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*Glancing at History, Punctuation on Formation.
25 Years of Après-Coup*

"L'éthique de la psychanalyse - car il y en a une - comporte l'effacement, la mise à l'ombre, le recul, voire l'absence d'une dimension dont il suffit de dire le terme pour apercevoir ce qui nous sépare de toute l'articulation éthique avant nous - c'est l'habitude, la bonne ou la mauvaise habitude"

J.Lacan, *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*, 1959

"The ethics of psychoanalysis – for there is one – entails the erasure, the casting into shadow, the withdrawal, indeed the absence of a dimension of which it suffices to utter the term to sense what separates us from every ethical articulation prior to us - and that term is habit, good or bad habit"

J. Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 1959

Après-Coup Psychoanalytic Association was founded in New York in 1987 as a place to study and carry on research, a meeting place for analysts from different backgrounds motivated by the desire to create an analytic community devoted to Freud's and Lacan's work and to the pursuit of their own permanent formation. The choice of the name Après-Coup was overdetermined: it underscored, above all, a central theme of Freudian doctrine – that of the time specific to psychic causality – generally overlooked in the American analytic context, both out of a disinclination to close reading of Freud's texts and the erroneous English translation of the crucial term *Nachträglichkeit* (rendered in French by *après-coup*) as "deferred action."¹ The name, therefore, refers to an essential point of analytic theory and makes the theme of translation a central issues in the approach of texts and of the formations of the unconscious. "Après-coup" was also chosen as a reference to the particular time when our association was established, in the aftermath (*après-coup*) of the dissolution of the École Freudienne in Paris and of the death of Lacan, and underscored a significant moment in the trajectory of our formation as analysts.

¹ In Autumn 1987 we organized a colloquium at Columbia University precisely on the theme of "Time in Analysis."

The analyst's desire sustains the analytic act; at the same time, it is sustained by the bond among analysts, in the transference of work that maintains the analysis in extension necessary to permanent formation. In this sense the analytic community never stops re-situating the analyst's position and the solitude inherent in the act. The bond among analysts is complementary to the ethics of analytic singularity, the analytic community being necessary to the renewal of the relation between clinic and theory.

Our starting points were both the texts of Freud and Lacan and the textuality of subjective discourse, the listening to the act of speech. Analytic formation is the effect of the formations of the unconscious. Immediately, though we were few, we organized seminars, lectures, working groups, characterized by a theoretical and clinical dialogue with local and international analysts and scholars. It was not a matter of giving ourselves some pre-established structure, modeled on that of already existing institutes, but rather of steadily developing our study projects on the basis of current, local needs and on the suggestions expressed by the participants.

The Après-Coup program has always been *in progress*, the result of a shared growth. It has been modified over the years according to the needs encountered in the course of our work. One central point, however, has been maintained: a multi-voiced teaching on shared themes, guaranteed by the participation of analysts coming from various associations – which has allowed for the progressive establishment of an international faculty, unique in the United States and perhaps in the Freudian-Lacanian world.

One of the risks of a pioneering position, and one of the risks of founding an association in general, is the condensation of the transferential investment around the figure of one or more masters, and all the more so in a setting that brings together a limited number of people. The history of institutes, associations, groups and so on, has shown quite well the toxic and disruptive aspect of the imaginary projections that follow such investments. Although inevitable, since they are the fruit of the relation to knowledge, they can at least be taken into consideration early on, and thus channeled, distanced or dissipated, respecting their temporal logic. One

of the functions of a multi-voiced teaching is to distribute these investments and thus to organize a plural transferential terrain around a common cause: that of the relation between *analysis in intension* and *analysis in extension*, a relation which is at the core of transmission.²

The position of the analyst, we know, is not at all the position of the Master, and whenever the analyst does turn into a Master, he betrays the premises of the discourse he claims to support, compromising both formation and transmission. An analytic association with more than one voice reminds the analyst that, in his own teaching, he speaks as an analysand, as Lacan so well put it, and it induces him to compare his position with that of other analysts.

