivolume work; Stiegler here frequently develops a point raised in volume 1, only occasionally referencing the connection, and just as frequently assuming familiarity with the theme or term's previous introduction (e.g., the *what* and the *who*, and of course the Prometheus/Epimetheus subtext). The reading of this volume will be greatly enriched by close attention to this overarching set of thematic developments.



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## TECHNICS AND TIME, 2

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## Introduction

*In honor of the journey of Hassiba Boulmerka,  
an Algerian woman*

An ordinary person of two centuries ago could expect to die in the bed in which he had been born. He lived on a virtually changeless diet, eaten from a bowl that would be passed on to his grandchildren. Through seasons, years, generations, his surroundings, possessions, and daily routines were close to identical. The world appeared to be absolutely stable; change was such an exception that it seemed to be an illusion.

It was in that world that the categories were forged within which we are still trying to think an *other* world, which first appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one in which stability had become the exception and change the rule. Technics, as technology and techno-science, is the chief reason for this reversal.

We now know that civilizations are historical—that is to say, mortal—and that process is everything. We know it—or believe we know it—scientifically; philosophy began to think it through dialectic, particularly through Nietzsche.

But this knowledge and these thoughts remain abstract and to some extent largely ineffective, since at present not only does the invention of that brave new world quickly named “progress” no longer seem to be the spontaneous bearer of the future but, for the majority of the world’s population—Occidental as well as Oriental,<sup>1</sup> it seems to lead nowhere—when it is not a nightmare. And as for those trying to lead it, every day we see further evidence of their impotence. Such is contemporary disorientation.

*The Fault of Epimetheus* was my attempt to show that this disorientation is *originary*, that humanity’s history is that of technics as a process of

exteriorization in which technical evolution is dominated by tendencies that societies must perpetually negotiate. The “technical system” is constantly evolving and rendering the “other systems” that structure social cohesion null and void. Becoming technical is originally a derivation: socio-genesis recapitulates techno-genesis. Techno-genesis is structurally prior to socio-genesis—technics is invention, and invention is innovation—and the adjustment between technical evolution and social tradition always encounters moments of resistance, since technical change, to a greater or lesser extent, disrupts the familiar reference points of which all culture consists.

Technics can thus appear to be the opposite of “the spirit of the age,” of “civilization,” of “the human” itself, though it is humanity’s very destiny: the two are bound together in a relationship that Gilbert Simondon calls the “transductive” (a relationship whose elements are constituted such that one cannot exist without the other—where the elements are co-constituents):<sup>2</sup> humanity and technics are indissociable. But this relation is a “metastable equilibrium” spanning an irreducible tension, a tension that is time itself: technics’s advance initiates temporal extension as such.

Those who oppose technics to civilization do not accept that, as the versions of the Prometheus/Epimetheus myth in Hesiod, Aeschylus, and Protagoras teach us, humans are prosthetic beings, without qualities, and that temporality (as *elpis*, waiting in hope and fear) emanates from this de-fault of and at the origin, this originary disorientation.

They do not accept it precisely because in fact it is sometimes quite difficult to accept, and because one’s skin must be sufficiently thick to do so. But, just as important, they do not accept the idea because this fundamental disorientation is at its most extreme limit today: our contemporary experience of it is unique, nearly unbearable, and requires *very* thick skin indeed—and yet strangely, in our current circumstances it is equally important to have very sensitive, indeed *hypersensitive* skin, and perhaps even . . . to *completely change our skin*.

