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## My Way to Andragogy - Autobiographical Reflections

**Abstract:** In this paper the author describes his professional way through his life becoming the chair of andragogy at the University of Bamberg. Here he is a professor of adult education since 1977 and he looks back asking which were the influences and events on his way. Describing his personal history within a temporary frame he wants to point out how he became an adult educator or - as he says - an andragogue. Looking back he finds several motives - a political, a family-related, an anthropological and a special andragogic one. First a teacher, he studied pedagogy, philosophy and political journalism, then he became a professor of pedagogy, he founded a department of adult education, he was the head of a Volkshochschule, and finally he was the first chair of adult education in Bamberg. Describing this walk of an individual life at the same time wants to search for the history and development of andragogy in Germany in the form of a biographic case study. Based on these biographical reflection the author tries to find general structures in the development of andragogy in Germany. The reader is invited to compare these observations in the authors country with the development in the own country. Perhaps these personal observations can serve as background to structure the development in the readers own country.

### I. Two reasons and historic background for these reflections

The title of the Bamberg-Conference 2006 "How to become an Adult Educator" causes me to reflect on andragogy as a discipline at universities in Germany. In the context of this title I came to the idea to present this question in the perspective of reflecting my own professional life as a way to andragogy - by the autobiographical method.

There were two reasons for me to do so. First: Since thirty-five years I am professionally engaged with problems of adult education as an academic subject - five years as a full professor of pedagogy at the University of Paderborn; then for seventeen years as the holder of the first chair of adult education at a University in Bavaria, Germany, this chair in Bamberg, since 1995 named chair of andragogy; and now as a professor emeritus here for thirteen years, still teaching students. These experiences asked me to reflect what had happened to me concerning my professional development during my life - and at the same time what happened to andragogy as a

developing discipline at German universities. I will answer these questions by referring to the special sources, influences and events in this time.

The second reason: I am a witness of our developing discipline. Since fifty years, since I began my academic way, I am involved in andragogy and its growing up, and as a witness I thought it allowed to analyse my personal way. I will do this as objective as possible and - important to say - in the mode of authenticity. Maybe I can present a piece of history concerning us as adult educators in theory or practice. And by looking at an individual case it might be possible to understand a piece of a general development in Germany.

#### A young discipline

Why did I become an adult educator or, as I prefer to say, an andragogue? In this context we have to remember that andragogy or 'Erwachsenenpädagogik' (pedagogy for adults), as many German colleagues use to say, is a very young academic discipline. When I studied in the 1950<sup>th</sup>, and when I was a young professor in the 1960<sup>th</sup> there was no discipline of this kind. Only in Frankfurt and Berlin there were some concentration points - special departments for adult education within an institute of pedagogy. So questions or problems concerning adult education were treated only by a few professors of pedagogy at universities or by some professors in other faculties. Adult education was a term for practice, a matter of special institutions like the "Volkshochschulen" or other educational institutions of learning. In 1960 an important experts-opinion was published about "On situation and duty of German adult education". Interesting to know is the fact that a named political writer and broadcasting manager, Walter Dirks, was responsible for the last composition, but not one of the professors of pedagogy who were members in the committee.

#### A discipline at the beginning

The year 1969 was important for the development of an own discipline at universities. The (West-)German University professors of pedagogy had designed a new rule of study and examination for diploma-students. And therein they had fixed adult education as a possible field of concentration. Since this time one could study this subject as an academic one - if there were professors to care for. In the following years professorships for adult education or institutions like the chair of adult education at the University of Bamberg (1977)

were founded.

There was no academic tradition for appointing professors for this discipline. Universities or colleges which were interested in this new subject had different opinions about it. The new professors had different subjects and degrees as their background, and so later on we find a spectrum with various or heterogeneous lines - pedagogy, sociology, psychology, history, political science or theology. So we had as a consequence a wide field with many perspectives, opinions and terms.

#### First Generation: Adult educators 'in passion'

Looking back we find this in a longer tradition, and I will make a short but specific historical retrospective helping to understand the present:

There was Robert von Erdberg (1866-1929), the important initiator of the so called 'Volksbildung' at the beginning of the last century and especially after World War I. Erdberg had studied history of art, he was an actor before, his thesis for doctorate he had written in national economics. And then adult education became the main subject of his life. He was a founder of the famous 'Hohenrodter Bund' (association of adult educators) (Erdberg 1924).

