

“LET YOU AND HIM FIGHT” GAME: PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**Ovsyannikova V. V.***Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Associate Professor,
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Key words: *“Let you and him fight” game, literacy, communication, role-play, internalization, inclusiveness, empathy, anticipation, encoding, decoding, cognitive dissonance.*

The article examines Eric Berne’s “Let you and him fight” game exemplified by its scenarios in the works of famous writers. Eric Berne is absolutely right in his claim that “LYAHF is the basis of much of the world’s literature, both good and bad”. This direction of research highlighted by Eric Berne’s remark is marginalized in the theory of Psychology. The article tries to show the assets of this fruitful approach. All Eric Berne’s examples deal with the traditional triangle, communication within which being directed and dominated by a female manipulator. Every development in the game, both verbal and non-verbal, is understood by Eric Berne to be invariably generated by a woman. This peculiarity seems to be a logical basis for Berne’s treating the psychology of moves behind the cognitive scenario as “essentially feminine”, though the woman does not merely initiate the game – she enjoys the fight provoked by her.

Theoretically, “Let you and him fight” game does not exclude the possibility for the Manipulator’s role to be played by a man. However, in Berne’s examples only the woman is held responsible for pulling strings. For this reason it would be more accurate to apply a different formula to the cognitive scenario Eric Berne is really interested in: “Cherchez la femme”.

The cognitive scenario of the “Cherchez la femme” game is seen here in its French ménage: the original meaning is much more sexist than its literal translation (“look for the woman”). The French meaning implies that no matter what the problem may be, a woman is at the root of each problem.

Following in the wake of psychological case studies provided by L.S. Vygotsky, Karl Leonhard, Paul Watzlawick and others the article illustrates the “Let you and him fight” game by the cognitive scenarios taken from A. J. Cronin’s “The Green Years”, Guy de Maupassant’s “Bel-Ami”, A. Kuprin’s “The Duel”, I. Turgenev’s “First Love”, I. Shaw’s “The Top of the Hill”, J. London’s “Martin Eden” and “White Fang”.

The presence of a woman in the cognitive frame shows her in negative colors: she is the trouble-maker. This arrangement of roles – she as the manipulator, he as the victim of manipulation – proves utter untenability of Eric Berne’s statement “the psychology (behind the game) is essentially feminine”: it is masculine and sexist. The examples of the “Cherchez la femme” game were not meant to cover all the possible developments in the scenario: Kurt Vonnegut was right suggesting that the “story lines” (the combinations of moves underlying the games) will not be exhausted in the next 10 000 years.

ГРА «НЕХАЙ ПОБ'ЮТЬ ОДИН ОДНОГО»: ПСИХОЛОГІЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ

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Ключові слова: гра «Нехай поб'ють один одного», грамотність, рольова гра, інклюзивність, емпатія, очікування, кодування, декодування, когнітивний дисонанс.

У статті розглядається гра Еріка Берна «Нехай поб'ють один одного» на прикладі сценаріїв, вилучених із творів відомих письменників. Ерік Берна слушно стверджує, що гра «Нехай поб'ють один одного» є основою більшої частини світової літератури, як хорошої, так і поганої. Цей напрям досліджень, незважаючи на важливу підказку його фундатора, опинився на узбіччі теорії психології. Стаття намагається показати переваги цього плідного підходу.

Усі приклади Еріка Берна стосуються традиційного трикутника, спілкування в якому спрямовується з боку жінки-маніпулятора. У розумінні Еріка Берна кожен крок гри, як вербальний, так і невербальний, незмінно породжується жінкою. Ця особливість уявляється логічною підставою для того, щоб тлумачити психологію рухів когнітивного сценарію як «суттєво жіночу», але жінка у цьому сценарії не тільки започатковує гру – вона насолоджується бійкою, яку провокує.

Теоретично гра «Нехай поб'ють один одного» не виключає можливості виконання ролі Маніпулятора чоловіком. Однак у прикладах Берна відповідальність за лялькарство несе лише жінка. З цієї причини було б точніше застосувати іншу формулу до цього когнітивного сценарію: «Cherchez la femme».

