Lost in Transition : Empathy, Architecture, and Traditionality in the Early 20th Century of Dutch Indies

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Abstract—The beginning of the 20th century can be regarded as a point of cultural and development shift towards modernity in Indonesia. These change comes along with the shifting paradigm of Colonialization that occurred in Dutch Indies, presenting figures of Dutch who were complained of having empathy towards Indies people. Multatuli with Max Havelar, Wilhelmina with Ethical Politics, Tillema with Kromoblanda, and a series Dutch Architects who are considered to have contributed to the development in Indonesia. Even thought so, there was a variety of declination from the Indies people thanks to the inability from both parties to understand each other, or as people says it lack of empathy. As the times goes on, Dutch- Indies people slowly accept the appropriated modernity offered by Dutch architect, however, it came with cost. The build environment culture that always been there with Indies people are seemingly lost in transition. This research paper seeks to elaborate on the discourse of empathy theory & examine it effects toward architectural dynamics in Dutch Indies in the 20th Century. The study was conducted through precedent studies. The understood elaboration then later will become a framework for understanding the development dynamics that occurred in Dutch East Indies at the early 20th century.

Keywords—empathy, architecture, culture, dutch-indies, tradition

I. INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 19th century, Dutch Government has been critically accused of being 'to much' towards its Colonialized country, especially Dutch-Indies. the Cultuurstelsel, or "Forced Plantation System" (Sistem Tanam Paksa) that has been running for years in Indies, was recognized as a very cruel extortion system. The system ended however, by the end of the 19th Century along with the appointment of Wilhelmina as the Dutch Queen. At the same year, Coalition of Christian Party Has won the government chair.

The new Government and Queen finally announce ethical policies as the new way to handle Dutch-Indies. One important thing that was brought with ethical policy is the decentralization. Its widely known that the supporters of ethical policy wanted the Dutch-Indies to decentralized its governmental system [1]. One of the consequences of decentralization was the formation of new regional administration, which then had to deal directly with developing local issues [1]. Because, when it comes to contact with local people, the new design, materials, and practices often intersects badly with the traditional beliefs and rituals of indies people, especially regarding the build environment. A Variety of declination was occurring more then often in the pursue of offering new build environment for indies people, it was known well by the Dutch that indies people poor health was came from how badly the condition of their house was [2].

As the time goes, indies people slowly accepted the change towards modernity. The housing slowly changed from the traditional house that was well known, into a more modern housing that was designed by Dutch architect. However, as the appropriated modernity has been accepted, it came with cost of losing its housing tradition, culture, etc. It then raises the big question, What is so different? How come the rejection slowly changed into crave for modern house? Do Dutch architects empathize with indies people that they managed to offer design that is acceptable by Indies people? But how came the tradition slowly lost in it's transition, That tradition used to be the reason for indies people to decline modern housing?

This paper will briefly examine empathy theory, that it is also known as the reason of how people have aesthetic judgement. The understood elaboration then will be used to examine the dynamics of built environment of the early 20th century of Dutch-Indies.

II. DUTCH INDIES, EMPATHY AND ARCHITECTURE

A. Sympathy For Indies People

At the early 20th Dutch Indies, Action concerning Indies People are somehow present as how Ethical Policy are illustrated. Mention Gouda who mentioned few Dutches who have Sympathy and empathy tendency toward Indies people. Abidin Kusno in his Book "Behind The Postcolonials : Architecture, Urban Space and Political Cultures in Indonesia" (although clearly stated not for other human) also mentioned Karsten's sympathy for Indies culture. There are also few exceptional example of how the sympathy are manifested at the end of 19th century, Eduard Douwes Dekker (also known as Multatuli) wrote a novel namely 'Max Havelar' which tells about a Dutch man who fought for the well-being of Indies people.

Similar action to Max Havelar's are somehow also present by the narrative of actual human being. Conrad Theodor van

Deventer (1885-1915) , Work his way around with his writing to ensure that Dutch Government would pay their debt of honor to Indies People. Just like Deventer, Pieter Brooshoft a journalist advocates similar demands to Dutch Government, he even succeed to bring his colleague together, pursuing exact goals. However, although not clearly stated, there are a high chance that the action taken were merely just a way for some Duchess to make sure that they can make a better opportunity for themselves.