Another one was Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (1888-1973), who was a historian of rights and a professor of sociology at the University of Breslau. In 1920 he founded a special educational academy for grown up workers ("Akademie der Arbeit") at the University of Frankfurt a.M. (Michel 1933; 20-22) and a working-camp for adult education with workers, farmers and students (Rosenstock 1933; 138-145). In regard to our subject it is important to know that it was Rosenstock, who firstly differentiated andragogical terms for adult education. Reflecting about the structure and new methods at the "Academy of Work" he pointed out that the learning of adults occurs in another way than with children. He was the first to notify the difference between an "andragogue" as a teacher for adults and a pedagogue teaching children (Rosenstock 1920; 93/1921;119). It was Rosenstock who wrote the constructive essay "Andragogy" (Rosenstock 1924;193-219), from which Lindeman (1926) took over this term to the later andragogy-movement in the USA last century, when Malcolm Knowles used the term andragogy to define and explain the conditions of adults' learning (Knowles 1973).

One should also not forget Paul Natorp (1854-1924), professor of philosophy and pedagogy at University of Marburg, who had studied music, history and philosophy, who was engaged in adult education

in consequence of the University Extension Movement. He founded the "Marburger Ferienkurse" and was president of one of the first German 'Volkshochschultage' in the beginning of the last century.

Wilhelm Flitner, one of the determining Hohenrodt-members, must be named in our context. Primary he absolved studies for an activity as a grammar school master with the subjects German philology, history and English language and literature. His doctoral dissertation he wrote about Fichte's philosophy. After World War I Flitner discovered the field of adult education and here he found his duty in the German society of this time. For seven years, since 1919, he led the new Volkshochschule of Jena. Reflecting problems of adult education in a certain historical view he was the author of the remarkable publication "Laienbildung" (education of laymen; Flitner 1921). He was one of the three headmen of the Hohenrother Bund. Later he became a professor of pedagogy, but he remained in connection with problems of adult education.

The other members of the Hohenrodter Bund all came from various disciplines and degrees: Theodor Bäuerle (1882-1956), first a teacher, founded an Association for "Volksbildung" (adult education) in 1918. As a creative organiser he was one of the initiators of the mentioned Hohenrodter Bund. Werner Picht, a politician for cultural affairs, was an expert in ministry for adult education. The famous Martin Buber finally was a religious thinking philosopher. We have to mention Anton Heinen, who was a theologian, Hermann Herrigel a journalist, Walter Hofmann a librarian, Fritz Laack an adult educator at a 'Heimvolkshochschule'. All these persons were extraordinary engaged in adult education. And many others more in this educational movement.

When I try to characterize these former persons in our field I might name these people the 'generation of adult educators in passion' ('Erwachsenenbildner aus Leidenschaft'): They came from different fields of the society, they were active in a new sector of life without an academic mandate or an institutional structure. They only were motivated by a new and important problem and, so to say, they were active in a form of private duty.

#### Professors in "double disciplines"

In the time after World War II - the period of the 1950<sup>th</sup> - we find the first academic development of adult education at German universities. Still we find as before the heterogeneous or specific personal background. A prototype of this time was Fritz Borinski

(1903-1988), one of the first professors of pedagogy at a University, who especially were engaged in adult education within their main discipline. Borinski presents a very interesting biography. He had studied law and had a doctor's degree in this discipline. His further studies were sociology and history. He came to Hermann Heller, who had founded a "Seminar für freies Volksbildungswesen" at the University of Leipzig, which Borinski later on led as an assistant of well known Theodor Litt. Borinski emigrated to England because of the German political situation in the Nazi-time. Here he was active in different educational fields, for example in 'Worker's Educational Association'. After the war he managed adult education in North-Germany and he became the director of the 'Volkshochschule' Bremen. Then in 1956 he was appointed a professor of pedagogy at the Free University of Berlin and there he had as a main subject political education and adult education (Borinski 1954; 1976, 1-81)..

Another professor of pedagogy 1956, who took care of adult education in a philosophic way, Theodor Ballauff (1911-1995) at the University of Mainz, had studied chemistry, biology, philosophy and psychology. His thesis for the doctorate was about a problem in Kant's philosophy. He wrote one of the first books about adult education in these years (Ballauff 1958).