Seen as originary, disorientation is always constituted by identifiable, characteristic orientation-markers (*cardinalité*) designating its borders, indicating North and South, Orient and Occident. In disorientation, however, Orient and Occident are not simply geographic givens; Orient and Occident designate particular experiences of disorientation. Such cardinal directional markers, insofar as they open (to) the horizon of meaning and configure the motif for all motivation, can be reified only through

experience of and in the world. Observed over significant lengths of time, establishment of such cardinal points is what “adjusts” both techno-genesis and socio-genesis. Through this positing of directions and their adjustments, disorientation opens a space of difference, between here and there, public and private, profane and sacred, strange and familiar, and so on. Adjustments (re-)orient, and originary disorientation is converted, if not occluded. If such adjustments are the engine of all motivation, and if they must be *oriented*, it is because the orient (the other) is missing. From this missing other, cardinal designation produces a *figure* (a motive that is a goal) in which what is being oriented is reflected—the Orient is this mirage.<sup>3</sup>

This cardinal orientation is not successfully occurring today; thus we are suffering from *disorientation as such*. This leads above all to the speed of technical development since the Industrial Revolution, which has continued to accelerate, dramatically widening the distance between technical systems and social organizations as if, negotiation between them appearing to be impossible, their final divorce seems inevitable.

In this crisis, the media, both “direct” and “real time,” play a prominent role. *The Fault of Epimetheus* attempted to demonstrate that precisely in order to face the new requirements resulting from the process of permanent innovation at the heart of the Industrial Revolution, information systems have become global, the result having been—through the development of the telegraph, telephone, photography, phonography, cinema, radio broadcasting, television, and the information technology whose emergence is currently taking place—that global memory has itself finally been subsumed into an industrialization directly affecting our psychic processes and collective identifications and differentiations; that is, individuation itself.

The industrialization of memory has clearly been brought about by these analogic and numeric technologies. And they have intensified with the programming industries’ most recent biotechnologies. This becoming-industrial of memory is the final stage of what *Of Grammatology* calls a *history of the supplement*. Jacques Derrida has analyzed “life becoming conscious of itself” as the singular cause of a general economy of the program—of which the programming industries are the current form. Life in general is programmatic, but life in dialogue with death (“the human” (*l’homme*)) is a process of “memory-freeing,” an exteriorizing of the living being’s programmatics into the artificial programs constituting an

originary supplementarity of this form of life. What is exteriorized is constituted in its very exteriorization and is preceded by no interiority: this is “the logic of the supplement.” “Différance” is the play of the process within which the programmatic, while never ceasing to differentiate itself, engages in life (as evolution and differentiation) by other means than life.

*The Fault of Epimetheus* focused on showing that the supplement is an always-already materialized trace (as if it were phonic matter, as ephemeral as it can appear), not simply a formal entity whose analysis could be absolutized outside of its material *genesis* itself. The logic of the supplement is the *différential* logic of already-formed matter: a logic preceding the opposition of form and matter. The logic of the supplement, always already the supplement’s history, is a techno-logic through which inorganic matter is *organized*<sup>4</sup> and takes on the appearance of the living organism of which it is the originary supplement. Since this “logic” is comprehensible only through its history, it is a dynamic, whose engine is *différance*.

If molecular biology is correct in claiming that the sexual being is defined by the somatic memory of the *epigenetic* and the germinal memory of the *genetic*, which in principle do not communicate with each other (to which Darwin devoted himself, *contra* Lamarck), exteriorization is a rupture in the history of life resulting in the appearance of a third—tertiary—memory I have called *epiphylogenetic*. Epiphylogenetic memory, essential to the living human being, is technics: inscribed in the non-living body. It is a break with the “law of life” in that, considering the hermetic separation between somatic and germinal, the epigenetic experience of an animal is lost to the species when the animal dies, while in a life proceeding by means other than life, the being’s experience, registered in the tool (in the object), becomes transmissible and cumulative: thus arises the possibility of a heritage.

It was Heidegger who brought the question of heritage as such into philosophy, prepared for by Hegel and Nietzsche. Though a student of Husserl—who defined transcendental philosophy as the analysis of lived experience in the conscious, living present, Heidegger breaks with phenomenology precisely on this point: in the existential analytic of *Being and Time*, the past that *Dasein* has not experienced, which it inherits, is an existential characteristic of its originary temporality (essential to its existence). The issue is no longer that of lived experience but of the future of the non-lived past: a “past of *Dasein*” is *already-there* before one, but it



is only *one's* past to the degree to which this *Dasein* has *had to be*, only to the degree to which it is possible that this past, which is not yet one's own, can or could become one's own. Without this past, this *Dasein* is nothing; and yet, this past is not yet one's past since it was not lived: this already-there past is not yet one's past since *Dasein was not* (did not inherit it) as its proper future: as what was reserved, in that past, for *this Dasein*, as that which, as the *fruit* of inheritance, remained (the) yet-to-come of this past's event, to come through this *Dasein* by the event of its singularity.