As the pressure have gone through, Under Queen Willhelmina (1890-1948) leadership, Dutch government finally announce their new policy, one that would become their way to repay what regarded wrong. In the name of guilt, Ethical Policy has become a way for Dutch government to right what was wrong, to repay what should not be taken from Indies people, a way to pay their debt of Honor. Essentially, through etichal policy, Dutch colony should no longer merely benefit the interest of the motherland, but also the interest of the colony itself and the inhabitants [1].

Under those frame, Ethical Policy can be regarded as a collective manifestation of Duchess sympathy, a constitution of their guilt. However, the truth under those manifestation itself is far than enough to justify that they have empathized with Indies people. Although the implementation of ethical policy were ambiguously remain on the domain of the Duchess, it was reflected unlikely on more individual level. Some famous Duchess such H.F. Tillema, Thomas Karsten, Schoemaker, draws a narrative of how people from different culture and different background tried to understand one and another.

B. Empathy & Sympathy

Through the understanding of empathy, what's regarded as sympathy towards indies can actually be seen from a different perspective. On individual level, the understanding of empathy can be drawn from How the people mentioned interact with Indies people, trying to persuade them to accept the novelty of their modern culture for Indies People.

Now that both sympathy and empathy has been stated, the distinction of both are indeed might confuse some people. In a brief, the definition of both are somehow resembling each other. Sympathy 'feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune', while empathy is 'the ability to understand and share the feelings of other'[3]. The distinction of both however, are actually pretty clear just from the definition itself. Sympathy are illustrated as a participation of someone with another person's feelings, ergo there is still a barrier that separates the feeling of the one who has it with the the person that actually feeling for it. Empathy on the other side, mean to feel what the others are feeling, means that for the person who having it he/she are somehow feeling as if they are themselves that undergo those feelings [3]. The distinction are the depth of the feelings, sympathy is presented as an understanding of other human being, thus sympathy means feeling 'for' other, while empathy, can be said that the feeling of others are their themselves, means that they actually feel it 'as' other.

Sympathy can be said as Concern for others, joining other human emotions, feelings, and sensation. Thus, sympathy can be more present, however at times it will manifest into action, Empathy usually regarded as a condition which enables human to Understand what other human are feeling.

The concept of empathy was first introduced in the mid 19th century by german aesthetics, they used the word Einfühlung to describe the emotional "knowing" of a work of art from within, by feelung an emotional resonance with the work of art [4] . However, the translation from einfuhlung was coined by Edward Titchener in 1909 [5] At the (masukan tahun) Robert Vischer in his dissertation "On The Optical Sense of Form" explains empathy as the reason of why human can have their Judgment toward Aesthetics. He explain empathy as a form of deeper feelings, a state of feeling where human starts to project themselves towards the perceived object. In that kind of a manner, it can be said that towards Vischer's framework, the presence of empathy is responsible for human aesthetic judgement : Like, Dislike, Etc. according to Vischer understanding, the judgement came from a series of action-reaction triggered by optical sense.

The notions are indeed seems too absurd to be seen from scientific viewpoint, however in one notable experiment, in which subjects watched actors who displays emotions of 'disgust' after inhaling the contents of a vial, scientist found the activation of circuits in two areas of the brain which responsible to cause for someone to process their own feeling of disgust[6]. In another word, it can be said that human brain are indeed capable of replicating the emotions or sensations that other person have gone through. Emotions are simply 'affect' or electrical and chemical programs that enables shortcut the way human perceive the world.

When human sees, they gone through two different kind of seeing : Simply Seeing and followed by Scanning. The first one explained by Vischer as how we usually see without paying any further attention. It happens when we walk, we sit, we talk. The later, scanning, is a way of seeing where human starts paying deeper attention, thus it gave humans some kind of immediate sensations. The perceived sensations would later be responded by reactive sensations. Those sensation would then acumulated and start creating ideas of feeling that human feel immediately. in response to those feelings, humans will starts to develop an idea where human starts to challenge it's compatibility with him/her. When the compatibility is strong enough, humans will enter a deeper kind of feelings : empathy, where human starts to be able to project themselves to the perceived object, comparing their physiologies to the available information emitted by the objects.