Wolfgang Schulenberg (1920-1985) was a professor of sociology at the University of Oldenburg. He was the first professor in our field, who obtained his doctor's degree with a thesis on an andragogic theme, the so called 'Hildesheim-Studie' (Schulenberg 1957). He further wrote several important publications on adult education.

Then I have to mention Joachim H. Knoll, born in 1932, first a historian, who was appointed a professor of pedagogy at the University of Bochum in 1964, where he founded a department of adult education in the institute of pedagogy. He became one of the very active professors in our field.

Last but not least in this short survey there is Franz Pöggeler, born in 1926, who studied pedagogy, German philology and English literature, later a student of Wilhelm Flitner. He became a professor of general pedagogy ("Allgemeine Pädagogik") at the college of pedagogy in Aachen. He favoured the term of andragogy already in 1957 (Pöggeler 1957). He is well known as an exponent of adult education and author of many publications.

When I try to characterize these professors I hope that I am right in saying: They belong to a generation of "professors in double disciplines" (Professoren mit zweifacher Disziplin). That means they

were at universities engaged in adult education *within* their main subject. They were, so to say, double interested, as professors of pedagogy or sociology and - as first academic ones - reflecting as individual persons on professors positions at universities on questions of adult education.

## II. Motives on my way to Andragogy

Now it may be allowed to speak of myself. I went the way from a professor of pedagogy to a professor of adult education (andragogy). Looking back on my life and on my professional way I can find four different motives, which were important for this: a historic-political one, a familiar founded moment, an anthropological reason and then a special andragogical one.

**The historic-political motive:** Born in 1928, I am a member of the so called generation of the 'Luftwaffenhelfer' (secondary school boys called to the arms with sixteen years). Formally I belonged to the Hitler-youth, but I was not infected by Hitlerism, I think in consequence of familiar education. At the end of war I became a prisoner for two month. A brother of mine, 19 years young, died as soldier during the war, when I was 15 years old; two brothers were prisoners for several years. These bad experiences told me the absurdity of the Nazi-time and I was induced to think about my further professional life. I wanted to be active in an educational sector.

After the war I worked in the agricultural sector for a year to have food for the family. Then I finished the school-leaving examination on account of my time as 'Luftwaffenhelfer' hoping to get a place at a University. But in this time there was no possibility for me to begin my studies. Therefore I went the way to a teacher training college to become a teacher and for several years I was in this profession. When I had the possibility to live and work in a University-town I could study the intended main subject of pedagogy, accompanied by philosophy and political journalism. My decision for pedagogy was a hidden condition for later andragogy.

**The family founded moment:** I am sure that here lies a special influence for my later way.

I grew up in a teacher's family. I learned the facts and perspectives of the pedagogic field. My father induced me how to think about helping others and serve in the community. So I got a certain cultural imprint by my family. Later on I have interpreted adult education as actions of helping adults living their life and learning to educate themselves. And for this task I saw empathy as a necessary

condition to make possible the positive contact with others as the addressees of education - a consequence of family's effect.

**The anthropological motive:** A leading motive for me and my later engagement in pedagogy and andragogy came from the thesis for my doctorate. It was about Martin Buber (Faber 1967), who in the 1950th was not so well known in pedagogy. My scientific searching here came to a significant source and I am right in saying that I found answers on my questions for the structure of human conditions and mutuality. Buber's philosophy of the dialogue opened anthropological perspectives in pedagogy and later on in andragogy. Here I found a theory which accompanied me on my professional way to go. Dialogical aspects got an important place in my thoughts on adult education. I will not forget to say that I am very glad to have met Buber for a personal dialogue in 1963 in the town of Amsterdam in the context of the Erasmus-award-ceremony.

**The andragogical moment:** In my pedagogical studies I early had discovered the thesis of 'lifelong learning' or 'education permanente'. The whole life, I had found out, was a task to live and to learn. The responsible adult became the position of a central object in my pedagogical reflections with the accent of anthropologic founded capacity of self-education. This view, living and acquiring life as a wide and the whole life accompanying perspective, I discovered in many examples of literature. There authors presented pictures of adults in various situations, with problems and individual proceedings. So literature became an important source for my reflection and knowledge. I am glad that I have stimulated a doctoral dissertation about an important German author (Dieckhoff 1994). In my early theory life of adults was understood as a permanent process of learning and self-education and these perspectives motivated my first andragogical thinking. To say it with Boris Pasternak: 'Living the life is no children's play'.