But since access to this already-there is only possible to the extent to which the fact of its exteriorization guarantees its preservation (which has constituted the phenomenon of technics since the origin of epiphylogenesis), technical specificities, as the medium or ground for the recording of the past, condition the modalities according to which *Dasein* has access to its past, for each age.

In Paragraphs 73 to 75 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger inquires into the status of what he calls *Weltgeschichtlichkeit* (world-historiality), which is nothing less than the existential definition of intraworldly beings insofar as they give witness to a past bequeathed by the dead—dead who have not simply “passed away” precisely because these traces still accord them a kind of presence, the ghostly presence of past times to which the material witness is a *medium*. And yet after a certain hesitation, Heidegger strips these ghostly beings of their originary value—they are no longer constitutive of originary temporality, and existential analysis did not need to account for their age-specificities: setting these phenomena aside as irreducibly empirical, *Being and Time* remains within metaphysics as a transcendental discourse.

Retreating before the most radical consequence of *Being and Time*, which suggested philosophically for the first time what I have called the “*what*” (intraworldly being, always already technical in that it cannot be analyzed simply as *vorhandene* but must rather be thought of as *zu-handene*), Heidegger remains in fundamental agreement with the Husserlian analysis of time, even at the moment when *Being and Time* pretends to break with Husserl's persistent privileging of the present.

Husserl defines as temporal the object constituted in its duration as flux or flow, and whose flux is coincident with the flux of consciousness of which it is the object. In this flux, Husserl identifies a primary retention belonging to the object's “now,” which is its “just-past”; the “now” of a temporal object thus proves to be originally extended; it is a “large now”

(Granel). Husserl emphatically distinguishes this primary retention from secondary retention: re-remembering, or secondary memory. *A fortiori*, he excludes what he calls the consciousness of *image*, merely a trace of consciousness's non-lived past, in that it does not belong to the lived experience that is, for Husserl, the sole originary and constitutive realm.

The exclusion of the *Weltgeschichtlichkeit* from this originary sphere in *Being and Time* repeats Husserl's gesture in *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, where consciousness of image (what I have called "tertiary memory," the ground of epiphylogenesis, a witnessing of the dead's past) is purely and simply eliminated from the dynamic of the temporal object (*Zeit-objekt*) Husserl analyzes.<sup>5</sup>

If Heidegger finally rejects tertiary memory from the constitutive sphere, it is because the becoming-one's-own of the non-lived past is something *Dasein* can always escape: it takes refuge in intratemporality, which Heidegger assimilates in its entirety and to which *Weltgeschichtlichkeit* belongs. Yet the possibility of the past is *Dasein*'s future, and this future, *in extremis*, is *Dasein*'s death. But death, like the being-toward-death anticipated in every projection of *Dasein* into the future, is what remains as such radically indeterminate, the extreme limit of all possibility. This indetermination, which originally disorients *Dasein* and leaves it isolated and without clear and sufficient markings by which to identify itself, is what *Dasein* can attempt to determine. *Dasein* thus works to "calculate" the future; it tries to "determine the indeterminate," thus "falling" into "inauthentic temporality." The determining agent is technicity as the intratemporal ground of all instrumental measurement. This is why Heidegger finally conflates technicity and inauthenticity, and more generally why he discards the world-historical (tertiary memory) from the existential analytic.

My effort here, on the contrary, will be to demonstrate how technics actually opens the indeterminate, not only as the originary de-fault of origin, as primordial disorientation on whose grounding an Orient can be posited, but *because* the Orient appears, in indetermination, only in the experience of prosthetic access to the already-there.

