

Wild Way Art

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Overview

The *Wild Way* blends four unifying whole art disciplines and draws from these cultures: The martial arts of China and Japan, the yoga arts of India, and the Shamanic practices of aboriginal peoples. Experiential Journeying in wild nature evolved into the *Wild Way Art*. This *Wild Way* survey systematizes its features, values, techniques and practices using journeying, adventuring and healing narratives. Multiple levels of meaning are grounded in wilderness adventures. Mythic journeys unite community and person, from physical to spiritual, to give us deep meanings by connecting with wild energies in wilderness and home places.

Four Groundings

We survey the features of wild journeying as a whole art unifying discipline. *Four Ways* to harmony with Nature blend in wild journeying as a *Wild Way Art*. They are: *One*, the unstructured ways of spontaneous spirituality, as in free air wilderness wandering; *Two*, the ordered practices of primal spirituality in shamanic journeys, trance dancing and Nature ceremonies; *Three*, the formal practices of concentration movements in Tai Chi and Aikido; *Four*, the ways of organized wilderness journeying that developed in North America under these and other influences. *Core Values* in all these approaches are respect and nonviolence toward people and wild Nature's many forms. We describe the features of a wild journeying spiritual discipline called the *Wild Way Art*.

The *Wild Way Art* integrates and unifies our *fourfold nature of sense, emotion, intellect and spirit* as embodied in places. Its values and practices create and nurture positive relationships with others based on mutual respect and consideration. Through these arts we come to deeply know the Earth, ourselves and others.

This *Wild Way System* is distilled from wild journeying practices in North America. It draws from personal experiences, diverse perspectives and shared narratives. The cross-cultural elements apply ecological paradigms from science and diverse contemporary cultures.

We focus on wild journeying in North America contextualizing the *Wild Way Art* through personal, communal, local and regional knowledge gained from wild journeying and from research. We explore how traditions and practices embellish and elaborate on spiritual themes emerging in our spontaneous experiences in wild places. We describe how to integrate and unify ourselves through practicing harmony with wild beings and energies. We explore how by a *wilderness wandering* natural practice, we spontaneously experience life's unity, becoming sensitive and aware of diverse spiritual energies in wild beings. The *Wild Way Art* is done in work, leadership, farming, forestry and being with animals. Using the *Wild Way* we can help others to find and create their personal practices appropriate to their places, families and communities.

Whole Arts

Whole Arts have practical skills, knowledge and values forming coherent unifying disciplines. Fine arts are *whole arts* when they are ways of life; we then use them to make choices cultivating spiritual integration, growth and clarity in valued aims. Martial Arts are whole arts when their practices unify us via ultimate values. Thus, *Art* transcends science. Science depends on the arts of imagination and observation to proceed. The dedicated practice of *whole arts* completes us as self-conscious beings. Many such arts are done without tools or materials, as for example, dancing, singing and acting.

Creative imagination gives us rich cultural myths with patterns of meaningful values. The *Wild Way Art Whole System* is positive and creative as we respond to the world of change. We discover ways to Wild Journey in daily life in town and in the wilderness. The world is creatively changing, a deep spiritual insight in many traditions such as Taoism and Buddhism.

Wild Journeys embody and create the *Wild Way Art* through action adventures and narratives. The *Wild Way* is self-realizing and expansive. It orders our lives and gives them connection, beauty and meaning. As we do them, we become better, and by doing them better, we improve as whole persons; thus, we practice ever more beautifully, and so on. The *Wild Way* as whole art is self-organizing and transcending; it is a way of continuous creative learning and growth. It is self-correcting and transformative. It is like an expanding opening spiral.

Learners Teaching

All of us are teachers and learners. When going on wild journeying mountaineering trips, we learn the values of wild journeying from the mountains and each other. We share mountaineering and wilderness skills, and deeply appreciate wild mountain living. We share these treasures with others. I learned wilderness skills and gained mountain knowledge in a tribe of teens led by an elder mentor artist. Our spirited group shared fun, adventure, esprit, and knowledge.

In sharing we better understood the role of serious play in outdoor activities for engendering community spirit, personal competence and wholeness. Some came to the first trips tense, lacking confidence, and without signs of leadership. Participating in wild journeying, they were changed with increasing confidence and personal initiative.

Together we shared adventures, skills in climbing and in wild journeying. Participation in leadership leads to deep changes in those who do such programs. They develop self-esteem, not only climbing, but also in other areas. Their increased integration and wholeness is obvious to others. For some, wild journeying becomes a life-long practice, a way of life, or *Tao*.

A *Tao* is a route, path, or way to practice and realize harmony with Nature (Lao Tzu, 1971). *Ways* expand our horizons to become more integrated, whole, and creative. Their

practices give us values, skills, and spiritual communion, acting together and alone. We transcend small self-willfulness as a more authentic, compassionate awareness comes into our lives and relationships (Dalai Lama, 2001).

Arts Mastery

By “Wild Journeying” in the *Wild Way Art*, we mean outdoor activities of cross-country travel and trail hiking while living in wilderness and semi-wild places. Mastery of these skills and practices leads to integrated unity and spontaneous persons. As we abide together in harmonious ways we share beautiful actions, adventures and stories.

The *Wild Way Art* frameworks, themes and activities work with subtle energies, attitudes and ultimate values. Its spiritual narratives are based on ultimate purposes and other rich meanings. They perfect us and our communities. Their practices transform negative elements in our awareness into action positive feelings, energies and values. Practicing the *Art* is integrating and *transforming*. Skillfully moving in balance across steep slopes and using a compass effectively are in a larger activity in the *mastery of the art as a way*. Whole Arts mastery is a joy, and we are ecstatic in high moments of perfection.

With mastery, actions and skills *flow in a natural unity*. They are part of a meaningful whole life journey. They are like notes and voices in a choral symphony, or steps, poses and movements in spirit dances and ballet. They can be informal and intuitive, or highly organized, with the stylized patterns of basic forms and explicit valued patterns. The essence of each *whole art* can be distilled in a single icon; significant gestalts are symbolized through mountain climbing adventure stories, or in outdoor adventure therapy programs. A whole story, or a whole technique, (or single *kata*) can encapsulate and teach the whole art. They are like master gestalt holograms, and so the *Wild Way* is flexible.

