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**PRIESTHOOD AND THERAPY –
THE PERSPECTIVE OF PASTORAL COUNSELLING**

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Modern man is experiencing numerous conflicts and problems. In the search for solutions to their difficulties, people turn to faith and the related pastoral care, or to the psychology and the ensuing different interpretations of psychotherapy. Can these two directions of human inquiry be connected? Is it possible to carry out pastoral care through therapy or therapy through pastoral care? The article tackles the issue of pastoral counselling, which appears to constitute such an intermediate solution. Thus, at the beginning of the research the understanding of the concepts of pastoral care, psychotherapy and pastoral counselling were clarified. Then, the article describes the relationship between these concepts and notes the importance of complementary distinctiveness (the author's term) in the functioning of pastoral counselling. What was discussed at the end were practical ways to update the rules of complementary distinctiveness in pastoral counselling.

Keywords: priesthood, psychotherapy, pastoral counselling, pastoral care, complementary distinctiveness.

**СВЯЩЕНСТВО И ТЕРАПИЯ –
ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ ПАСТЫРСКОГО КОНСУЛЬТИРОВАНИЯ**

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Современный человек переживает многочисленные конфликты и проблемы. В поисках решения своих трудностей люди обращаются к вере и связанной с ней пастырской заботе или к психологии и вытекающим из нее различным интерпретациям психотерапии. Могут ли эти два направления человеческого познания быть связаны между собой? Можно ли осуществлять пастырскую заботу через терапию или терапию через пастырскую заботу? В статье рассматривается вопрос о пастырском консультировании, которое, как представляется, является своего рода промежуточным решением. Таким

образом, в начале исследования уточняется понимание понятий пастырского попечения, психотерапии и пастырского консультирования. Далее в статье описывается взаимосвязь между этими понятиями и отмечается важность взаимодополняемых различий (термин автора) при осуществлении пастырского консультирования. В конце статьи указываются практические пути совершенствования принципов взаимодополняемых различий в пастырском консультировании.

Ключевые слова: духовенство, психотерапия, пастырское консультирование, пастырское попечение, взаимодополняемые различия.

A modern man seems to be very lost. Confronted with numerous internal and external problems, he or she often does not find solutions for many emerging conflicts and issues. This seems to translate into the feeling of being lost, but also into personality disorders, problems with relationships and various psychiatric diseases. In their search people turn to different ways of deciding about a man and understanding his psycho-physical and spiritual condition. Generally speaking, we can say that people in their difficulties turn to their faith and the related pastoral care, or to the psychology and the ensuing different interpretations of psychotherapy. But can these two directions be connected? Is it possible to carry out pastoral care through therapy or therapy through pastoral care? Many people have this idea and try to implement it. This path can be called the pastoral counselling. However, the question should be posed: is it possible to proceed like this and, possibly, at what conditions such assistance can be pursued? These questions become background for the issues raised in this paper. The undertaken subject is the fruit of thoughts and experiences that are the result of several years of therapeutic work in the Diocesan Family Counselling in Opole.

1. The concept of pastoral care and psychotherapy

At the starting point of the inquiry, clarifications of indicated concepts should be made. What is understood by the pastoral care is the religious type of impact and service of the Church for individual believers to bring them to salvation that is that is

achieving eternal happiness. This is, therefore, the activity of the Church realizing saving work of Jesus Christ in the Modern World [21, s. 84]. This is also evangelization activity of the Church as the subject of pastoral actions. Its targets are identified with the goal of salvation, i.e. the liberation of man from the evil of sin and death (salvific aspect) and the union of all people in God and with each other through love (eschatological aspect) [21, s. 85]. Pastoral care is thus a specific service for an individual man or various groups of people in bringing multiple help, especially in the spiritual realm [24, s. 53-62].

Psychotherapy [14, s. 35-38] as the name suggests, is the treatment of the human psyche. It can be defined as the art and science on treatment of mental and emotional disorders and mental illness by understanding the way of thinking and emotional responses In order to get a better mental balance. Its aim is to reorganize the patient's personality, especially the transformation of the faulty attitudes. This happens as a result of a person's insight into oneself, into the causes of the difficulties, and it is meant to lead to, among others, better adaptation to environmental conditions and greater ability to coexist with the environment [1, s. 161]. Whereas, according to L. Grzesiuk psychotherapy can be defined as a specialized method based on the intentional use of programmed psychological interactions, using the expertise of psychotherapists in the process of helping people with psychogenic disorders (neurosis, personality disorders, psychosis, addiction to alcohol, drugs, etc.), as well as with disorders having psychological consequences [13, s. 11]. J. Bazylak defines psychotherapy as a deliberate use of certain psychiatric measures towards other people call with the aim to cause some specific, positive changes in their personality [2, s. 5].