Сценарій гри «Cherchez la femme» розгортається у його французькому сенсі, який є набагато більш сексистським, ніж його буквальний переклад «Шукайте жінку» (= та сама проблема, що і завжди). У французькому розумінні жінка уявляється причетною до кожної проблеми.

Услід за Л.С. Виготським, К. Леонгардом, П. Вацлавіком та іншими стаття ілюструє гру «Шукайте жінку» когнітивними сценаріями, вилученими з таких творів, як «Зелені роки» А.Дж. Кроніна, «Бель-Амі» Гі де Мопассана, «Поєдинок» О.І. Купріна, «Перше кохання» І.С. Тургенева, «Вершина пагорба» І. Шоу, «Мартін Іден» і «Біле Ікло» Джека Лондона. Цілком зрозуміло, що варіанти гри, описані у книзі «Гри, у які грають люди», не в змозі охопити усі можливі сценарії. Курт Воннегут вважав, що «напрямки розповіді» (комбінації кроків) не будуть вичерпані ще 10 000 років.

The formulation of the problem. A good deal of our life consists in communicating with other people. In the process of communication a human being creates and acts out different “roles” for all sorts of occasions and places. These “roles” help people take orientation in their cognitive-social domain and adopt a specific behavior pattern depending on the peculiarities of their interaction.

1964 saw the publication of a bestselling book “Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships” by psychiatrist Eric Berne. Since then it has sold more than five million copies. Its enormous popularity is accounted for by Berne’s collection of games: people read the games first skipping the body of theory. However, the theory tries to make it easy for the reader by avoiding “clever” words and offering simple schemes.

Communication between two persons is presented, for example, in the following way. Every mature person, he says, has in his personality three parts: a child-like part, an adult part, and a part that imitates parents. At any given moment the person can respond as a Parent (P), an Adult (A) and a Child (C). There are nine different combinations (P – P, P – A, P – C, etc.) in which these two can communicate, some pleasing, some maddening, some useful, some not. Eric Berne does not recommend an A – A relationship at all times. Each of the nine combinations is appropriate to some occasion. For example, C – C is appropriate to love. It may seem oversimplified, but it is quickly grasped. Kurt Vonnegut promoted Eric Berne’s best-seller in his review. The review first appeared in the June 11, 1965 issue of Life Magazine and was included in the 40th anniversary edition of Games People Play published in September 2004. Here is a quote from it:

“The book is a brilliant, amusing, and clear catalogue of the psychological theatricals that human beings play over and over again. When someone creates a commonplace social disturbance in order to gain some secret relief or satisfaction, Dr. Berne calls it a game. In the opening move in a game of “Try and Collect,” for instance, a player runs up a big bill, which he is very slow to pay. (This is a game, incidentally, which the author says children usually learn from their parents.) The middle moves are the low-comedy threats and chases which deadbeats find delicious. The end, when the creditor either collects the money or gives up, often leads to a harrowing round of another game, such as “Now I’ve Got You, You Son of a Bitch,” or “Why Does This Always Happen to Me?”

Dr. Berne sketches 101 games in 186 pages.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

Dr. Berne’s book paved the way for vigorous research in the province of the psychology of communication (Paul Watzlavick, Janet Beavin Bavelas, Don D. Jackson and others), psycholinguistics (Steven

Pinker and others), social linguistics (Julie Tetel Andresen, Phillip M. Carter, James Paul Gee, Annabelle Mooney, Betsy Evans and others), the manipulation and scopus schools of translation (Susan Bassnett and André Lefevre, Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss), discourse analysis (David Machin, Andrea Mayr and others), stylistics of role-plays and decoding stylistics (G. Leech, Paul Simpson and others). It’s worthwhile mentioning a most important contribution into the development of the theory of the games by Steven Pinker, whose chapter 7 in his book “The Stuff of Thought” bears the self-explanatory title: “Games People Play”.

The urgency of testing out Berne’s games against the backdrop of their interpretation in fiction relies on the following ideas:

1. Students read texts and emails and Facebook posts throughout the day. They are certainly reading. However, they no longer report reading much literature as part of their reading for pleasure. Certain types of reading seem to be going out of fashion among university students. They are now more likely to spend time on a “visualized world” [11, p. 82].

2. “Playing with toys may well involve language, but it also requires physical activity. Ideology is not just expressed in language; it is found in every aspect of our lives, including the way children interact with toys” [8, p. 54].