## III. Stages on my way to Andragogy

### Years as a teacher

This autobiographical reflection and remembering now comes to describe the practical periods of my professional life. To begin with the beginning - there were my years as a teacher. Now I was responsible for children and their education, they had to become adult persons. I had to learn the specific development of children's learning and to prove the unknown contact with these young personalities. I remember these years of pedagogic practice as time

of very interesting engagement and creative trying. I did many things which were not obligate - playing theatre, reading in the afternoon, chorus-singing, contact with writers and so on. "Pedagogy" was to me more than school- and knowledge-training: It meant "learning to live a human life". I was not aware that this time was a founding course of practical work important for my later teaching at college and University and for my andragogical activities too. In other words: I see therein a time of significant preparation and training for the coming engagement in the world of adult education.

#### A first contact with adult education - the international "push"

In this retrospective I remember an interesting experience in 1952, as I was a young teacher. During a vacation-time I lived with some friends for a week in an English Summer-School. I did not know before, what sort of adult education was practiced there. The school was arranged in an old castle and we intended to improve our English conversation. But this is not the point. What I have to tell concerns the specific atmosphere of adults' contact - free and constructive. A bit I improved my English, but my specific learning was about adults and their learning - a new and until these days an unknown field of education. The impressions of this vacation-time made me curious on aspects of adult education.

#### Studying pedagogy

Here I remember some rich impressions I got during the first study at a teacher training college. Naturally I absolved the obligate lectures, but main influence had a professor of poetry and rhetoric. I became a lover of the spoken word. I learned to play theatre and to recite poems. Later on as a professor and in the practice of adult education I could remember this as a helping and useful competence. Then at University when I studied pedagogy, philosophy and political journalism I had good contacts with some professors. I learned wide historic perspectives in Theory of Bildung and reflected special aspects of "paideia", significant for pedagogy as well as andragogy (Lichtenstein 1962). In pedagogy as my intended University-study I had impressive professors, but soon I learned that I had to educate myself in a way of autodidactic practice. I later understood the sentence of Hieronymus: 'I am my own teacher' - an important thesis in my later theory of adult education. In these years I learned that it is straining to be an adult as I had two professions: a teacher in the morning and a student in the afternoon or the evening. And, by the

way, I was the leader of a student's theatre.

During this time, in 1956/1957, my first publications occurred in the added discipline 'political journalism'. They came from some tutorial exercises in the institute; their subjects were problems of adults in rural sectors. I did not know yet that for a certain time at the University of Bamberg I would concentrate on problems of rural andragogy.

In my retrospective it seems that I went a consequent way. After obtaining the doctor's degree, after a short time as an assistant and as University lecturer I became a professor of general pedagogy at the "Pädagogische Hochschule" Aachen in 1962.

#### Professor of pedagogy - Aspects of adults

In the coming years I was interested in thinking and researching about educational ideas and anthropological subjects. The students now were young adults, and I had to learn how to teach them. I was not interested in making pedagogy to a sort of paidology, but I wanted to open this subject for life-wide perspectives and to the world of adults. Many themes of my lectures or tutorial exercises were treating the life of adults and their educational problems - for example: *The structures of encounter; Learning and education in the older ages; Manners of living in Chassidism*; or the political theme of *Totalitarian education in Nazi-time*.

#### Extra-mural activities

Outside of my profession I had specific contacts with adults. As an important one I name my engagement in a Society of Christian-Jewish-Cooperation. This activity had to do with a special learning and a special education in a very sensitive field, a sort of extra-mural task with lectures and discussion-groups and public performances. In this field I had the possibility to learn much about adults, their life and the necessity of tolerance.

#### Adult education - double-engaged discipline

In 1968 I was appointed to the University of Paderborn as a full professor for pedagogy. Now I directly had to do with the new rule of study and examination for students in the academic subject of adult education. Already in 1971 I decided to care for this new discipline as a responsible professor and I began specializing myself in adult education. During the following years I conceptualized theoretical aspects of andragogy together with a generation of older students,

who were searching a new profession, with theologians, teachers and others. It was a time, when the new study of adult education found much resonance and therefore many persons changed their former profession. Some books coming from these discussions and diploma-examinations were published. I remember at "Legal questions in adult education" (1975) by Wolfgang Gernert, and "Further education in the old age" (1976) by Mechthild Rennkamp.