In a brief, according to Vischer understanding, the better human compatibility with the objects, the easier they will develop a better judgement towards an aesthetic object : likings. And so do with the vice versa, as the compatibility more short handed, the harder for them to like it. Over the years however, Discussions on empathy has broaden its scope of understanding, Theodor Lipps a German believe that the presence of empathy is available not merely towards aesthetics. Lipps said that the object of empathy includes human Psychology, Animal Psyche, Nature, and Aesthetic Objects. In line with his previous understanding, He also believe not just through Optical sense, empathy can also be triggered by othes various senses : through hearing, touching, smelling, tasting.

Lipps understanding towards empathy can be regarded as a point where it starts to develop toward our modern understanding of empathy. The broaden scope of empathy has opened a way for various factor for human to define it's

judgment towards it's target of empathy. The particular notions seems plausible when the cause' of empathy were taken into account. Robert Vischer explains that the compatibility between Humans and Aesthetic objects came from the similarity of human body and the form of the perceived objects. The examination of compatibility happens through a form of imaginative simulation, where human actively compare his physiology with the perceived form. However, as the understanding has broaden, the presence varies similarity has also being discussed over the years. The available information provided by those above can already deliver us to modern understanding of empathy, especially towards human psychology. Through simulations, the available similarity between a person and targeted object would provide information of what the targeted object has gone through. Thus the empathizing human could project themselves as if they are the one who've gone through what the targeted object has.

On recent finding, the notion that has been brought by the previous also being recognized, even kind of proven to be possible. It has been found that there is a high possibility that human also have a dedicated brain sectors that is responsible for the occurrence of empathy. Vittorio Gallese [7] asserted that human brain came with a set of brain sector that likely responsible for a mechanism that allows a simulation similar to Vischer's imaginative simulation. It works to replicate a situation that human sees as if they themselves who have gone through the process perceived. The said process however happens under Mirror-Mechanism, a process that is available under a set of neuron that enables human to replicate the sensations that possibly happens to the object that the person perceive through sensory senses. to simplify it seems that through these mechanism, humans neurologically internalize the emotions and sensations of others [6].

To put it in short, the similarities that is available, provide necessary information needed for a person to replicate what the targeted object might have gone through. Through embodied simulations, the similarities play the role as the substitution for the targeted object sensation, feeling, or emotions. Thus the empathizing person could feel as if he/she themselves who have gone through the interpreted process. Mirror-mechanism enables human to replicate what someone perceive exactly how when that person itself actually having it [6]. Ergo, it can be said for someone to be able to replicate a process from what the sensory sense, means that the person need to have enough information that can be used as reference to provide necessary idea for a replication, thus similarity.

Under many discourses, empathy either being discussed around its process, or about the action that it might cause. He explains that empathy is responsible for altruistic motivations, means that, the presence of empathy plays a role that caused a person to have an action as a response to the process of empathy. When we look back, Vischer already explain that empathy might be responsible for why human can have certain judgements toward aesthetic objects. Now that the understanding has been broaden, it seems plausible to say that empathy might play a role in one's process to define appropriate actions towards particular subjects, especially when it involves another human being.

C. Architecture & Empathy

It is pretty much clear that in the process of design, there are two particular existing role, The Architect, and the Future Dweller. In order to provide a well fitting and fulfilling design, means that an architect needs to go through some certain process so that they could constitute the stated objectives. For architects, it seems pretty much clear that to provide a design for a particular future dweller, means that they need to better understand the future dweller, it might involves some talks, interviews, or possibly require them to have a brief moment of being in the same place to understand each other (more likely for architect to understand the future dweller).

Through the framework of empathy, the relationship between the Architect and the future dweller can be seen as how a connection between empathizer and the object of empathy are. Architects tends to design their building to fit the needs of the future dweller, asserting what is necessary and what should be avoided so that the design would fit the better ends. Juhanni Pallasma [8] believe that in the process of design, architect tends to places themselves as the future dweller, testing the validity of ideas through their imaginative exchange of role and personalities. These understanding could explain why some architectural design are being abandoned for being unusable, while some other works like a charm.

As architect starts to place themselves as the future dweller, the test for validities were possibly being judged from two kind of ways. Either it is judged from their own perspective of appropriateness, or actually further using the future dweller subjectivities as their spectacles of seeing. nonetheless, both kind of ways are invested with problematic tendencies.