An international faculty that establishes mutual ties within the same association and annually guarantees a teaching on shared themes, affords participants an exposure to different ways of relating to the text (be it the written text or that of the analysand's speech) and promotes the ability to listen to different *styles*: and if style is the stamp of the uniqueness of subjective desire, the style of the analyst reveals the analyst's desire, an essential element of transmission – to return to Lacan's radical saying, according to which style is the one thing that gets transmitted. If this is literally the case, style can be understood only when the difference in styles is appreciated, and in the formation of a listening to style, of the reading of the letter of desire.

Visitors to *Après-Coup* are surprised to see analysts collaborating who elsewhere would not necessarily meet in a fruitful way. It is worth mentioning this not to be self-congratulatory but to stress the effects of a particular bond among analysts which elevates *difference* into an ethical principle; it is no accident that the desire for pure difference is the principle of the analyst's desire. If such desire guides the ethics of the act in the cure, it also sustains the transference of work proper to analysis in extension. Otherwise, on the one hand we would not have an analytic act and we would not have an end of the treatment (but rather, for instance,

²The concepts of «analysis in intension» and «analysis in extension» (replacing and amplifying those of "personal analysis" and "transference of work") underscore the topological complexity of analytic formation, as well as its inherent transferential quality. See Lacan's «*Proposition du 9 octobre 1967 sur le psychanalyste de l'école*» [Proposition of October 9, 1967 on the School Psychoanalyst].

that identification with the analyst encouraged by some that radically creates an *impasse* to the cure); on the other hand we would not have the production of innovative works, essential for the life and transmission of psychoanalysis.

The commitment to the transmission of psychoanalysis impelled us, in 1996, to participate in the founding of *Convergencia, Lacanian Movement for Freudian Psychoanalysis*, the first international association of Lacanian associations. Après-Coup took part in the work group that drew up its statute: its horizontal organization, the principle according to which inclusion and participation are always the *consequence* of working productions among associations and among analysts, make it an "International" of an unprecedented, anti-pyramidal character, dedicated to sustaining analytic discourse, to promoting the bond among analysts, and to transmission.

Another characteristic of Après-Coup is that it has always welcomed as members and participants not only analysts or people in analytic formation but also people coming from other fields, writers and literary scholars, philosophers, scientists, artists, lawyers, and so on.³ Having scholars in other disciplines as members and participants in an analytic association, however small it is, emphasizes the importance of the interdisciplinary in the formation, and fosters an intermingling of bodies of knowledge necessary to theory, the clinic, and transmission itself.

Finally, the return to the reading of original texts, the reality of an international faculty and the presence in the association of members from different countries, results in constant labor of translation and a constant reckoning with the resistances produced by the passage from one language to another. Needless to say, this draws particular attention to the word; it fosters stumbling, misunderstandings, as well as ingenious solutions, hastening an encounter with the

³ Freud already radically underscored how the studies necessary to psychoanalysis implied deep knowledge in numerous disciplines. The extensiveness of Freud and Lacan's knowledge are superbly exemplary – examples ignored by the majority of 'training' Institutes, both in their *curriculum* of studies and in the famous idea of the *selection of candidates*, which bars from participation in work those who do not come from the domain of mental health, or who do not have preliminary experience in it. On the position of the American Psychoanalytic Association in this regard, see P.Mieli, « Letter to Our American Colleagues : Questions Raised by the Report of the Psychoanalytic Consortium on Analytical Training, » www.psychoanalysis.ie/Issues in Psychoanalysis/current issues/

resistance of and in language, with that which appears *untranslatable* – echoing what is most intimate and inaccessible in the subjective use of language, in style.⁴ An untranslatability which, in order to be evoked, requires invention: a poetic act. The passage from one language to another creates the occasion for an encounter with the very nature of speaking. The act of speech is always an act of translation.

Institutional reality is one of the major sources of resistance to analytic discourse and to transmission: a fact that has proved to be the case almost everywhere. In North America this takes on a particular character, since here, sooner or later, everything gets institutionalized. Faith in institutions is an American cultural trait.