That which anticipates, desires, has agency, thinks, and understands, I have called the *who*. The supplement to the *who*, its pros-thesis, is its *what*. The *who* is *nothing* without the *what*, since they are in a *transductive* relation during the process of exteriorization that characterizes life; that is, a process of differentiation by which life proceeds by other means than

life. The *who* is not the *what*: a transductive relationship can occur only between different terms. There is a dynamic of the *what*, irreducible to that of the *who* (the logic of the supplement is not simply anthropological), but that requires the dynamic of the *who* as its anticipatory power. The anticipatory power of the *who*, however, presupposes the already-there of the *what* that gives it access to the non-lived past. Within the transductive relationship of the *who* and the *what*, whose dynamic is catalyzed by the advancing of the *what* (insofar as it is already there, and insofar as it tends spontaneously to differentiate itself in advance from the differentiation of the *who*, since the *who* is always inscribed in a system of *what* overdetermined by technical tendencies), these are two dynamics in negotiation: the one, bio-anthropo-logical, the other, techno-logical. The dynamic of the *who* itself redoubles that of the *what*: conditioned *by* the *what*, it is equally conditional *for* it: within the transductive negotiation of terms, the issue is always one of co-individuation.

In *The Fault of Epimetheus*, I demonstrated that the reification of a technical propensity or body of propensities, leading to an altered technical system, suspends the behavioral programming through which a society is united, and which is a form of objective *epokhē* the social body initially tends to resist. An adjustment then takes place in which an epochal intensification (*redoublement*) occurs; this adjustment is the *epokhē's* key accomplishment, in which the *who* appropriates the effectivity of this suspension (i.e., of programmatic indetermination) for itself. Technical development is a violent disruption of extant programs that through redoubling give birth to a new programmatic; this new programmatic is a process of psychic and collective individuation.

Contemporary disorientation is the experience of an incapacity to achieve epochal redoubling. It is linked to speed, to the industrialization of memory resulting from the struggle for speed, and to the specifics of the technologies employed in that struggle. In this investigation, I propose to analyze these factors as a contribution to the elaboration of the question of a politics of memory.

In *The Fault of Epimetheus*, I tried to establish *why* the analysis of a temporal constitution must take into account the prosthetic specifics conditioning access to the already-there.

In *Disorientation*, I shall try to show *how* this conditioning has indeed taken place throughout modern history, and why current prosthetics acts as an obstacle to intensification.

All supplement is technics, and all supplementary technics is a storage medium “exteriorizing” a program. But all technical supplement is not thus a technics of memorization: *mnemo*-technics only appears after the Neolithic period. And “the history of being” (the properly “historical” age of historicity) begins *along with* the history of language. In the first chapter of *Disorientation*, “The Orthographic Age,” I explain that the literal prosthetics of orthographic writing constitutes a unique ground of belief—which opens the space of and for politics by providing access to a past that thus becomes properly historical. When I read Plato or Heidegger, I do not question the reliability of the already-there. I do not ask: am I certain of having dealt appropriately with the thought of Plato or Heidegger, who are, after all, dead and buried? I believe, and I believe from the outset that I have dealt appropriately with their thoughts, despite the real possibility of typographical errors or interpolations. It is philology’s business to establish the authenticity of source materials; once they have been established, I no longer doubt having access, as if I were there, to Plato’s or Heidegger’s orthographic thoughts, constituted in the very possibility of a certain after-the-fact re-constitution.

All collective belief constitutes itself within a state of supplementarity that conditions collective memory. For centuries, rationality and monotheism, in the forms of all the religions of the Book, have constituted the foundation of belief; it is this foundation that the new supplementarity destroys, to the degree to which it is not ap-propriated, and the entire question is one of knowing the degree to which it is ap-propriable. If (cultural) memory *can* be industrialized, it is because it is techno-logically synthesized, and if this synthesis is originary, it is because the *who* is defined by its *retentional finitude*: its memory being limited, essentially failing, radically forgetful (Epimetheus’s primary trait); it must be strengthened by supports that are not only its means of self-conservation but the very conditions of its *e-laboration*. Orthographic writing enacts a wrenching out of context that intensifies memory’s industrialization still further (disorientation being precisely this decontextualization, this disappearance of place), which has actually been occurring since epiphylogenesis’s origin—and which thus also, paradoxically, gives place. The second chapter here, “Genesis of Disorientation,” describes this process of giving place, analyzing the conditions by which the programming of all essentials, rhythms and memories, suspensive techniques, styles, and idiomatic differentiations occurs, and providing evidence that all territorialization

(all conquest of space) is initially *deteritorialization*, all communitization *decommunitization*, all epochal orientation *disorientation*.