Master wild journeyers embody the whole Art and internalize it as organic reality. It is who they are. We identify with it as it shapes us. Detailed descriptions of methods call attention to aspects of the art for learning purposes, but they are a fluid activity of creative improvisation, like jazz. At high levels of mastery, we appreciate the significance of each act, and its variations, as places in a larger cosmic space. There are unlimited possibilities for creativity. No two trips or walks are ever the same, even when we climb to the same summit or do the same walk every day. What we learn through mastery is directly applicable to daily life where ever we are, even in the city. The *Art's* values, knowledge and wisdom are always compounding.

Knowing-Feeling

The *Wild Way* is an artful full feeling living aesthetic way. Unifying stories embody its practices. Its skills, values and practices can be used in other places and situations, as in sailing a boat, building a cabin, or teaching school. Thus, our actions in daily life are part of the *whole art as a way of life*. All *Whole Arts* are creative whole ways of life.

The *Wild Way* engenders harmony in personal and communal relations and develops our emotional, intellectual and practical skills. We each are unique and live in specific places

and ecosystems. The *Wild Way* helps us find our own personal way to be integrated, confident and whole; we appreciate multiple ranges of rich values, in harmony with others and Nature. The *Wild Way Art* creates community spirit with humans and nonhumans in home places. We live the *Wild Way* even in the city. Everything becomes the *Wild Way* and can be done in the *Wild Way*. The *Wild Way* is then our home. It is a gentle low impact way of living well.

Knowing-Action

Wilderness education is as an active communal process. We help others to engage in creative action and inquiry working together. We discover native intelligence with creative freedom. We examine our experiences for distorting theories, preconceptions, dysfunctional beliefs, conflicted emotions and crippling fears. The skills, techniques, and methods are not the end or aim of *Wild Way Art*. In their fruition, we have a sense of life as a whole, and for our relations to other beings. We are attuned by the natural wild way, a way of no force, *a way with heart*. *Ecocentric values* orient and guide a creative life.

The *Wild Way Art* is a model for complete education; it furthers self-knowledge and an understanding of our relationships to depth in Places. We understand being part of the natural world and how to contribute values. *Wild Way Journeying* is complete immersion in wild land life-and-death situations. The *Wild Way* demands practical action, not withdrawal or disengaged speculation. The *Wild Way* is like nature, dynamic, creative and open-ended. We respond appropriately with fully unified physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual energies.

Wilderness learning deepens our spiritual appreciation for life and the sentient energies pervading the natural world. Wilderness and the wild bring us into direct contact with *the other* and the more than human conscious reality. We transcend doubt, fragmentation, alienation, and nihilism. Urban life does not cut us off from natural communities, deep ecological sensibilities and wild energies. We are not just *personae* filling stereotyped roles and specialized functions. In wild journeying we discover larger personal resources with deep spiritual connections. Modern culture stresses competition and undermines community; wild journeying inspires cooperation and nurtures cohesive community spirit.

Spiritual Presences

Wild Way spiritual practices appreciate the diverse wild qualities of the natural world and natural selves. Its *Practices* are akin to *Rasa Yoga*, a *Way of Beauty* and *Aesthetics* described by Tagore (1971). We journey through the deep silence of wilderness, with its rich ecological diversity, and awaken to life's *Creative Source*. The radiant starry night sky enhances the whispered sounds of a brook; and in the night, bugling Elk serenade us in an alpine meadow. These experiences intensify our wonder at the *mystery* in all beings. The sounds of falling water and rushing streams, the cycles of rain and snow, the wind high in the trees, are all in the Earth's *natural wild spontaneity*. We abide in them, and are fully at home in this earthly presence.

In our mountain journeying, we take on *Nature's* wild ways. When hungry, we eat; when sleepy, we sleep; when tired, we rest. We are intensely alive, totally involved in what we are doing. When we are in town, eating is often accompanied by tension, worry, arguing, watching TV, talking on the phone or reading. In the mountains or in town when in the wild way, we sit together and just eat. This *total involvement* makes wilderness experience intensely satisfying. We are *in wild time*, not clock time. The *Wild Way* is mythic in its universal symbolism. It joins the personal and communal in affective iconic adventures and stories.

Rich Simplicity

The breathtaking beauty of the natural world, with its unhurried pulses and cycles, is inspiring for all peoples, sages and spiritual leaders. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush on a mountain. Jehovah appeared to Job in a whirlwind. Jesus prayed and fasted in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. Buddha meditated under the Bo-tree for many days and nights attaining enlightenment under a glowing morning star.

The Wild World shows us voluntary simplicity. In wilderness adventures we simplify our lives, equipment and gear. We reduce gear and stuff to necessities. This practical carrying limit helps us to realize how little we need to *thrive*. Wild journeying gives us some of our most rewarding and happy times. We gain valuable insight into *vital needs* and how life quality can be rich with few things and modest consumption. We create ecologically balanced lifestyles in the city.

We know well-being and happiness do not depend on possessions and things. We know the range of possibilities for a satisfying life related to material needs and natural limits. The personal and cultural dimensions of the environmental crisis are directly known by us in these practices.

Simplifying and reducing possessions is consistent with comfort and safety; we compare desires to needs. While wild journeying, satisfying simple needs is enjoyable and we do not have a craving jaded palate. Cold mountain water quenches thirst and is more satisfying than exotic drinks. We see how desires spawn other desires and can become self-perpetuating and insatiable. Wild journeying helps us to appreciate the *wisdom of sacred teachings on having few desires*. We practice this voluntary simplicity at home.

Walking on trails we learn sustainable pace, a balanced, rhythmic movement of our whole mind, body, breath and heart. Our spiritual heart warms as we walk with enthusiasm. We learn efficient travel; we are sensitive to balance, adjusting pace, posture, and breathing to the changing terrain. Our balanced, dynamic harmony is in touch with a larger, common life. We learn the wisdom of a slow, steady, sustainable pace. We pass through a “second wind” into flowing boundless energy with mindful pace and careful walking, on and off-trail (Csikszentmihalyi 1997). We are mindful with each step. Our energy and attention focus on walking, and we also take in a larger view. The sensuous and visual aspects of wilderness nurture our being. We roam without being attached to anything. This is a meditation art like yoga and the unifying movements of Tai Chi and Aikido.