According to local tradition it is implicit that to do an analytic training you have to be enrolled in an institute requiring a specific course of study towards a professional certification. The analyst receives his license and a power guaranteed by the fact of belonging. North American psychoanalysts have not sufficiently questioned the consequences on the formation of the analyst of this fact, a cultural fact that is taken as though it were "natural." The psychoanalytic institute is viewed as a professional association meeting a social need. You decide to become an analyst the way you decide to become a lawyer or a dentist; and in fact, you potentially become one the day you enroll in an institute, following the rules and the time-tables preestablished by the *curriculum*, together with the will of the instructors. Under these circumstances, what is the condition *sine qua non* for an analytic formation, personal analysis, can easily become a secondary matter: far from being a condition – which distinguishes the wish to become an analyst (one symptom among others) from the effect of the analytic act – it becomes an accessory. This sets the gauge on the implications of a radical misunderstanding regarding the singularity of the time proper to an analytic formation, in no way comparable to the linearity of an academic course or of a technical apprenticeship, and reveals an astonishing ignorance of the conceptualization of the logical time inherent to psychic causality. An ignorance that is at the basis of the difference between training

⁴ This echoes the language of which the unconscious is made (*lalangue*, as Lacan calls it), ever unique, singular; a language which far surpasses anything the subject of speech is capable of enunciating.

and analytic formation. It is not by chance that the reflection on time in analysis has been the watershed between opposite positions in the history of psychoanalysis.

On the legal front, it should be mentioned that in 2001 the vote was cast for the regulation of psychoanalysis in the State of New York: in 2006 the law was introduced establishing that in order to practice psychoanalysis it is necessary to get a license from the State – as is the case with all other professions.⁵ If the idea of licensing sounds like an aberration in psychoanalytic tradition, since it proposes a standard of comparison between psychoanalysis and other professions that fails to recognize the specificity of the analytical trajectory, at the same time it paradoxically marks a radical innovation in the history of U.S. psychoanalysis: the juridical recognition of psychoanalysis as a “lay” profession, as Freud conceived it, an *independent* profession, different and detached by its very nature from medicine, psychology, social work and psychotherapy – which makes some States in the United States a legislative vanguard in relation to those States or countries in which psychoanalysis is subordinated to medicine and psychology (or confused with psychotherapy). As is well known, Freud broadly denounced the alleged necessity to get a degree in medicine to become an analyst as the *most dangerous* resistance to psychoanalysis – a resistance revived nowadays by the requirement, in many countries, of a degree in psychology.⁶

It is in this cultural context that *Après-coup* has sought to create a place that would give priority to analytic listening and one’s personal analysis⁷ and respect the times of the individual psychoanalytic path, logically independent of preestablished

⁵ The license that allows for the practicing of psychoanalysis can be obtained in the following sectors : medicine, psychology, clinical social work, psychoanalysis. *Après-Coup* decided not to participate in programs for attaining licensing in psychoanalysis, given that its current provisions are in contradiction with the analytic ethic. Concerning the introduction of the law, see P.Mieli, "Acte analytique, acte juridique : paradoxes, apories, contradictions," *ESSAIM*, no. 23, Erès, Paris, 2009.

⁶ See the eloquent *Manifeste pour la psychanalyse* of S.Aouillé, P.Bruno, F.Chaumon,G.Lérès,M.Plon, E.Porge, Éditions La Fabrique, Paris, 2010.

⁷ No need here to return to the question of the paradoxical distinction between personal analysis and didactic analysis, a distinction which in itself betrays a profound misunderstanding of what the analytic act is. If, coming from the Greek *didasko*, didactics is the theory and practice of teaching, the very notion of « didactic analysis, » separated from a personal analysis, reveals a conception of analytical education in contradiction with that of formation. Analytic formation is the effect of the formations of the unconscious, the effect of the subjective experience of separation between knowledge and truth. An analysis, if brought to its conclusion, can produce an analyst. The expression « personal analysis » indicates here the analysis that produces an analyst.

courses of academic study: a place where to gain exposure to rigorous teaching and participate in the activity of a different form of listening to texts and styles, in order to steadily unravel the thread of one's own formation. A place finally where to engage in real analytic work – which for some people has come to mean the beginning of a formation and for other people, formed elsewhere, the continuation of their own trajectory.

We have always maintained the importance of differentiating the notion of formation from that of training, and this has been a radical innovation in the world of North American psychoanalysis. We have introduced into the analytic vocabulary the hitherto nonexistent expression *Psychoanalytic Formation*, which today has began to gain a foothold. Though term *formation* exists in English, it is used almost exclusively for geological and military formations. To use it in the field of psychoanalysis sounds curiously new and strange. Insisting on the appropriation of such a term responds, however, to the problematic implications of the term *training*, implications which end up reflecting a significant difference in the very conception of psychoanalysis.