Memory is always the object of a politics, of a criteriology by which it selects the events to be retained. The industrialization of memory, the focus of the third chapter, is *the industrial synthesis of retentional finitude* subjected, as pre-judgment, to the specific criteriology of calculable credit as the operator of economic development, as opposed to both theo-logico-political discredit and integrist compulsions (lay and religious) that industrialize the already-there. The programming industry, as the operator of memory's industrialization, exploits the possibilities of memory's synthesis as opened out by analogic, numeric, and biologic technologies. Through on-line communication, data processing in real time, and genetic manipulation linking the somatic and the germinal, the structure of the event in all its forms is radically modified. Contemporary technical mediation destroys the process of communication that once grounded orthographic writing. And thus arises the question of the politics of memory. Today more than ever the political question is memory, in that it is industrialization itself that raises the question of selection, of pre-judgments, of the criteria of both judgment and the resultant decisions to be made in the possible beyond of the real itself, technoscience no longer constatively describing the real's existence but rather performatively exploring and writing about the new possibilities to be found there. This chapter demonstrates finally that, paradoxically, the cognitive sciences that previously put informatic prosthetics at the very heart of their heuristic can actually conceptualize nothing of retentional finitude, and yet simultaneously also misunderstand the very Husserlian intentionality to which they refer, and which is only revealed in analysis of the temporal object.

These first three chapters of *Disorientation* present an outline of the history of tertiary memory, whose role in temporalization is reconsidered in the final chapter, "The Temporal Object and Retentional Finitude," for two reasons:

—On the one hand, as I have said, Heidegger is not able to think the thought of the constitutive nature of the *what* because while breaking with Husserlian privileging of the lived and living present, he rejects the consequences of this rupture, which I shall elaborate in detail: the impossibility of isolating primary, secondary, and tertiary memories; Heideggerian analysis of modern technics cannot account for contemporary technics because it has never analyzed retentional finitude.

—On the other hand, the question raised in Husserl's *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* is the temporality of synthesis in transcendental consciousness, and insofar as this is the age of the generalization of industrial temporal objects (since the flux of worldwide collective consciousness increasingly coincides with the flux of those temporal objects that are the products of the programming industry in all its forms), the industrialization of memory must be thought of simultaneously as part of the philosophic question of synthesis and as a rupture with what, within that question, cannot think the synthesis that is already prosthesis as tertiary memory.

In *The Fault of Epimetheus*, I laid out an interpretation of *Schuldigsein*, the subject of *Being and Time*'s second section, as being-in-default rather than being-at-fault, notwithstanding the fact that the first volume of *Technics and Time* speaks centrally about Epimetheus's *fault*. And yet in fact this fault is *Epimetheus's*, not that of mortals who are only mortals because of this fault. There is in fact no mortal fault but rather an originary *de-fault* of origin that opens like a default of community, the community of a default. The distancing of *Weltgeschichtlichkeit* is in a close correlation with what remains in it of the theology of culpability in Heidegger, and it is also in this sense that he fails in his reading of the most profound thinker of power, that is to say of technics: Nietzsche, who writes on the Greek experience of crime:

“How is it possible? how could it actually have happened to heads such as *we* have, we men of aristocratic descent, of the best society, happy, well-constituted, noble, and virtuous?”—thus noble Greeks asked themselves for centuries in the face of every incomprehensible atrocity or wantonness with which one of their kind had polluted himself. “He must have been deluded by a *god*,” they concluded finally, shaking their heads. . . . This expedient is typical of the Greeks. . . . In this way the gods served in those days to justify man to a certain extent even in his wickedness, they served as the originators of evil—in those days they took upon themselves, not the punishment but, what is nobler, the guilt.<sup>6</sup>