3. Fiction provides fertile grounds for psychological research: great authors are great psychologists. In his famous work “Akzentuierte Persönlichkeiten” Karl Leonhard made a point of using fiction for his psychological case studies [6]. Deplorably, the reproach addressed by Leonhard to psychologists for their neglect towards fiction is relevant today.

4. Resorting to the interpretation of intentions found by Stanislavsky in the remarks of personages from Griboedov’s play “Woe from Wit” L.S Vygotsky makes a far-reaching observation: “The theatre faced the problem of the thought behind the words before psychology did” [12, p. 123].

5. “Parents in all parts of the world teach their children manners, which means that they know the proper greeting, eating, emunctory, courting and mourning rituals, and also how to carry on topical conversations with appropriate strictures and reinforcements. The strictures and reinforcements constitute tact or diplomacy, some of which is universal and some local” [2, p. 17].

6. “To be able to read is to be able to decode writing. The reader has to have an interpretation of the text or parts of it. For traditionalists, interpretation is a matter of what goes on in the mind. If readers know the language, can decode writing, and have the requisite background “facts” to draw the inevitable inferences any writing requires, they can construct the

“right” interpretation in their heads. And this “right” interpretation is the same for all competent readers. There are “fancy” interpretations of texts like poems, riddles, novels and sacred texts. But to read is to have in one’s head a “basic” interpretation” [4, p. 38–39].

7. “The text’s functional significance as discourse acts as a gateway to its interpretation. While linguistic features do not themselves constitute a text’s “meaning”, an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground a stylistic interpretation and to help explain why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible” [10, p. 2].

The methodological approach. It is that of a psychologist who tries to find clues to the peculiarities of role-play in the works of fiction of those authors who make a point of looking into the games their characters play. The alternative is the actual clinical data that for the size of the academic paper would be prohibitively bulky.

The psychological dimension of the crisis. Psychological “stroking” so important for normal communication is getting very primitive and vulgar. People get less susceptible to such an essential bridge between the participants of communication as empathy. Communication started to produce role-play never seen before. The President of the most powerful nation may use Twitter to address very important problems, assume the Parent role in the Parent – Child role-play and call for the President of Turkey “not to be a fool”, thus reducing Erdogan to the status of the Child. The strictures and reinforcements that constitute tact or diplomacy, according to Eric Berne, are being thoroughly revised.

The aim of the article is to test out the cognitive scenario “Let you and him fight” against its interpretations offered by the classics of fiction.

The main thesis illustrated here is that the cognitive scenario “Let you and him fight” can show a stunning variety of moves if put against the background of its fictional interpretation.

The theoretical urgency of the research is clear from the frequency and boundless variety of “Let You and Him Fight” game played in different cultures.

The main body of research

Let You and Him Fight – Dr. Berne’s presentation

This may be a maneuver, a ritual or a game. In each case the psychology is essentially feminine. Because of its dramatic qualities, LYAHF is the basis of much of the world’s literature, both good and bad.

1. As a maneuver it is romantic. The woman maneuvers or challenges two men into fighting, with the implication or promise that she will surrender herself to the winner. After the competition is decided, she fulfills her bargain. This is an honest transaction, and the presumption is that she and her mate will live happily ever after.

2. As a ritual, it tends to be tragic. Custom demands that the two men fight for her, even if she does not want them to, and even if she has already made her choice. If the wrong man wins, she must nevertheless take him. In this case it is society and not the woman who sets up LYAHF. If she is willing, the transaction is an honest one. If she is unwilling or disappointed, the outcome may offer her considerable scope for playing games, such as “Let’s Pull A Fast one on Joey”.

3. As a game it is comic. The woman sets up the competition, and while the two men are fighting, she decamps with a third. The internal and external psychological advantages for her and her mate are derived from the position that honest competition is for suckers, and the comic story they have lived through forms the basis for the internal and external social advantages.

Commentary. The strangest claim appears in the sentence: “the psychology is essentially feminine”. It is essentially masculine because all the moves in the game point to a woman as the guilty participant and the cause of the trouble. Examples offered by Eric Berne fit into a popular idiom “Cherchez la femme”. The jocular name is in line with Eric Berne’s preference for colloquialisms and is to be treated as a unifying cognitive frame that describes the essence of the game more accurately than LYAHF.