The term *training* suggests the idea of apprenticeship, the acquisition of a knowledge related to theoretical procedures and practices necessary for a certain technical *expertise* – as occurs in other professional fields, including sports. The idea of acquiring a preconstituted knowledge that can be applied *ad hoc*, manifests the whole distance separating *training* from analytic formation, where the function of knowledge is radically other. One forgets that the field of psychoanalysis is that of the experience of subjective division, of the taking into consideration of unconscious knowledge and thus of a relationship between knowing and truth that cannot be anticipated or preestablished. It is no accident that Freud considers personal analysis the condition to become an analyst: one can't know what the result of an analysis is going to be. The analyst's desire can be only the consequence of an analysis, not its condition. The notion of formation, from the Latin *formare* (to give form), which indicates the act of creating and at the same time the result of such creation, is closer to the uniqueness of analytic experience, an experience of subjective "subversion," as Lacan calls it, which leads to a new libidinal economy

and a new ethical position. One might observe that the difference existing between "training" and "formation," between the accent placed on an apprenticeship and that placed on a process without precedent, emphasizes different dimensions: the technical one, attainable through a rational knowledge, and the ethical one, the effect of a *trans-formative* experience, in which the dimension of the transmission takes on a very different level of importance.

The transmission of psychoanalysis entails the reflection on the social context in which psychoanalysis takes place, since such a context can influence the very conditions of formation and transmission. Ever since the mid-'90s the need to make the formation program explicit, grew clearer at *Après-Coup*. Some people wished to exhibit in their workplaces (psychiatric departments, outpatient clinics, psychoanalytic institutes and so on) a document certifying their own psychoanalytic education: where they were formed, and what this formation consisted of.

We took a significant step forward when we decided to request official recognition of our Association by the *Board of Regents* of the State's Education Department, presenting the program *Après-Coup* had developed over the years. That recognition came in 2002, the historic first registration of a Freudian-Lacanian association in the State of New York. A registration *après-coup* - afterward - of *Après-coup*, a recognition of the way in which *Après-Coup* operated and had operated, which stated our intent and our presence in the social bond.

According to tradition, formation implies personal analysis, teaching, active participation, supervision. Needless to say, personal analysis claims central place. Unlike many of the existing institutes in the United States, *Après-Coup* does not interfere with the choice of the analyst with whom to undertake an analysis. Of course it is highly possible for someone to develop a transference relation to a member analyst of an institute at which he or she becomes a candidate. But to oblige someone already in an analysis to abandon a chosen analyst in order to start a new analysis as the condition for enrolling in an institute is a negation of the very nature of transference, the particularity of which makes the encounter with a given analyst the very condition of the analytic act, the act, that is, of carrying out the analysand's task (*tâche analisante*). It is certainly possible for someone to be in an analysis that

is not working out, on occasion, because of the analyst. Yet obliging a person to leave his own analysis is certainly not the way to resolve the problem.⁸ Rather, it is by exposing the analysand to a teaching of quality, involving him in a fruitful transference of work, that analysis in extension will be able to galvanize the transference and perhaps shift the personal analysis somewhere else.

Teaching is carried out through seminars, lectures, working groups and clinical groups. It is one of the particularities of Après-coup that every participant can organize his own course of studies, determined by the point reached in the trajectory of his analysis and in his relation to texts and theory: a reality which implies respect for a singular temporality.⁹ At the same time, we encourage active participation in working groups, cartels, the public presentation of one's own work and the writing of texts. Research is a constitutive part of the program. It is a matter of maintaining one's desire in formation and assuming subjective responsibility for it.

Supervision has always occupied an important role in our association. From the outset, one of the significant and most encouraging effects of the teaching at Après-Coup was that of generating requests for supervision, some of which turned into requests for analysis. The work of supervision highlights aspects related to various logical moments of the formation: on the one hand transmission of the framework for the cure, with an accent on analytic technique and the elements that belong to it; on the other hand, listening to the position of the analyst in the direction of the cure. The latter aspect sends the analyst/analysand in supervision back to his own analysis, raising the stakes of the analytic work in a multiple and fertile way. It is not by chance that the word 'supervision' could be given the name of 'control analysis,' which underscores its transferential quality – despite the

⁸ Just try it and see. On the other hand, behind the avowed concern for the quality of the preselected analyst, the imposition of an analyst belonging to a given institute conceals interests relating to the sector's business, and/or normative interests.