If the architect start validating what best for the future dweller solely by their own subjectivities (even though it is appropriate enough), there are chances that architects subjectivities might clash with the future dweller's one. On the other side, if the architect starts to fall to deep into feeling "being" the Future Dweller, their prior architectural knowledge might fall behind and failed to safeguard the design from being too subjective. In another note, Ionescu quoting Heinrich Wolfflin argue that aesthetic pleasure is fundamentally a spatial phenomenon where human consciousness performs an imaginary lap forward [10].

The notion above in some way comparable to what Robert Vischer has coined regarding empathy, what is different however, that the subjectivities are probably based on more then just physical presence. Physical forms might become a surrogate to a person memories which recall their past feelings, sensations, etc. the atmosphere of a building might remind them of some past experience which become their standard of appropriateness. The point is not, of course, that the physical places or things themselves have human feelings or qualities. however humans explore, interpret, and come to understand them with the same sensory systems, brain structures, experience, memories, and reasoning that can be used to detect the qualities and inner thoughts of humans. Encounters human experience might be far less intense, but human might be able to respond to them (built environments) with similar structures of mind, body, and language as how human connects with other human beings [10]. Latest findings have shown that even in the dark our bodily structures are able to sense the presence of a wall in front of it, the point is of

course, our judgment towards aesthetics were not merely based on physical appearance. It can be said that empathy is a further expression of our innate sensitivity to the world [11].

Robert Vischer illustrated how empathy is present and being responsible for a person perspective towards perceiving an object. Through empathy, human can connect themselves to the world, enables human to incorporate things outside of our body [12]. Empathy in some way becomes a tool for human to determines their satisfaction towards the object. Through empathy, human will determine which is good and which is not for them, which one is fun, and which will give terrible feeling for them, what is appropriate and what is not for their life. Thus, similarities between architect and the future dweller play a crucial roles in the process of a design, whose subjectivities were being used? The architect or the future dweller? There will be no problem whichever are being used if both parties have enough similar experience, but what if it is not? This problem in architecture can be avoided with the help of Dominick Lacpra's Empathic Unsettlement theory in discussing empathy as a method of historical inquiry. By presenting limits, and being aware of the presence of a simulation process that might occur, one can make target subjectivity empathetic as the object of its achievement [11].

At the end of the day, the actual validation will be done by the future dweller, define and judge their compatibility with the built environment that manifested from architectural design process. The happiness that the architect tried to serve will be for the actual dweller to define. The form, the atmosphere, the feeling and sensation will be for the dweller to experience, thus it is for the architect to create something that is actually available for them to understand. Empathy can be used to cut down what is unnecessary, and understand what is potential for the future dweller by empathizing with them. It can be used as a tool to at least predict how will the future dweller response to the experience that comes with the built design.

III. TRADITION, MODERNITY, AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY IN DUTCH-INDIES

A. Dutch-Indies and Traditionality

Dutch Queen who was in the lead declared a new policy regarding the colonies of Dutch-Indies. Willhelmina's decision to declare the Ethical Politics was quite influenced by the suggestion of her prime from the Christian anti-revolutionary party. In the same year, the Dutch government seat was won by a coalition of Christian parties. The Declaration of "Ethical Politics" is a policy that aims to achieve an increase and prosperity for Indies people. The main programs contained in the Ethical Politics include three things: irrigation development to irrigate the people's fields, education for indigenous people to be able to produce better quality human resources, and community migration from densely populated areas for equity.

However, there are problems such as lack of shelter, dilapidated infrastructure, and lack of administrative experience, coupled with lack of funds, present a tough challenge in facilitating development under the name of decentralization. The local problem present was a legacy of the lack of attention of the Dutch East Indies government in increasing civilian work [2].

In the efforts to develop decentralization, villages received special attention. Problems that were present with the effort to develop the village were also accompanied by outbreaks and diseases, this then became a concern for H.F Tillema (1870-1957) who lived as a municipal council. Tillema in his assignment to observe development needs, revealed that outbreaks of cholera and typhoid need to be considered, and he stated that this outbreak was a result of the housing conditions of villagers. Tillema was one of the activists who tried to convince local governments and other professionals to pay attention to this, and better housing development should be a priority. Tillema also tried to convince the local government to immediately prepare a drawing of a new home plan to address this problem.