Eric Berne uses maneuver, ritual and game to identify romantic, tragic and comic cognitive scenarios. We shall see that they can be mixed. Anyway, all of them should be treated as a game because they presuppose mutual “stroking” in a well-organized arrangement of “moves” aimed at gaining a victory.

Here are examples of the same game with different combinations of moves. Words pointing to individual features of persons and explanatory forces behind a cognitive scenario in bold type are underlined.

1. The LYAHF game with a romantic scenario and imaginary fighting

It can be illustrated by Clotilde de Marelle from Maupassant’s “Bel Ami”, a charming, provocative, provoking and romantic woman. Clotilde is passionately in love with Duroy. Though warm and sincere in her feelings she is greatly fond of adventure and pretense and dresses “like a soubrette in a French farce” and manipulates her lover to take her to the most disreputable drinking haunts where she imagines herself being assaulted by the ruffians and rescued heroically by her lover:

“Sometimes she asked Duroy, with a shudder: “If I were insulted in these places, what would you do?”

He would answer, with a swaggering air: “Take your part, by Jove!”

And she would clasp his arm with happiness, with, perhaps, a vague wish to be insulted and defended, to

see men fight on her account, even such men as those, with her lover” (Maupassant. *Bel Ami*. Translation into English. Chapter 5).

Since the insult never comes the danger is imaginary as well as the vehicle of it, turning the whole situation into make-believe LYAHF. However, it doesn't diminish the pleasure of extracting romance from it.

2. The imaginary LYAHF game with real fighting

It can be illustrated by a painting described in the next chapter:

“The governor continued to light up the pictures as he explained them. He now showed a water-color by Maurice Leloir, ‘The Obstacle.’ It was a sedan chair checked on its way, the street being blocked by a fight between two laborers, two fellows struggling like Hercules. From out of the window of the chair peered the head of a charming woman, who watched without impatience, without alarm, and with a certain admiration, the combat of these two brutes” (Maupassant. *Bel Ami*. Translation into English. Chapter 6).

Clotilde must have admired the water-color like this. The picture catches the darker side of the LYAHF game: the woman enjoys the fighting with no sign of her caring for the possibility of a tragic outcome. The triangle is situationally arranged since no relations among its participants are specified. Henceforth, no romance is implied. However, the game is evident in the presentation of the events because the woman imagines herself to be the cause of fighting, thus making herself and the two men participants of the game.

3. The LYAHF game with a tragic outcome:

It can be illustrated “The Duel” by A.I. Kuprin. Here the roadmap of the game is masterminded and engineered by a scheming, unscrupulous and ruthless woman engaged in back-street affairs. The woman's name is Shurochka. Second lieutenant Georgy Romashov is going to fight a duel with an officer of the same regiment over the latter's wife Shurochka. Shurochka is determined to make her husband climb up the career ladder and reap the benefits. Since Romashov may kill her husband in the duel and destroy her plans in this way, Shurochka comes up with an idea of a mock duel. She wants Romashov to fire off the target. She assures her lover that he will be safe, because she will persuade her husband to play a mock duel. She is lying because she is planning nothing of the kind. She doesn't give a damn whether Romashov is going to remain alive. Shurochka is as hard as a nail. She knows her manipulative power:

“Cheap effects I despise, and I will spare you them. But I know I am young, intelligent, and well-educated. I am not pretty, but I know the art of catching

men far better than all those famous charmers who, at our official balls, receive the prize for beauty in the form of an elegant card-tray or something between a musical-box and an alarum. I can stand in the background; I can, by coldness and contempt, be bitter to myself and others. But I can flame up into a consuming passion and burn like a firework” (A.I. Kuprin. *The Duel*. Chapter 22).

4. The LYAHF game in the animal world

It can be illustrated by Jack London's story in which the author draws stunning parallels between the world of people and the animal world:

“But the elder leader was wise, very wise, in love even as in battle. The younger leader turned his head to lick a wound on his shoulder. The curve of his neck was turned toward his rival. With his one eye the elder saw the opportunity. He darted in low and closed with his fangs. It was a long, ripping slash, and deep as well. His teeth, in passing, burst the wall of the great vein of the throat. Then he leaped clear.