Concerning researching in this period I planned and organized an investigation about the readiness and the practical experience of adults in the town of Paderborn, comparable a bit to Schulenberg's 'Hildesheim-Studie.' The results were published in: Faber, W./Ortner, G.E., 'Erwachsenenbildung im Adressatenurteil' 1979 (Adult education in the opinion of their addressees). In a review the author said: "All speak about adult education, but only a few know, what adults really expect. These dates from a team of Paderborn are important".

#### Head of a 'Volkshochschule'

A marking activity was my leading of the Volkshochschule of Paderborn, honorary by the way. This was a challenging work for some years. The teaching-units at the beginning were 900 and at the end 3500, when the Volkshochschule hired a full-time director. Why did I do this? I found it exciting and useful to combine theory and practice of adult education. I was a professor of this subject at the University and parallel I learned and got experiences in an institution only for adult education. So I had the possibility to bring in practice, what I theoretically had discussed, for example the andragogic demand, that adults need own houses for their education. I hired the rooms, and until today there is the Volkshochschule of the town. I learned how to make programmes, how to win lecturers for adult education, I proved the learning contact with adults in own courses, I managed public performances and special University-days for public learning. The experiences of these years were very important for me on my way to andragogy (Faber 1986; 45-48; 77-81).

In 1975 I was encouraged to apply for the new chair of adult education at the University of Bamberg.

#### Professor of adult education

The former advisory body of the University of Bamberg must be commended explicit, that the members of it gave high accent to the raising importance of adult education in the society and positioned in

their concept a chair of adult education. Later on I would be asked if this new chair should be located in a sociologic faculty. I rejected the proposal as I was convinced that the new subject belonged to the field of educational sciences. I was appointed as full professor in to January 1, 1977. Perhaps it is allowed to mention that I had refused an appointment as a professor of pedagogy at another University. I simply wanted to go the way to andragogy, where I saw my duty and determination. As a professor emeritus later on I supported my successor Jost Reischmann to rename the Bamberg-chair as "Chair of Andragogy" (Reischmann 2002), and I was glad when this was accepted by the University and the ministry in 1995.

#### IV. On andragogy

In a formal sight I had brought to an end my way to andragogy coming to the University of Bamberg. But there is to say that I had got a new academic subject which I had to build up and a new field to cultivate. I was the head of a new chair, and there were no prototypes or patterns for the discipline which I had to give a character. Manners of teaching and forms of researching in this sector were to design.

Concerning theory it was difficult, because this discipline was in the beginning. There were no compulsory or even shared concepts, ideas or categories. They had to be designed and improved. Here I will not speak about problems of theory. But I will clearly notice the fact how I handled the central term of our discipline. 'Erwachsenenpädagogik' (pedagogy for adults) was a term some colleagues had nominated for this science of adult education some years before. I thought this term is a "contradictio in adjecto". In my logic and after my knowledge it was a misconception and it did not concern to the figure and image of adults and their education.

I used the term of andragogy, which I firstly had notified by Buber (1956;56) and Rosenstock, which also Franz Pöggeler (1974) had favoured. I was convinced that in this perspective of thinking and using this category one could better discuss the problems of adults independent from pedagogy. Problems of self-education, life-wide learning, activities against lack of education, sense of responsibility, living after one's own concept - all these perspective could be touched by a theory of andragogy. Here we have to remember: adults are no children - a simple statement, but this must be understood in all seriousness.

Surely the word andragogy presents a bit of semantic failing, but

in the long run this term is more reasonable, more serviceable and better in pragmatic use for us. So I told students: Andragogy is 'the science of education and self-education of adults' (Faber 1981, 1988).

#### 'Aufbaustudium Andragogik'

When I came to Bamberg the name of the new chair was fixed. It is to remember, that 'Erwachsenenbildung' or adult education, strictly speaking, means a field of practice. But in a near future I saw no possibility for changing the name. So at once I was active in another field. I designed a new course of study, called "Aufbaustudium Andragogik", an additional study of adult education, the first of this kind in Germany, addressed to students who had already finished their studies at universities. This new course of study began in 1981. In this way the term andragogy was firstly positioned at a University and the word 'andragogy' got the character of an official "ministerial fixed term" (Faber 1996. 107-113).