In summary, it can be stated that psychotherapy should strive to achieve the state of mental health of people who need such assistance, as well as to act as a “partner” in exploring and improving personality. Therefore, *the aim of psychotherapy* is determined in two ways: 1) improving the disturbed psyche and its processes, that is, removal of signs of psychopathology; 2) cooperation in a positive

personality development, improving contacts of the individual with the environment, analysis and problem solving in everyday life of the patient [23, s. 159-166].

2. The relationship between pastoral care and psychotherapy

The relationship between pastoral care and psychotherapy can be divided into three basic standpoints as a kind of reality: opposite, separate or complementary position. Radical opposition was postulated by Z. Freud. Today, this type of perception of the relationship between pastoral care and psychotherapy is represented by A. Ellis, known as the creator of rational-emotional therapy (RET). He dared to identify mental health with atheistic humanism and religious thinking with the formation of pathology [8, s. 173-175]. This vision of the relationship leads to the total opposition of pastoral care and psychotherapy [12, s. 129-160]. In Christian circles it resulted in the formulation of the charges against many forms of psychotherapy, and denying the possibility of any form of cooperation.

Firstly, it was stated that psychotherapy in this formula is associated with atheism and naturalism. They are expressed then in ignoring God. All acts and forms of religious devotion were considered suspicious. They also lack space for fundamental from the Christian point of view, the action of Providence, or at least to leave room for the presence of the Mystery in human life.

Secondly, what was noticed in these psychotherapies is far-reaching individualism, as they recognize an isolated, autonomous, self-absorbed individual as the only important psychological and social reality. Except for family therapy the importance of one's own development is overemphasized with the simultaneous relative lack of interest in the welfare of others.

Thirdly, what was recovered in these psychotherapies is subjectivism and relativism. These approaches to psychotherapy admit people only the right and ability to change with no constant moral dependencies and interpersonal relationships. Often, any truth was relativized to the changing experience of the person and/or socio-cultural conditions in which he or she operates. And talking about what is constant (especially in interpersonal obligations) was treated as a manifestation of

anti-development dogmatism, far-reaching conservatism and rigidity of thinking and behaviour [25, s. 5-16].

In less strict form, the opposite position in the relationship between pastoral care and psychotherapy, it is assumed that the difference in objectives and methods of pastoral care, based on religion, and psychotherapy, based mainly on the achievements of medicine and psychology, is significant. V.E. Frankl puts it succinctly stating that the aim of psychotherapy is the healing of the soul, and the purpose of religion is the salvation of the soul [10, s. 78]. He deems that the goals of pastoral care and psychotherapy are of completely different ranks and are located on different levels, in completely different dimensions [10, s. 78]. This does not exclude, of course, the fact that when it comes to the actual impact and the effects, pastoral care in some cases can have psychotherapeutic effects, and, similarly, psychotherapy may affect the achievement of religious purposes by a patient. However, these are the side effects and although these effects sometimes overlap or coincide with each other, it does not change the fact that psychotherapy and pastoral care in their substance are completely separate areas, hence psychotherapy cannot replace pastoral care and vice versa [9, s. 21].

According to this approach, the difference between psychotherapy and pastoral care is significant and requires a strict dividing line between those areas. This position confirms also N. Autton, noting that the pastoral care deals with the attitude of man towards God and the supernaturalism, while psychotherapy deals with the relationship of man with himself and with other people. On the foreground of greater importance in pastoral care there is the attitude of man towards a supernatural being - towards God. While the spiritual life concerns human movement upwards, psychotherapy deals with the movement of man directed downwards, towards emotional life and drives [1, s. 201].

The difference that exists between psychotherapy and pastoral care lies in the fact that *the aim of psychotherapy is "healing" the spirit and the purpose of pastoral care is sanctification of the spirit*. Psychotherapy can at best prepare a person to inner change, but the metanoia itself is the sanctification by grace. *Psychotherapy aims to*

free man from mental disturbances, from fixation, which did not allow him to fully participate in society. *Pastoral care*, in turn, aims to direct every person to the transcendent value. It is focused on sanctifying the person and his or her environment by contact with God. The claim that psychotherapy and pastoral care compete with each other or work against each other is not justified, on the contrary, psychotherapy can give valuable service to the pastoral care [19, s. 149-150].

What is created here is a space for existence of views claiming the activities of pastoral care and psychotherapy to be complementary, on the principle of cooperation and complementarity [2, s. 79-86]. The first point of tangential impact of pastoral care and psychotherapy is primarily the fact that they relate to the same object – a man who is a psychophysical unity, strictly speaking, spiritually-psychophysical one. Therefore the tasks of pastoral care and psychotherapy are inseparable, thus the interaction coincides with the command of Christ for His disciples to heal and teach [1, s. 196]. The second tangential point of those two fields is seeing the limitations and shortcomings existing in man, shortcomings in the natural or supernatural sphere. The tangential point is thus the fact that both psychotherapy and pastoral care see man as a being, which is far from perfect, and try to help him with methods suitable to them [16, s. 121].