When coming into contact with local people, new designs, new materials, and new practices - whether consciously or not - often rub against traditional beliefs and rituals related to family, relationships, and nutrition. Armed with European knowledge and experience in designing, this also became a challenge for Thomas Karsten who debuted in Semarang in 1914.

(Source : *Car, Kampung, & Conduits*)

Fig. 1. Kampong housing condition in 191.

In the book "Behind the Postcolonial" Abidin Kusno revealed that there was a conflict regarding the identity of traditional Indies architecture. For Wolff Schoemaker who is the Professor of Architecture, stated that the Indies did not have an architectural tradition. This kind of thinking was later criticized by Karsten, in which he assumed that the imposition of the Dutch architectural style only fostered isolation and showed colonial contradictions. Even so, Karsten can be said to be the most successful in efforts to incorporate kebaratan architectural styles with the Indies tradition. In developing the village design, Karsten pay attentionto the local Javanese tradition while still bringing innovation related to the modern concept of health and sanitation. Karsten also presents various types of houses to ensure that the design fits the needs of residents who are very diverse.

B. Tradition and Build Environment in Dutch-Indies

The arrival of Thomas Karsten in the Netherlands East Indies in 1914 became one of the points that helped mark the transition of development in Indonesia. Karsten is quite well known as one of the actors who managed to persuade the village community in the Dutch Indies era to slowly move to a healthier type of house [2]. However, the people in Semarang gradually switched to modern homes, there was a friction which caused a rejection of the offer to switch.

To reduce friction between tradition and necessity for improvement, incorporation of traditional elements is one of the chosen solutions. This 'architecture' tradition then provoked debate as more Dutch architects operated in

Indonesia. In the book "Behind the Postcolonial" Abidin Kusno revealed that there was a conflict regarding the identity of traditional Indies architecture. Wolff Schoemaker, stated that the Indies did not have an architectural tradition. This thought was quite contrary to Karsten, where he assumed that the imposition of the Dutch architectural style only fostered isolation and showed colonial contradictions. In developing village designs, Karsten tried to reward local Javanese traditions while still improving related to health [2].
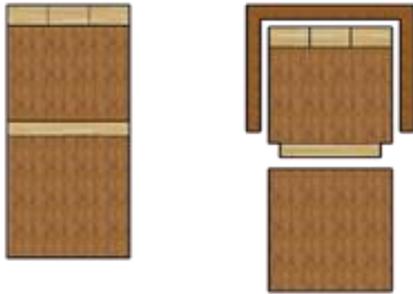
(source : *Author's Observation*)

Fig. 2. Javanese kampong housing layout (left), and rich people housing layout (right).

Broadly speaking, the tradition of development in Indonesia has a hierarchy and symbolic meaning stored behind the physical manifestations that are present. The concept of traditional Indonesian development cannot be separated from the procedures and customs of the life of the people. especially if you pay attention to the house as a place to live. Darmanto Jatman, revealed that the house has a meaning as a meeting place for men symbolized by the heavens and women symbolized by the earth (Y.B. Mangunwijaya, 1988) like the following passage :

"... The house is Omah, Omah is from Om and Mah, Om means O, meaning sky, meaning space, male. Mah means facing up, meaning earth, meaning female. So the house is a meeting room for men and rabinya. Therefore I call you Semah, if we are at home. The ten courtyards of our house are so bright that the kids go up to the ground ... "

This makes it clear that the house represents an important meaning, and Indonesian society even today still follows traditional rules. In a variety of different Indonesian cultures, a similar pattern of view can be found regarding the placement of space, that in occupying a region there is an order based on tradition that continues to be obeyed.

C. Transition Towards Modernity

The example of success in transitioning kampung housing towards modern houses in Dutch-indies can be related to the one around kampung Sompok in central java. So successful that the project quickly used all the available land around, including that the existing kampongs of kintelan and lempongsari. However the project did destroy the old kampongs. The insertions of new kampong housing into the area of old kampong also introduced new divisions to the built environment in dutch-indies. In sompok for instances, was devoted for the lower ranking servants.

Generally speaking, the facilities of the housing has created a new cultural environment. The new configuration od house created a new perception of how an appropriate house should be. The new environment inaugurated a broader change in the society as a whole, slowly transforming traditional to a modern society.