A further accent I tried to give was the publishing project "Andragogy" in 1981. Unfortunately there were only two books in the planned series on account of the publishing house. But once more the term andragogy was notified. At the Bamberg-chair I began to differ several sectors of andragogy, so 'Landandragogik' for questions of rural adult education (Faber 1981) and 'Gender-Andragogy' for problems of love and sexuality as a thesis for doctorate (Bönnen 1982).

#### Institute for University adult education

In the years of my professional time practical adult education was done in several modes. In 1977 I had designed a "Kontaktstelle für Universitäre Erwachsenenbildung", an institute for University-adult education (University extension), of which I was the head for fourteen years. In this kind it was the only one in Bavaria and the Bamberg-University was engaged in extra-mural activities of further education in a new way. We planned and managed University-days in the town of Bamberg and the region around for several years. So andragogy in practice did the job of transmitting science and knowledge to the community. I have to mention that the name of this institute now is 'centre of scientific further education' (Faber 1984).

#### Adult Guest-Students

Another concrete consequence of andragogy in Bamberg was set in the field of adult "guest-students". We helped them and took care for

this group, especially older students, as autonomous learners. For some time guest students were 5% of all students in Bamberg, the largest part at all universities in whole Bavaria. Researching about guest-students became an important subject with the consequence of several publications (Faber/Dieckhoff 1984, Faber 1993).

#### Generation of "Explicit-Andragogy-Professors"

I have tried to name former generations of adult educators in the history of our science. When I try to do this for me as a member of a University, I like to say that I went through all the discussed three forms of our history: I am an adult educator in passion, I belong to the generation of double engaged professors, and now I am a member of the generation of the "Explicit-Andragogy-Professors". With this specification I want to express, that now for the first time we have the academic reality in our science that adult education or andragogy is not an additional subject but - *expressis verbis* - only the main one. So autonomy and development are granted in the scientific community. This interpretation naturally includes all appropriate academic professorships for "Erwachsenenpädagogik" or "Adult Education".

#### V. How to become an andragogue?

I will give a short remark to the question of this conference: How to become an adult educator. I repeat: Here in Bamberg I like to say: How to become an andragogue. This is a question with several points to clear. What is the meaning - the academic professor or lecturer of adult education, the teacher in the field of practice, the examined student? Here is not the place to finally discuss and to decide this - but this question has to be answered!

What I want to explain here is to point out some individual characteristics, which perhaps can be recognized out of this biographical reflection and give a generalizing accent too. I will name four aspects - in order to give a circumspect answer.

- First: Andragogy seems to need a specific nearness to pedagogy as both are sciences of education. Indeed, both are parts of a wider "Bildungswissenschaft" (science of human education). On this common fundament the andragogue should study and reflect this connection considering the richness of historical perspectives of education.
- Further: Andragogy is a human discipline and so it needs specific human motivations. As a science of "Bildung" it must be seen

different from only technological sights. Becoming an andragogue includes to be interested in human beings and human life. One must be convinced that men are able to change themselves. The andragogue needs open eyes for the adventure of life in any biographical development and the fact, that adults as individuals have unknown possibilities of learning. Anthropological aspects and educational views can enlarge the stock of knowledge and widen the perspectives concerning andragogy.

- Then: Additional studies and relevant interests seem to be useful for andragogues. Life at all encloses many sights and perspectives concerning men, and by those experiences one can learn many things about oneself and about adults. So the individual horizon of an andragogue can be extended in a significant and useful way.
- At the end: Experiences in practical fields of life and adult education are important. They make possible special competencies and perhaps they support the later activities in the responsible sector of education of adults.

The question was: How to become an adult educator or an andragogue? Based on a biographical reflection I tried to find general structures in the development of andragogy in Germany. The reader is invited to compare these observations in this one country with the development in the own country. Here was presented an individual, but authentic view, a specific and very personal way to the profession of an academic andragogue. Life always has its own touch. and describing how to become an andragogue must be seen as one biographical possibility of life. To say it in the end: I did it my way!

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