The *Wild Way* has affinities with Tibetan Laung Gumpa walking (LaChapelle, 1978) and the marathon walks of the Japanese Buddhist monks of Mt. Hiei (Stevens, 1988). It has elements from Shamanic Journeying (Harner, 1986) for it connects with the spirits of Nature. Its ceremonial journeys visit the lower and upper worlds of Nature spirits, ancestors and gods. It resonates with the spirit of Australian aboriginal walkabouts and North American vision quests (Sun Bear, Wabun, & Wienstock, 1987).

Communion Unity

“Meditation” is unity with whatever we are doing while relaxed *and* attentive. Wild walking is an enlivening (*zen*) process. *We do not have to think to be.* We are aware, intelligent, perceptive and responsive. We are quietly and spontaneously aware of what and where we *are*, and of the World’s inexhaustible richness. This spontaneous, primal experience is the world’s Meditative walking; our pace, balance and mindfulness are in a *universal emptiness*. Natural sensations cleanse our senses, and the journey cleans our minds and feelings. We have a sense of whole place-story, and storied-places.

In Wild journeying we share communal understanding in intimate contact as we act from the heart. We are together all hours of the day in simple, intense and beautiful situations. We climb long alpine ridges and walk through silent forests. Our movements balance deep inwardness with intense connections to others and Nature. We are in non-verbal communion with each another *and* the natural world. This mutual feeling *communion* is our journeying community. We share serendipity in a communally conscious space. We share community with others. There are global and cosmic narratives in wild journey adventure stories. We are wild journeyers in daily life.

We learn from hardship and the easy-going parts of our journeys. We know that as the rain stops and the sun emerges from the clouds, so too tears of sadness and clouds of grief dissipate and lightness returns. We need basic orientation in daily life, so too in the wild mountains. We need meticulous preparation for extended wild journeys, and so too do we for our life work. Both Journeys have highs and lows, summits and valleys. The benefits of wild journeying permeate our lives, as its practices subtly change us. Mountains are mountains, and in our stories are also mythic metaphors and icons.

Earth-Beings

The *Wild Way* resolves problems by working together in harmony with Nature. We see how the symmetries between human consciousness and the principles of ecology pervade worlds. We see how each of us *are* miniature ecosystems. We appreciate the integrity of the Earth with Its diverse ecological communities that sustain all living beings. In the *Wild Way* we are into the personal ways of the whole world, living ecosphere we share. Wild Journeying enlivens us as we take home positive energy. We gain strength and optimism for we know anything is possible!

The *Wild Way* appreciates the living beings with whom we share the Earth. We appreciate the wild silence of wilderness; we share and are part of creative life forces or *Ki* (Ueshiba 1985). We sense and are aware of the multiple cycles of living energy. We appreciate the interconnections of the living and how all things hang together. We are part of vast shared creative processes. The principles of community, friendship, and human flowering are revealed in the wholeness of wild oceans, sky, wind, flowers, forests, rivers, and mountains. The *Wild Way* shares this *Cosmic Wisdom*.

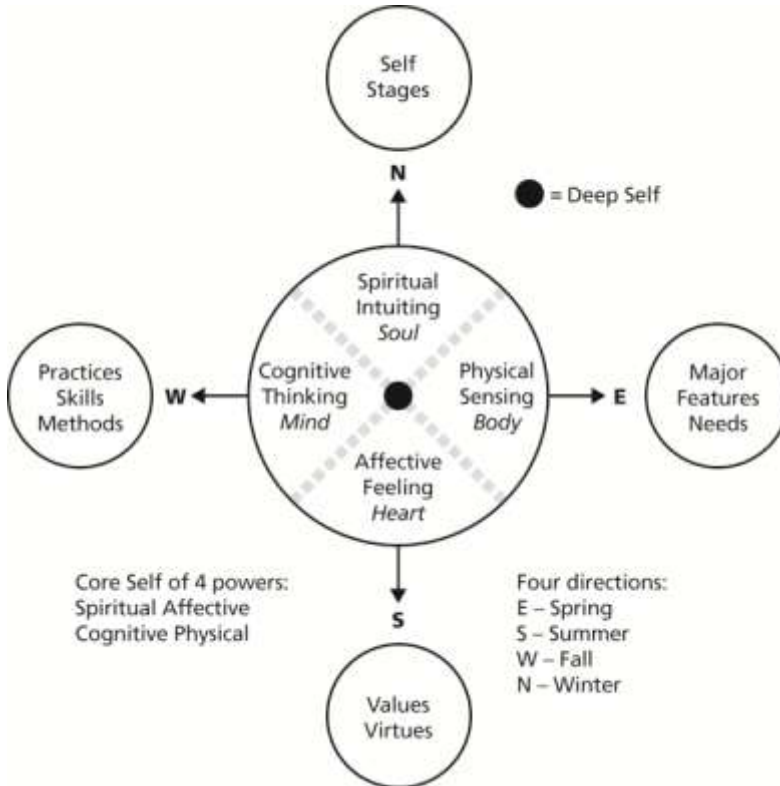
The *Wild Way* brings us to the vital home center in ourselves in harmony with Nature and the Universe. Lao Tzu, M. Ueshiba and others in Eastern traditions, learned this from Nature and taught this *Way*, as did teachers in our Western wisdom and mystical traditions. These are mystical qualities at the center of our ordinary experiences, when we are aware *and* receptive. As in wild journeying, life sends us many gifts for joy in every moment. We are blessed as caring citizens in home places on a good Earth.

Personal Wild Way as Constellation Design

Medicine circles below are guides for designing your own wild way life-style. The inner dark circle represents the deep self, while the larger circle is the embodied self, with its four powers as shown in the diagram. The dotted lines represent porous boundaries. The arrows represent directions in the Northern Hemisphere, as in North American aboriginal and Old Norse systems. In these *Old Ways* each major direction has qualities, values and seasons. The *North* is the spiritual direction. The outer circles to which the arrows point, each have eight sections. If you fill these out for each circle you can organize your worldview as a cosmology with stages of self, major needs, values, practices, skills and methods. (I do this in my *Wild Way Home*, 2010.)