The inhabitants slowly accept the losing Cosmos & Cultural Divisions in the built environment. Changing from craving traditionality as a must to the appropriated hybrids that can be seen from the housing. Later, the inhabitants began to appreciate the functionality of a house, and as can be seen nowadays, the tradition that has been carried on for decades, is nowhere to be found in the house, except for those that was built or preserved as a commemoration purpose.

IV. TOWARD LOSING TRADITIONALITY

A. The Losing Traditionality

Ethical politics is seen as a very optimistic policy. so much encouragement for Dutch governments to come in, political parties, social groups, lawyers, activists, and many others became one of the bridges for "compassion" that is often portrayed through the work of Multatuli: Max Havelaar.

The description of the sadness and cruelty of the Dutch East Indies government which lasted for approximately 40 years was summed up with satire through the story of Max Havelaar in defending the natives in the Indies land. Literature is the only medium in bridging opinions like Deventer & Brooshooft.

The story of Max Havelaar in his fight against oppression is so great, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, a widely known Indonesian author, views this satirical novel as a book that has killed colonialism. This book is widespread throughout the world and has been translated into 34 different languages. So great is the legacy of Eduard Douwes Dekker's thoughts contained in Max Havelaar, until the title of this novel is made as a group of sympathizers as a body. In short, this article has made history in changing parts of the world, the Netherlands and Indonesia into some of the strokes of that history.

In "Reading the Suffering of Others" Emy Koopman (2010) describes how the literature is able to present a simulation of suffering, loss and sadness for its readers. The Dutch atrocity depicted through every ink stroke slowly infiltrated the memory of its readers, spreading new ideas through simulations of the experience of Multatuli that was replicated. New ideas came from memories that were imitated from Douwes Dekker's understanding. The memory of this imitation experience then leads people who refer to this paper to empathy.

The presence of empathic responses (Empathic Response), can also be felt through narratives that were present at the beginning of the 20th century. Figures present in historical records such as Tillema & Thomas Karsten present deeper narratives by seeing them as social beings.It is true that Tillema's background as a pharmacist could provide a reason for how he saw the epidemic as a matter of concern[13]. But it is his efforts in fighting for improvement which should be explored as a form of response to humans. Not only to the villagers but also to the Dutch citizens. Given that Tillema saw this outbreak as threatening not only the population, but its distribution could also threaten the wider Indies population [14].The presence of Thomas Karsten in 1914, can illustrate a narrative of how a person who was never had direct contact with the Indies population can still give birth to thoughts that

can benefit both parties. Karsten even managed to bring up the first Indies "people" theater as part of his journey [15].

By the understanding the notion above, it can be concluded, that Empathy enables human to understand the others, as long as he/she had enough information and ideas to be used as a referent to simulate what other might undergo. In the aspect architecture, the declination draws a clear line, that Indies people surely has their own judgement towards built environment, that their tradition has a lot to do with their taste of design.

However, by exposing them to the notion of modernity that have been infused with appropriated traditionality, became a way for new ideas to infiltrate indies people's ideas of appropriate built environment. Traditional elements that can be caught by the indies became the surrogate and accepted as a substitute to their understanding of appropriate house. However, as they already had another understanding about what is appropriate, the new taste draws them from carving traditionality, to look for the new appropriateness of how a built environment should have been.

B. Empathy & The Future Keeping Traditions

What can be learnt from these notion is that, the appropriation of an idea can slowly infiltrate into human minds. The presence of process of empathizing can be reversed from meeting one's taste into crafting them. Whether intentionally or not, the transition towards modernity came slowly changing perspective of Indies people judgement towards what was appropriate or not. As it comes out, nowadays the tradition of built environment is nothing more then just for commemoration, changing from a daily standards of how to live their life, into symbolic prestige that not everyone can acknowledge.

However, the addition of empathy into understanding the transition can gave us a new horizon for how can we preserve tradition and culture in humans daily life. That for one to acknowledge a notion, means to change their perspective, to craft someone so that they can understand how something need to be preserved can be done by exposing them to the notion, even by force. It is Social Construct all over again, it is as simple as how human taste work. But empathy explain how all of those things became a reason of how someone would judge something.

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