The young leader snarled terribly, but his snarl broke midmost into a tickling cough. Bleeding and coughing, already stricken, he sprang at the elder and fought while life faded from him, his legs going weak beneath him, the light of day dulling on his eyes, his blows and springs falling shorter and shorter.

And all the while the she-wolf sat on her haunches and smiled. She was made glad in vague ways by the battle, for this was the love-making of the Wild, the sex-tragedy of the natural world that was tragedy only to those that died. To those that survived it was not tragedy, but realisation and achievement” (Jack London. *White Fang*. Part II. Chapter I. The Battle Of The Fangs).

Such words as *smiled* and *love-making* are a transferred from the world of people to the world of animals humanizing in this way physical actions performed by wolves. The smiling and gladness of the she-wolf puts the game into the same cognitive scenario that is observed in example 2. The transfer of the LYAHF game to the world of animals is an indicator of internalization of roles through numerous repetitions of the cognitive scenario.

5. The LYAHF game with a fighting, but without a guilty party

In the situation below Martin Eden has to fight with the man who claims Lizzie Connolly as his girl, the event irony being that Martin is indifferent to her while she is passionately in love with him. Lizzie is straightforward in her desire and dumps her companion to gain Martin. The whole game used to be fun for Martin, but now he feels that after years of intellectual effort to educate himself he no longer belongs to the world of working people. He is forced to accept the rules of the game and fight the rival, but all the participants of the love triangle are doomed to see their dreams tumble down.

“Martin was thrilling all over. This was the old days with a vengeance, with their dancing, and their fighting, and their fun. While he kept a wary eye on his antagonist, he glanced at Lizzie. Usually the girls screamed when the fellows got to scrapping, but she had not screamed. She was looking on with bated breath, leaning slightly forward, so keen was her interest, one hand pressed to her breast, her cheek flushed, and in her eyes a great and amazed admiration” (Jack London. *Martin Eden*. Chapter 42).

6. The LYAHF game with manipulation going all wrong

Keeping her son from fighting with boys his mother provokes him into it. Here LYAHF game in Irwin Shaw’s novel takes an ironic turn. Michael Storrs, a schoolboy, is being ruthlessly harassed as a “pansy” by his mates and forced to fight the leader of his tormentors Joseph Ling.

The next day, the game was repeated. Only now, even the bare tolerance that the boys had shown of him before was gone. As he ran after his hat, he was tripped and sent sprawling and a chant of “Pansy! Pansy!” echoed mockingly on all sides. Finally, Ling got the hat and, just as he had the day before, stood still with it and said, “If you want it, fight for it.”

*Michael knew there was no other way out. And suddenly he didn’t want any other way out. He walked slowly up to Ling and hit him in the face with all his force. Ling fell back a step, more surprised than hurt, and Storrs was all over him, hitting wildly, oblivious of everything but the sneering, unfinished face in front of him, an exaltation he had never known before sweeping over him as he hit, was hit, fell tangled with the boy in the muddied snow, felt his nose begin to bleed, punching, kicking, trying to strangle, being strangled in turn, unconscious that the bell had rung, that a man was bending over him, trying to tear the two boys apart. (Irwin Shaw. *The Top of the Hill*. Chapter 2).*

At first sight the cognitive scenario of the fight is different because one of the two fighters is a provocateur at the same time. But psychoanalysis makes Irwin Shaw to look for deeper reasons. The one who pushes Michael into violence is his own overprotective mother:

*“Thus the boy was overindulged, overprotected, overfed on highly nourishing and scientifically chosen foods, kept from the hurly-burly of ordinary childhood, forbidden to climb trees, go out for teams, consort with rough children, play with toy guns or bows and arrows and to go to and from the neighborhood school unescorted” (Shaw. *The Top of the Hill*. Chapter 2).*

The LYAHF game as it was masterminded by the overworried mother presupposed that her son should “fight” (metaphorically, of course) her dead husband

whom she set as a negative example for Michael: her law-abiding husband died from a knife wound that he got trying to stop a brawl between two drunks. Instead, she achieves the opposite result by making her beloved son “the butt of the wits”:

*When his mother observed even the slightest signs of restiveness on the part of her son – pouting at the piano, embarrassment at being delivered and picked up at school like an infant, raising his voice when excited – there were no overt punishments, no slaps, no deprivations, no going to bed without dinner. His mother, Michael learned early, could exact retribution with a sigh, a tear, a sad look up to heaven. He envied his classmates their tales of a good solid beating by irate parents. Meticulously dressed among his peers, who came to school looking like a last battalion of retreating Confederate troops, he became the natural butt of the wits and the bullies who surrounded him and he learned to dread recess periods, where, in the whirl of games and wrestling and whooping, he would be singled out for torture. (Shaw. *The Top of the Hill*. Chapter 2).*

Irwin Shaw tells the reader how psychologically destructive were the manipulative moves used by Mrs. Storrs against her own son: if Freud had been alive “his giant groan would have been heard from Vienna to Catalina Island”.

7. The LYAHF game backfiring on the manipulator

The heroine of Turgenev’s “First love” Zinaida is adored, courted and made fuss of by men including Volodya, the story-teller who is 16 and reading for University, Though she has quite a sufficient number of men to make a choice from, Zinaida becomes a mistress of Volodya’s father. Volodya happens to hear Zinaida’s request in French addressed to his father: she is asking him to dump his wife (apparently, believes to get rid of the rival). The father is outraged:

*“My father shrugged his shoulders, and straightened his hat on his head, which was always a sign of impatience with him. <...> Then I caught the words: “Vous devez vous séparer de cette” <...> Zinaïda sat up, and stretched out her arm. <...> Suddenly, before my very eyes, the impossible happened. My father suddenly lifted the whip, with which he had been switching the dust off his coat, and I heard a sharp blow on that arm, bare to the elbow. I could scarcely restrain myself from crying out; while Zinaïda shuddered, looked without a word at my father, and slowly raising her arm to her lips, kissed the streak of red upon it. My father flung away the whip, and running quickly up the steps, dashed into the house. <...> Zinaïda turned round, and with outstretched arms and downcast head, she too moved away from the window” (S. Turgenev. *First Love*. Chapter 21).*

Conclusions from the study and prospects for further research

The most obvious question that Eric Berne failed to have addressed is as follows: what happens to the LYAHF game, if the Manipulator is to be a man? After all, there are numerous scenarios when two men are led to fight each other by a man: the 6th chapter of “The Green Years” by A.J. Cronin provides us with a realistic example of this set-up (significantly, manipulation has a noble aim). Apparently, the LYAHF function remains in place, though divorced from the malicious designs of the Manipulator.

Obviously, the varieties of the LYAHF game explored in the article above represent just one of 101 games described by Eric Berne. It will require further research to cover even the most frequent games determining the psychology of human communication. Still, it is possible to predict that the most evident direction is going to embrace Paul Grice’s maxims and the development of the theory of politeness. Further research of the LYAHF game will certainly occupy a prominent place in the gender studies.

Conclusions. Eric Berne is absolutely right in his claim that “LYAHF is the basis of much of the world’s literature, both good and bad”. Paradoxically no research is known to have tested Eric Berne’s games against “real” actions, events and personalities

that are immortalized in fiction: his scenarios are bones without flesh when divorced from great authors who put these scenarios into execution in their works.

The overwhelming presence of the female Manipulator trying to make the two men fight makes “Cherchez la femme” a better name for the cognitive scenario Eric Berne is really interested in.

The LYAHF game exemplified here is a glaring example of the male picture of the world that demonstrates its overwhelming presence in the “Cherchez la femme” cognitive frame of many famous literary works, and further research will allocate a prominent place for it in the gender studies.

The LYAHF game may produce scenarios in which there is no woman and the manipulation is executed by a man who does not pursue malicious designs in his plan to make the two other men fight: the 6th chapter of “The Green Years” by A. J. Cronin. However, Eric Berne does not take notice of them: he is preoccupied with the “Cherchez la femme” variant of the LYAHF game.

The execution of the moves in an amazing variety of cognitive scenarios points to the final stage in the internalization of the role by an individual and depends on such variables as sex, age, personality, intention, power, peculiarities of socializing and stroking generated by this or that culture.

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