You can design your personal worldview as a Wild Way Constellation by answering these questions: 1. What do you think and feel is your nature as a self? 2. What do you most value? 3. What do you want to achieve and how will you do it? 4. How does your way of life relate and give values to other humans and beings?

Constellation with Self as Center (See ARD WWH 2010, p 254)



The inner dark circle represents the deep self as your core; your embodied self has four dimensions as noted in the larger white circle.

Constellation Design: Self as Center

The *Wild Way Art Constellation System* has four directions, each with eight aspects, qualities, features and stages. There are eight design categories: Spiritual, physical, narrative-metaphorical, historical, personal-social, ecological, practical and educational. In the whole system, each direction has 8, and there are 64 in the whole system. Each direction corresponds to one of the 4 major aspects of *self*: *body*, *heart*, *mind* and *soul*. Each of these corresponds to a direction. We start with *East* since it is the direction of sunrise. Each direction can have its own meanings in different cosmologies.

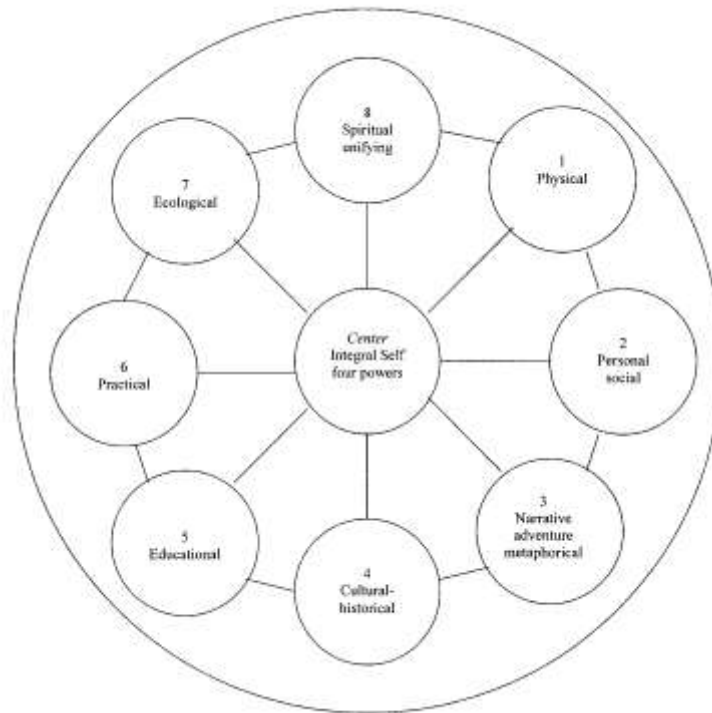
We can use different design centers depending on our aims, e.g. we can use a community or an ecosystem as design centers, instead of the self.

Major Features-Needs Circle (East)

In the concentric circles below the innermost, center circle represents our *Vital Center*, our core being. When our four powers are balanced, we are stable, no matter what shifting perspectives and situations we are in. When we are in balance, in our inner and outer journeying, and narrative journaling, we are fully present in the natural world attuned to animals, trees, streams, mountains and stars.

The *East's major elements* in the *Wild Way Art* have eight interrelated spheres: physical, personal-social, narrative-metaphorical, cultural-historical, educational, practical, ecological, and spiritual.

1. *Physical*: fitness and skills of balanced movement with breath regulation; activities giving strength, endurance, coordination, flexibility, confidence, and body-mind integration.
2. *Personal-social*: Solo wilderness treks give deep self-knowledge; in group trips we learn about our relational interconnections. We transcend ego-self to realize our ecological Self in a larger life community. The *Wild Way* develops our four basic powers - spiritual, cognitive, affective and physical - in balanced integrated ways.
3. *Adventure-journey narrative and metaphor*: *Wild Way* journeying represents life as a whole. Its narratives have integrating and unifying power bringing knowledge of natural processes into our daily lives, whether in communities with modern technology, or in natural settings.
4. *Cultural- Historical*: spiritual practices of withdrawal from urban society to the wilderness and the return; primal vision quests; tracking skills of hunter-gatherers; Scandinavian *friluftsliv*; skills, ethics, and spirit of Scouting; craft and art of Mountaineering; survival skills and personal competence of Outward Bound and Rediscovery. Wild journeying as a *Way* (*tao* in Chinese, *do* in Japanese) connects the values realized in past traditions and unifies them within our lives. Symbolism in the *Wild Way* has affinities with ancient Alchemical traditions focusing on unifying body and spirit, the transmutation of base elements to noble forms, e.g. greed into generosity, indifference into concern, hate into love, anger into forgiveness.
5. *Educational*: developing our whole person, in body, feeling, mind and spirit; this leads to deep self-knowledge and understanding of the interconnectedness of all life. Recovering the sacred wholeness lost in industrial culture; practicing humility, respect and gratitude; by integrating these in our person we are a blessing to any endeavor. An ultimate aim of education is this completeness of ourselves, an original meaning of *higher learning*.
6. *Practical*: pacing ourselves in good work, creating good services and products, attention to details, flexible, improvising freely, improving quality of relationships, and life as a whole.
7. *Ecological*: awareness in wild journeying is comprehensive, with experiential knowledge of ecological principles. Live by voluntary simplicity. Our trips are creative expressions and ceremonial celebrations with a unified vision of the Earth and living Cosmos.
8. *Spiritual*: Mastery in realizing the sacredness of life and its Source; a glowing sense of wonder and awe; realizing the ecosphere is not hostile but benign; living with increasing awareness and care; this respectful approach leads to communion with other persons and life forms.