⁹ To complete the *Formation Program* of Après-Coup a certain number of credits are needed, corresponding to a number of hours of seminars, courses, and so on, which may be done over six, seven, or more years of study, depending on each person's pace. The duration of the program is subjective. Symptomatically, recognizing the diversity of individual time is intolerable for anyone who wants to impose an academic grid over analytic formation, and it sets analytic formation in contrast with legislative impositions.

infelicitous connotation of both terms 'control' and 'supervision'.¹⁰ Supervision is an essential part both of analysis in intension, and of transmission.

When the question of how to formulate a term for our formation program was posed, it seemed logical to refer to our experience in supervision. How to conceive of a symbolic punctuation in formation, one that can be sustained in the social bond, without betraying the premises of permanent formation? How to take up and sustain the quality of the course a given analysand takes in his own formation? One possible response seemed to us to be a form of invention: a new procedure for completing the formation program, a "completion" that is understood as recognition of the path pursued in formation and as a *punctuation* in permanent formation.

An AF (*Analysand in Formation*) chooses supervisors from Après-Coup for his own clinical work;¹¹ such work will follow the course of the personal formation, the progressive subjective opening up to analytic listening. At a given moment, a supervisor may be able to notice that the work with such an analysand is transmitting to him something significant about the analytic act. There is analytic listening and transmission of listening: in the analysand in the treatment, in the analysand/analyst in formation and in the supervising analyst. The transferential field has allowed for an opening in the unfolding of the cure, a change of position. If we agree with Lacan and consider as an "act" the entire unfolding of a cure – the change of subjective position that entails the very possibility of the end of a cure – it should be observed that such an act, in its uniqueness and entirety, in fact takes its pace from discrete punctuations, related to the logical time inherent in each session and the logical times inherent in the course of a treatment. To the extent that they entail a shifting of position of the analysand or of the listening of the analyst, such punctuations are logical steps that close a time of repetition in order to open a new

¹⁰ The task remains to express this practice in a most suitable way.

¹¹ Après-Coup has a list of association supervisors. In the case of supervision, the Analyst in Formation needs to choose among those supervisors. If an AF should want to work with an analyst who is not on this list, he can submit a request to that effect to the Formation Committee. The Committee will study the request in question; if the analyst proposed is recognized within the analytic community, comes from a Freudian-Lacanian formation and embraces the spirit of formation of the association, we propose to him or her joining the list of Après-Coup supervisors. In this way, the list of supervisors respects the transferential predisposition of the AF and, at the same time, extends the bond among analysts in formation.

space in the treatment: steps conceivable as discrete elements of the analytic act, as its "representatives". They are steps in the act; a "*pas d'acte*" that is, at one and the same time, a "*pas de sens*"¹².

One of the extremely laborious aspects of transmission in analysis is the challenge of transmitting the analytic act as such. We know quite well that the practice of presenting clinical cases nurtured by various training institutes has nothing to do with transmission of the crucial steps of the treatment; in fact, such presentations are limited to exhibiting the theories of the analysts who present them and to being indicative of their symptomatic positions. It is no coincidence that any deeper reflection on the analytic clinic suspends such a sort of performances, an institutionalized form of barking up the wrong tree. On the other hand, the difficult question remains of the very possibility of transmitting something of the logical step that transforms a moment in a cure, extrapolating it from the transferential reality of which it is, precisely, an effect in act. How to convey the originality of a creation when the conditions for it – unique, precise, unrepeatable – are removed? For this to happen, it is necessary that the analyst who gives a testimony of it, still be seized by the effects of such an act, by the astonishment that has accompanied its unprecedented production – and thus be able to do a "step in transmission", as one might speak of a dance step.