What monotheism calls original guilt or original sin, in terms of the myth of Epimetheus, does not belong to mortals but, as forgotten, to the Titan Epimetheus, Prometheus's brother and (re)double. This is what our age still does not know how to think.<sup>7</sup>

Does this mean, as I have been told *The Fault of Epimetheus* might be seen to suggest, that *speed* should become the substitute for God's infinity—and that, consequently, technics should become infinite

retentionality (that is, in fact, God's memory) faced with the finitude of failings?

At the beginning of this introduction, I reviewed speed's primordial role in the current experience of disorientation. Even more important, in *The Fault of Epimetheus* I proposed that speed's acceleration is at the very heart of the process of exteriorization, as the conquest of mobility, which would also characterize vital differentiation in general, speed thus constituting "the absolute past" of all present: that past that was never present to the temporality of "conscious life itself." But one need not have a substantialist understanding of what I call speed here. Speed is our experience of a difference in forces: speed in and of itself is nothing. "Speed" expresses the test and the act of a potential constituted through the negotiation of tendencies. In ordinary disorientation, this differential of forces-as-potential is the difference of *rhythms* between human beings and organized inorganic being (technics), as well as the de-phasing brought about by technics' structural advancement, in its differentiation, on the living being it constitutes and differentiates by bringing it into being. In addition, according to André Leroi-Gourhan, speed more generally designates mobility, as difference of potential, among concurrent species. It therefore becomes necessary to think the (transductive) relation between concurrent species, and this relationality itself necessarily leads to an overall increase in mobility, through which local conditions and strategies may produce reductions in speed, even quasi-immobilities. But this deceleration remains a figure of speed, just as immobility is a figure of movement.

That said, technical supplement itself, whatever its advances, is itself finite. As supplement, it opens out a gap that can be seen as in-finite, but that in fact is not infinite but rather, more precisely, indefinite (the principle of indetermination), and, relative to retentional finitude, quasi-infinite; the technical supplement is the substance of the transductive relation between the *who* and the *what* as distributed in the places constituting irreducible singularities: as events. Speed is the result of the negotiation between the dead and the living—between primary retention and tertiary memory. To think the current age through speed is thus to think—before decomposition into space and time or opposition of form and matter—the general modification of event-ization (*événementialisation*) that is taking place before our in-credulous eyes, and consequently to examine the conditions of an *epokhal* redoubling.

## § I The Orthographic Age

By the public use of one's own reason I understand the use that anyone as a scholar makes of reason before the entire literate world.

—Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?"

### Orthography, Orthoseses, and Photography

In the final chapter of *The Fault of Epimetheus*, I asked: "If the already-there is what constitutes temporality in that it opens me out to my historicity, must not this already-there also be constitutive in its positive facticity, both positively constitutive and historically constitutive, in the sense that its material organization in form constitutes historicity itself, prior to and beyond history?" (240). In enumerating the principal elements of a positive response to this question, Heidegger nonetheless excludes one particular hypothesis.

To account correctly for *Dasein's* historicity would be, first of all, to account for the very possibility of accounting for it, to analyze the conditions through which *Dasein* is capable of thematizing its own historicity, and that would only be possible when this historical *Dasein* conquers its historicity and thus enters into the history of being (as forgetting of being): in the following, we shall explore why this history is indissolubly that of the letter and of citizenship. Writing, in its alphabetic specificity, as exact recording, an orthographics, that liberates a new possibility of access to the past, configures properly historical temporality.

The already-there is positively and historically constitutive in its facticity, and the inaugurality of History within historicity occurs along with the techno-logic emergence of an orthography of the already-there. To plumb this hypothesis more deeply is to develop a history of the supplement whose fundamental concepts have yet to be elaborated beyond that bequeathed to us by *Of Grammatology*.



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