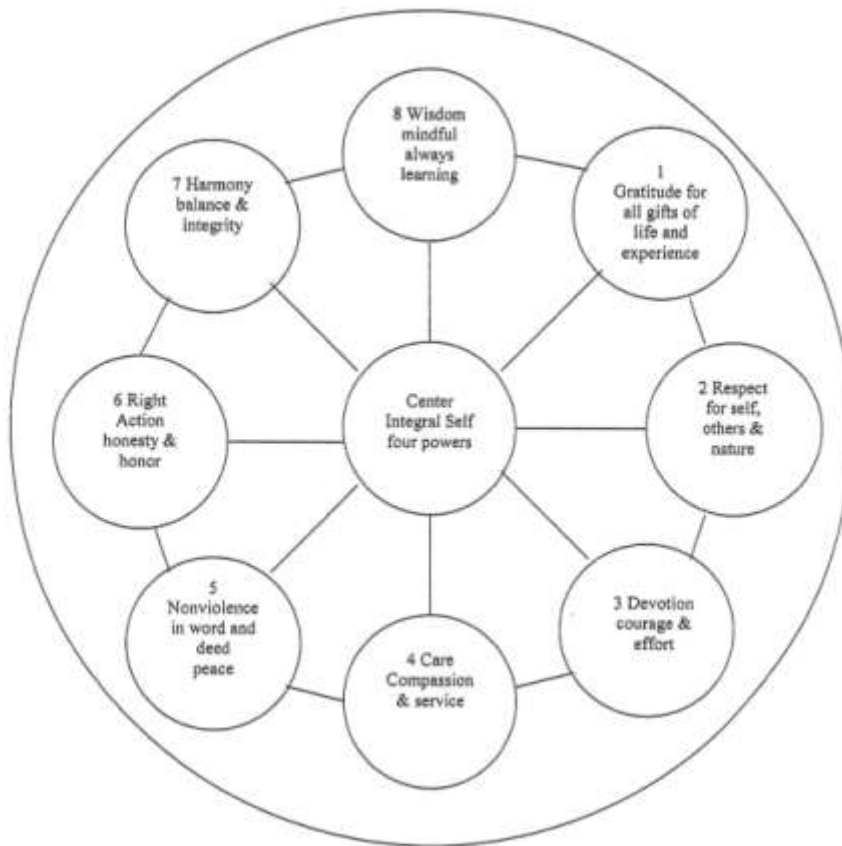


Major Elements (East) The inner self in the center is dynamically interacting with all eight major spheres of activity and relationship. The lines represent dynamic interaction between all of the spheres. These energies and relationships spiral into the self and out into a larger milieu, as do all of the circle systems used in this article.

Values Circle (South)

The 8 value spheres in the *Wild Way Art* are:

1. Gratitude for all life and experience gives us;
2. Respect for self, others, nature, and all beings;
3. Devotion and commitment, with courage to make strong effort;
4. Care, compassion and service to our relations and relationships;
5. Nonviolent communication in thoughts, words and actions;
6. Right actions with integrity and honesty, honoring others (Seek truth but don't claim it.);
7. Actions and non-actions for harmony, balance, integrity and beauty;
8. Wisdom, mindful actions and open learning.



Values Circle Reflections (*South*)

The 8 spheres have permeable boundaries. The lines between them represent relationships and processes. Qualities within the self and its relationships are always changing, and we seek integration and balance. There are energy spirals moving within and out of the circle of self into the larger world. We choose value constellations; this in turn shapes the quality of our experience and the nature of our identity. At different stages our personal names might change.

The inner and outer self are dynamic. Values become virtues through practices. Values are active and passive manifestations of the whole cosmic self. It includes inner and outer, and narrow and wide identifications. In the *Wild Way Art* we work positively to realize mastery. We move forward without negative judgments of self and others. We embrace changing conditions as *Creative Life* in the Universe. Like attracts like; an angry person lives in an angry world, a joyous person lives in a joyful world. The *Cosmos* is creative from moment to moment, since nothing is static, creation is always going on. We can participate in creation by acting positively, adding values, even if we are silent; we can appreciate and love in stillness. This is a *Cosmology of Creation*, as with *Aikido* as a spiritual way, there are no fixed rituals or things, all is changing and we can participate in creative, positive and beautiful ways.

Practices Circle (*West*)

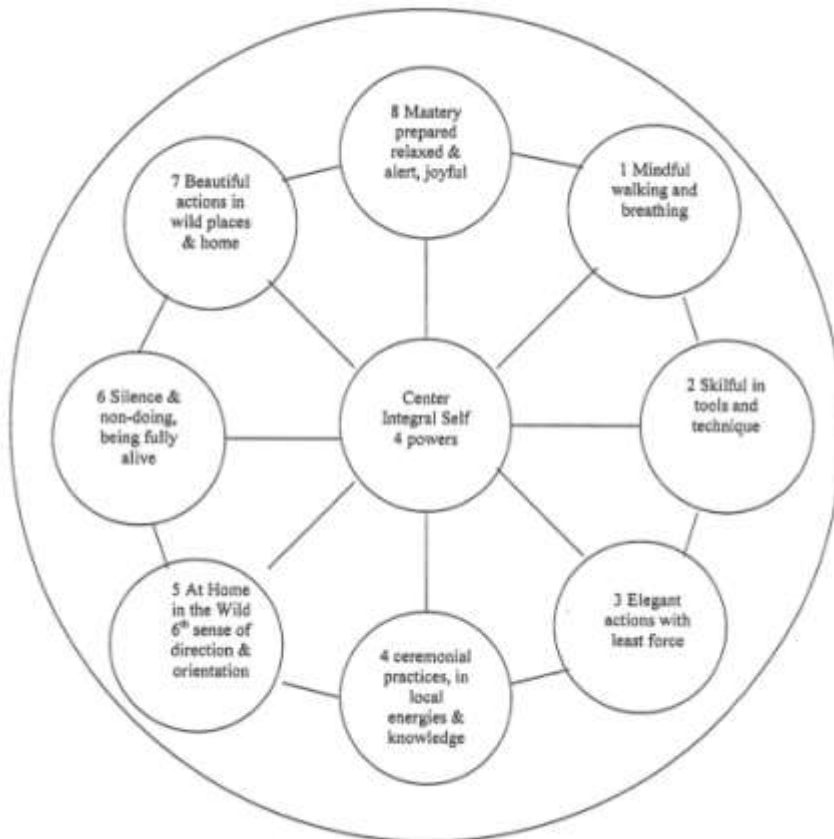
The *Wild Way Art* spiritual discipline uses ceremonial activities and practices to be in harmony with home places in Nature. With mastery we are skilled in shifting

perspectives, inner and outer journeying, narrative journeying, centered and fully in the natural world in tune with the rocks, trees, streams, mountains and stars.