We know quite well how crucial the dimension of astonishment is in the course of the analytic act. We often speak of it from the perspective of the analysand, since it punctuates the recognition of the formations of the unconscious, the manifesting of the subject of the unconscious in the transferential relation. Yet it is important to reflect also on the astonishment from the analyst's perspective; if the analyst's desire is based on the wager of the unconscious, this does not take away the fact that the emergence of the effects of such a wager do not cease to surprise. *To allow for surprise is the fundamental element of formation.* It is no accident that

¹² A "step in act" that is, at one and the same time, a "step in sense" and "non sense". The form "pas de sens", which means at once "step in sense" and "non-sense", is used by Lacan to indicate, among other things, the particular switch occurring during treatment when the unconscious truth emerges and changes the course of the work.

analytic listening is evenly suspended attention, "*gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit*," where any preestablished knowledge is, precisely, bracketed.

Après-coup's formation program foresees that a supervisor of the association can present the work done with an Analyst in Formation to a *Council*, a Council formed *ad hoc* – which comprises four analysts of the association and an AF.¹³ But such a Presentation (Presentation to the Council by the Supervisor) has a particular character. The supervisor will have to transmit to the Council something specific of the experience of the act; he will have to transmit what he has learned of the analytic act in the work with such an analysand, what new, unique thing he has learned in such a transmission. A testimony about transmission that aspires to being transmission itself. And the Council will express itself in this regard – affirmatively if transmission has taken place.

This procedure, in operation for some years, has proved to be fruitful. The experience of Presentation is often an occasion for surprise: the surprise of seeing a testimony produce effects while in progress, in the listening of various members of the Council and in their transference of work. In many cases this becomes an unprecedented experience and an any event an experience that retriggers a reflection on analytic ethics and on transmission. From the standpoint of the supervisor, the *challenge* of the transmission of the work of supervision becomes a punctuation that ties together analysis in intension and analysis in extension, and confirms the analyst's analysand position – which underscores formation as permanent. From the standpoint of the association, the procedure allows for a shift of emphasis, real and imaginary: we move from a value judgment of the work done by the AF to the recognition of an analytic position in act, which is acknowledged as such if there is transmission. At the same time, the procedure testifies to the fact that the formation of the AF whose work is presented and recognized has advanced in its relation to clinical work.¹⁴

¹³ A different AF, obviously, than the one whose work is being mentioned. The analysts and the AF who will make up the Council are chosen by the AF whose work is being presented by the supervisor.

¹⁴ The interest in this procedure is confirmed by the fact that there are analysts and supervisors who request a Presentation independently of the wish or need to obtain a completion of the Formation Program.

To complete the Après-Coup Formation Program, it is necessary that two supervisors of the association with whom the AF has worked, independently of each other, present the clinical work to two different Councils, which will make statements about it separately and at different moments. The affirmative response to such Councils will be the signing of a punctuation in formation: the end of the formation program and the continuation of permanent formation.

The end of the formation program is not a nomination: certificates attesting the title of analyst are not issued (as they are at all – *all* – the existing training institutes in the United States). If requested to, we will give a letter confirming completion of the formation program. The association assumes the responsibility for the quality of a formation within the social bond; but nomination is a matter that concerns the analyst as such, an analyst who vouches "*de soi même et de quelques autres*" ("*for himself and some others*"). Let us say that the nomination is part of the the analysand's task. The association can foster the necessary bond among analysts so that the analyst can find "others," who are indispensable to sustain his own position as an analyst. There is a point of no return to this vouching " for himself and some others": an ethical issue, which alone "guarantees" any psychoanalyst worthy of the name – and which distinguishes psychoanalysis from any other discipline or "profession"; bringing it closer to the domain of art.

At the point where we are, we think that the distinction between the end of the Après-Coup Formation Program and nomination is an essential point also for the life of our association. The history of psychoanalytic associations has shown to us the devastating effects of yearning for a guarantee and belonging; the risk of this is all the greater when the number of participants of an association is limited. Centripetality and proximity are harmful to the survival of psychoanalytic discourse and to its transmission.

Today there are those among us who are interested in the experience of testimony inherent in the *passe*. For this reason, the *passe* has become an area of study in our work of the last few years. In keeping with the dissemination of working ties characteristic of our tradition, we are today beginning to explore the possibility of implementing an inter-associational *passe*, which would allow for an

extension of the bond among analysts and a decentering beneficial to transmission. Last year we launched a project in that direction with the members of *la lettre lacanienne* of Paris and the *Escuela Sigmund Freud di Rosario*. A new step, in progress, in our formation.

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