These skills and practices are shown in a medicine circle below.

1. Natural and mindful meditation rhythms fit party and self in pace, grade and walking.
2. By skillful means we artfully use and care for equipment, for example, walking stick, ice-ax, rope, pack, compass, etc.
3. Elegant actions and powerful techniques use wise patterns of action with least force.
4. Ceremonial practices unify local energies and knowledge.
5. Sense of direction, destination, and orientation and a sixth sense in route finding, map reading and being at home wherever journeying.
6. Silence, non-doing, blending in, nonviolence, efficient, small energy use, being more alive.
7. Hiking and climbing skills for beautiful cross-country wilderness travel, living outdoors day after day, as the *whole art* is practiced.
8. In Mastery we are prepared and ready for any situation, relaxed, joyful and alert.

Practices Circle (West)



Stages of Development Circle (North)

We live in a four dimensional space-time. The world is in continuous creative transformation. When we survey our place from a summit, or from a hill on the prairie, we see the world as a circle and we are in the center. The horizon is at the far edge of the *landscape circle* surrounding us. Within this large circle, there are many smaller ones. Circles, mandalas, spirals, spheres and other round figures are used to represent relationships, cycles, processes and developmental stages. In this article the self has a fourfold relational pattern of *physical, affective, cognitive* and *spiritual powers*. There are dialectic spirals between inner and outer, tame and wild, and self and community. The wild is natural living energy; civilizing is a taming and domesticating process of order and control.

The *developmental stages of the self* start with the prepersonal (preegoic) as the earliest (infant) stage of life. The child develops a sense of personal self (ego). In the early teens we develop a tribal identity; this then leads to a community self (young adult) and from there we develop a social self (mature adult). As development continues, we move into *transpersonal dimensions*. These dimensions include the Ecological Self, Planetary Self and Cosmic Self. (Some call the *Cosmic Self* “cosmic consciousness,” some call it the “atman” and there are many other names.) There is continuous movement between these different stages of self awareness.

We commonly experience the other stages before we are fully integrated at those levels. These stages have positive (when growth continues) and negative aspects (when growth halts and is turned into negative shadows); these are discussed in mystical and spiritual literature in all Ages. They are in the esoteric teachings of all major religions. The deep Self is the sacred center in which the powers of the self are balanced when integrated using principles such as Jesus’ teachings on unconditional love, or Buddha’s teachings on compassion.

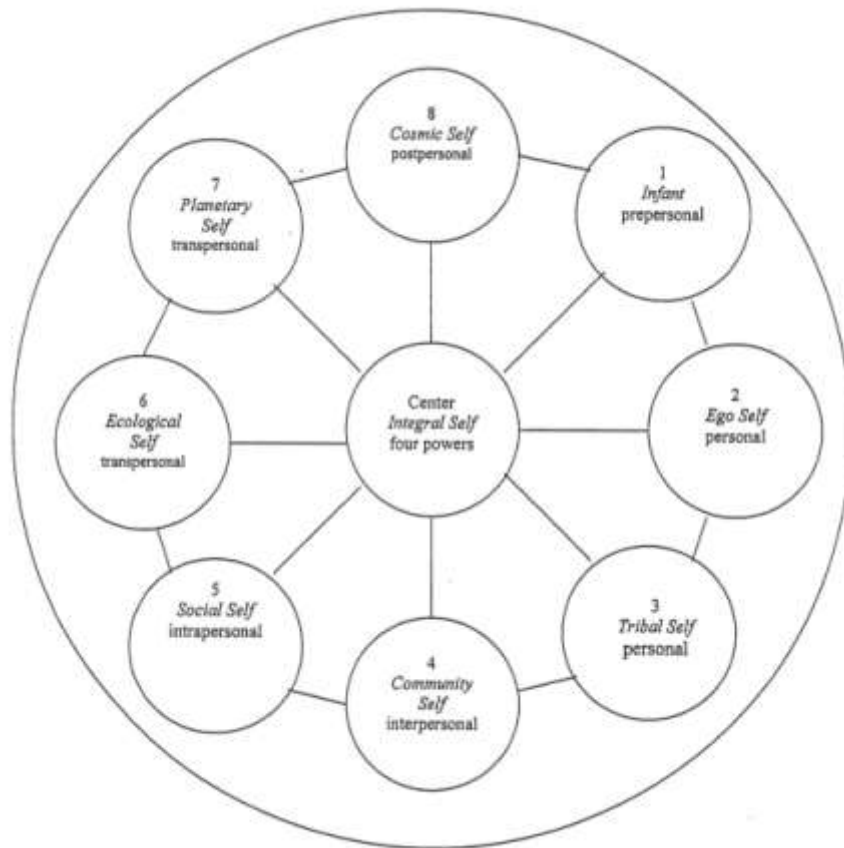
Jesus said: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; ...Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 6, 43-48)

Today holographic models are used to illuminate “worlds within worlds” “stories within stories,” “circles within circles,” as multidimensional representations of self and world in dynamic relationships. Mandalas, sacred symbols and other icons can help us move toward full self realization and through all stages to the *Cosmic Self*. These processes are nurtured and enhanced by peak experiences that bring us into total harmonious unity, experienced as *joy, ecstasy* and *bliss*. The *Wild Way Art* opens us to these transformational experiences. We get deeper into our home places through extended, deep and peak experiences.

Self Stages (North)

1. *Infant*, prepersonal stage, so called because the infant does not have a clearly developed sense of self as distinct from her/his maternal matrix;
2. *Ego Self*, beginning of personal stages, which is observable in many children before they are even a year old, but is not well developed until seven or eight;
3. *Tribal Self*, still personal stage, but now there is a sense of self that is also connected with a group that has a clear sense of itself as distinct from other groups, often defines itself in opposition to the other groups, most clearly evident in teenage gangs in our society;

4. *Community Self*, personal, developing into a communal sense of self identified with an extended family and larger community including home and neighborhood and a sense of responsibility for others and the community;
5. *Social Self*, personal, a person's sense of responsibility and participation in their society goes beyond their community and region to embrace a much larger sense of belonging and responsibility to nations, but can be pan-national as in feeling like a European, for example;
6. *Ecological Self*, transpersonal, transcending focus on only human persons. In all of the self identifications above the person might not feel deep connection with their ecological community and might be focused mostly on human relatives and associations, but now they feel a sense of transpersonal connections of responsibility and concern for their ecological community with its many living beings and energetic life processes;
7. *Planetary Self*, transpersonal, one's sense of self goes beyond the ecological community and bioregion to embrace the whole Earth Household and one recognizes that we are all within this vast diverse system and must be responsible members of the whole Earth household and its assembly of beings;
8. *Cosmic Self*, post-personal, one is no longer focused on our Earthly home but feels connection with a cosmic universal system. The Cosmic Self is sometimes called cosmic consciousness and it is a universal sense of unity and harmony with all of creation. All value possibilities are felt as expressed in a time transcending sense of an eternal presence, or awareness permeating all of reality. This is also called *Buddha Nature* by Buddhists, *the Christos* by the early Christians, and *Atman* in Hindu traditions. In all traditions this goes beyond all languages and dichotomies. It is the highest sense of perfection and harmony we can realize. It is thought by many that all beings participate in this perfection and strive to realize it in their own ways. In these traditions, anyone can realize this self and it can happen to persons in spontaneous ways. One gets glimpses of it at almost any stage in one's development. There are many systems which cultivate our spiritual nature to progress toward this full Cosmic Realization.



Developmental Stages (North) Reflections Our natural state is open and flowing like an infant. When going through stages we take on appropriate self structures that are partially shed as we move to other stages. The spheres have permeable boundaries. The diagram lines between them represent relationships and processes. Energy spirals move in and out of the circle of self in the larger milieu.

For a familiar narrative, consider the story of Adam and Eve, when completed by the eschatology of the Gospels: It tells the story of the birth of the infant in a state of perfection represented by Eden. The complements of man and woman must realize their own distinct nature from their origin by spontaneous choices between a wide range of values. This is the beginning of awareness in responsibility ushering in the time of history and historical persons often told as biographies. We perfect ourselves through our own efforts, and if we continue, we can realize our distinctiveness as historical persons, which *Jesus* represents.

Jesus is the archetypal historical person as egoic consciousness. He perfects his historical presence by following and teaching a new way to live transcends war and conflict. This is the *way of love*, unifying the complements (male and female for example) into transcendental awareness, transforming the temporal consciousness into the *Christos*, the *Universal Self* or awareness that is always present everywhere. *It is eternal and all things are perfect in it*. Each place in the universe is in the center of reality, since the *Cosmos* is eternal and infinite. This is represented in the crucifixion by the vertical line of the cross that points toward the cosmic dimensions, while anchored in the earth. The vertical thrust of the cross represents the eternal.

Jesus' hands are on the horizontal line representing the flow of time in history. In other words, Jesus as ego self is sacrificed so that the *Christos* can be realized and eternal perfection made manifest. The important message is that each person has this possibility since Jesus is fully human and "born of woman." He unifies both male and female in himself. He gives up his egoic self-willfulness and is in harmony with both his male and female energies.

Deifying people who realize this cosmic consciousness is a mistake that is made over and over. It can side track the real spiritual work of a person, so that they get caught up in compensatory cravings and strivings which do not bring joy and bliss and a sense of completion. If Jesus and Siddhartha are gods, then what they realized is beyond all the rest of us. However, their profound teaching is that *each of us has the light of the Christos or Buddha within*. As Buddha said to his comrades, "Be a light unto yourselves."

Thus, Humans are spiritual beings, as are other sentient beings. This is well put in remarks Jane Smiley (2000/2001) made in an interview which is at the end of her novel *Horse Heaven*. The interviewer said:

RF: "It seems as though the line between horse and human in your novels is even more blurred in your day-to-day experience."

JS: "I prefer to think of it like this: Everybody is essentially a spiritual being who is temporarily settled in a horse or a human or a dog—whatever. Our essential communication with another being is spiritual communication, which is filtered through one body to another despite differences in shape or form. With a horse, for example, there's a connection that takes place on a very arcane, spiritual level—not in the realm of motions or actions or intentions. We meet in the realm of attention. The job of the horse-trainer or lover or parent or novelist is to remove the various obstacles to spiritual connection in order to meet the other being in the realm of true attention." (This is the last question in the Reader's Guide at the end of the book.)

Circling Back while Going Forward

Modern industrial society redesigns and reorganizes persons, cultures and nature for a standardized "rational" order. Values are reduced to single measures, a bottom line, like monetary profit. Everything becomes an industrial commodity to be bought and sold. Nothing is sacred. Work, family life, recreation and education are reduced to monetary measures. This monoculturing industrial philosophy uses powerful energies and technologies to create a global *Cosmopolis* (Toulmin 1990) with a form of corporate feudal-oligopoly. This endangers personal freedom, democracy, diversity and wild places. This *total control* has not yet happened. We escape these controls by coming to *know* the wild, as we work to defend wild lands, beings and natural forests in solidarity with Aboriginal indigenous peoples around the world.

Creation Continues

When skilled in the *Wild Way Art*, we continue in urban parks and gardens. We daily practice no matter where we are. By dwelling in wilderness places using the *Wild Way Art*, we bring the wild into daily life. We bring *wild wisdom* home. The *Wild Way Home* is a spontaneous joy and natural harmony always present. This spontaneous creativeness (*Cosmogenesis*) is *Nature's Way*. We participate in creating meaning and values in work, arts and places. We live in rich meaningful cultured places. In urban settings we visit other levels of reality by means of chanting, drumming, dancing and other ceremonies. We join the urban-rural to the tame-wild through a *Wild Way Art*. From this wholeness,

diverse, ecologically wise, place-specific practices, communities and cultures are being born and are both vehicle and end. (“My end is my beginning, and my beginning is my end....”)

The *Wild Way Art* completes us, and we add to the total beauty and value of life on Earth Home in our Solar System of the Milky Way Galaxy. Life flows with satisfaction, appreciation, joy and rich beauty and mystery in the wild and home worlds. Wild creative energy is a spontaneous power Nature manifests in wild places, and in ourselves and homes. We realize and share this and reclaim spiritual life. Our wild personal and communal adventures and stories grow ever richer in *mythopoetic* narratives of emerging artisan cultures of creation.

Wild Presences

Birds as Messengers: During World War Two we moved from North Dakota on the plains, to the forests of western Washington. We were on the shores of Puget Sound at the edge of extensive forests. Bear, deer, bobcat, raccoons, killer whales, seals, trout, salmon, blue heron, birds of all kinds, and other denizens of forest, field and shore, wandered, flew and swam into our lives then.

Our Puget Sound house was a summer fishing cabin with thin walls and at night even soft sounds were audible. I sometimes woke at night. One dark night there were loud noises in the yard that frightened me. When the ruckus stopped, I went back to sleep. The next morning when we got up, Dad was at work and Mother seemed more quiet than usual. She said nothing about the night before. After breakfast, I went into the woods feeling unsettled.

I wandered off a main trail deep into the forest. I came to a small natural clearing. There were large Douglas-firs and other conifers in the forest around the opening. I sat on the mossy ground and leaned on a large log lying along a side of the glade. Light breezes wafted through the trees. Birds were singing in the forest. The sun shone through the trees and was pleasantly warm. The world became a circle of light, warmth and sanity, a peaceful *radiance*.

I then heard a distinctive, bird song. (I later learned that the bird was a Swainson’s thrush.) I felt she was calling and imitated her song. She answered and we called back and forth. She flew around the edge of the clearing, and landed on the lower limb of a small bush a short distance away. She looked at me, turning her head from side to side; she then sang a beautiful song several times. I was absorbed in watching and listening to her. Her wonderful song thrilled me, as it echoed through the still morning air. I tingled with each note, feeling an electrified glow. Warmth and energy rose from the ground, flowing through my back and head. A fountain of light swept away the tension from the previous night. I was filled with warmth, peace and healing wild energies.

These and other spontaneous experiences in Nature connected me deeply with wild spiritual energies in the natural world. I became a lifelong journeyer in this spontaneous spiritual awareness. I learned that *Wild Journeying* is *a way to travel in all realms of space and time*.

Another Swainson’s thrush: This happened on October 22, 2010, the day I finished my book *Wild Way Home (WWH)*. I was thinking about this kind of bird, for I wrote about it at the end of my book.

Mountain Walk: I was going for a walk in Mt. Douglas-Pkols Park. As I was going to my car, I saw a Swainson's thrush lying near a parked van. I gently picked her up, thinking she was dead, but then noticed she was breathing. I thought she was stunned from hitting the van window. I went back in the house and put her in a cloth lined box for safety until I returned. As I put her in the box I whispered "you'll be all right." I put the box in a safe place and went walking. I saw scores of birds of many species. Mt. Douglas is a landing place for migrating birds and also a year round habitat for many birds and animals.

When I returned home, I took the box to the back porch, and when I opened it I saw her. I picked her up and held her in my cupped hands, she did not look injured. She then opened her eyes and looked at me. I held her for a while and when I opened my hands, she flew to a tree in our back yard and sang. I felt this repaid my debt to a relative thrush I met when ten. I recalled the many times we heard Swainson thrushes singing in different places outdoors. It is uplifting and wonderful to hear them! Thanks birds for your songs and other wild gifts!

NB: This essay is a revised version of Chapter 12 from my book *Wild Way Home* (2010).

Appendix

The eight design themes in the Wild Way system are:

1. *Spiritual* life and its *Source* are sacred; with a sense of wonder and awe, we realize the ecosphere is not hostile but benign; increasing awareness, care and respect leads to communion with other persons, life forms and the *Earth*.
2. *Physical* skills of balanced movement and regulation of breath are activities promoting strength, endurance, coordination, flexibility, confidence, body-mind integration and unity.
3. *Adventure narratives* in the *Wild Way* are integrating, unifying stories that power our understanding of natural processes daily in human communities and natural settings.
4. The *historical* roots of wild journeying show its evolution to the *Wild Way Art*. Its backgrounds are in the spiritual practices of withdrawal from urban society to the wilderness and the return; primal vision quests; the tracking skills of the hunter-gatherers; Scandinavian *Friluftsliv*, or life in the free air (Dahle, 1994); the journeys of some mountain men; the skills, values, and spirit of Scouting; the craft of modern mountaineering; the survival skills and personal competence as in *Outward Bound*; the healing processes of Wilderness Therapy and Rediscovery. The *Wild Way* connects these values and unifies them in the present. Symbolism in wild journeying has affinities with ancient alchemical traditions using body-spirit techniques, to transform base elements of the self into noble forms, turning greed into generosity, indifference to concern, hate to love, and sadness to joy. Some took the metaphors literally and did experiments laying the ground for material sciences (e.g. chemistry) rather than just spiritual transformations.
5. The *personal-social* in solo wilderness treks brings deep self-knowledge; in group trips we learn about self in relationships. We go beyond the small ego-self to encounter a larger ecological identification with communities. These practices develop our spiritual, cognitive, affective and physical dimensions in balanced, integrated ways.
6. *Ecosophical* awareness of wild journeying is comprehensive with deep experiential knowledge of ecosystems and ecology. Each trip is a creative expression and ceremonial celebration of a unified vision embracing respect for the Earth and the Cosmos.

7. Wild journeying *practical* elements are central to daily life: we learn to pace ourselves in good work, to create good services and products, and attend to detail, be flexible, and improvise freely, to appreciate quality of relationships and actions, as we see life whole.
8. *Wild Way education* guides undertakings that develop whole persons in body, feeling, mind and spirit. It unifies our capacities with an expansive, positive spirit. *Wild Way* education brings deep self-knowledge and understanding of the interconnections in all life. It brings sacred wholeness, humility, and gratitude blessing any worthy project or endeavor. An ultimate aim of education is to be complete persons and to contribute values, which the *Wild Way Art* does.

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www.shamanism.org Website featuring Michael Harner's work.

www.bivouac.com Canadian website devoted to all aspects of mountaineering.

www.mountaineers.org Website of the Seattle Mountaineers, rich with information.

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