Pastoral care, due to being rooted in religion, can offer psychotherapy the following:

1. Religion and values deriving from it are a part of every culture, and socio-cultural factors influence the understanding and the process of helping [3, p. 179-189].

2. In the process of psychotherapy, religious values provide a system of concepts and language, allowing one to name and specify mental states of the client in terms of content, for example, the inner freedom, responsibility, spiritual maturity, guilt, sin, forgiveness, reconciliation, compensation, etc. [11, p. 160-166].

3. Religious values include recitals and support for the implementation of decisions taken in the course of therapy for a change of behaviours and their implementation [17, p. 158-162]. On the other hand, the pastoral care by having a

practical nature, like psychotherapy, can assimilate many methods applied by psychotherapy for its own purposes [19, s. 149-150].

Complementarity of pastoral care and psychotherapy can be carried out with varying intensity. This allows to distinguish *three levels of Christian psychotherapy*, which takes the tasks and objectives set by the pastoral care.

The first level assumes that good treatment is characterized by a deep respect for the beliefs of the patient (client). It really grows from the assumptions recognizing the separateness between pastoral care and psychotherapy. Such aid is characterized by action towards solving major personal problems of the client, combating anxieties, improving ways of interacting with the environment and learning the fullest possible use of one's own resources, rather than modelling one's beliefs and behaviours in accordance with the psychotherapist's or adviser's religious vision of reality. An important and at the same time sufficient Christian aspect of such aid can be a genuine willingness to support the client, backed by a personal prayer in his intentions not expressed aloud. In this sense we can speak of a Christian therapist or adviser, but not of a Christian therapy. In this sense, Christian may be at most pastoral counselling [25, s. 5-16].

The second level consists of these approaches, which are an expression of the belief that the so-called secular (non-religious) therapeutic systems require a larger or smaller adjustment of both theoretical assumptions and associated practices, in order to be consistent with the Christian vision of nature and development of a person. Differences within this level are significant, because some people think that just some reformulation of existing systems, the shift of emphasis or adding to a therapy specifically Christian issues is enough, while others are convinced that only some of the assumptions are appropriate and there is a need of a deep spiritual thought before being able to use existing methods and strategies of psychotherapy in a holistic manner while working with people who believe [25, s. 5-16].

The third level recognizes that the only truth, on which one can rely and take psychotherapeutic and counselling actions, is the revelation. This means that the Christian psychotherapist must necessarily reject any approaches and therapeutic

techniques that are not directly embedded in the Bible (Protestants), or in the Bible and the teachings of the Church (Catholics). What is expressed by this is the belief that for two thousand years people have coped relatively well with mental health problems by indications of Sacred Scripture and spiritual direction [18, s. 179-196], and therefore there is no need to reach for often suspicious, or at least uncertain, forms of treatment, not knowing whether they will help mentally, and with likelihood to harm the spiritual life of man [25, s. 5-16].

From the considerations submitted above it can be concluded that complementary distinctiveness should remain something fundamental to the relationship between pastoral care and psychotherapy. It is therefore necessary to consider the danger of confusion of these two systems and the inadmissibility of exceeding the competence by one or the other field. Thus, for example, on the side of psychotherapy, there is the danger of explaining all the psychic life of man, including his conscious and free aspirations and unconscious desire to justify all the faults and moral shortcomings suppressed with complexes and unconscious mechanisms. On the side of pastoral care what becomes dangerous is the recognition of all mental disorders as consequences of moral guilt, or to ignore or disregard the existence of certain mental illnesses, which often call for specialized care and treatment. Therefore it can be said that the largest favour that those two helping fields can give to themselves is to fulfil what belongs to them, adhering closely to their competence [24, s. 53-62].

3. The idea of complementary distinctiveness as a fundamental principle of pastoral counselling

At this point, it is worth noting that pastoral counselling fits perfectly in the ideas of complementary distinctiveness between pastoral care and therapy. It seems important to point out that counselling so understood occurs in pastoral situations that are in those situations, in which there is interpersonal relationship open to transcendence between the person acting pastorally and one or more pastoral entities [22, s. 13]. It is more a specialized continuation of ordinary pastoral care and includes helping individuals, couples and families in their struggle with difficulties and crises

that life brings. The condition for the functioning of the so understood pastoral guidance is for the person acting as a counsellor to have adequate theological, psychological and therapeutic knowledge [4, s. 27-28].

The preservation of rules of complementary distinctiveness in a pastoral counselling undertakes advising people to actively respect the faith of the client/clients. It is instantiated in the following activities:

1. The counsellor is attentive and opens to the spiritual dimension of the client and his or her religious experience. The counsellor assumes then that this dimension is important for a client and it is not reducible to only psychological dimension.

2. The counsellor talks with a client about his or her faith, if the client brings this issue to the conversation, but also when the client does not raise it. In the latter situation, religious bringing the topic should occur with mindfulness and caution, without intrusiveness, so that the client does not feel compelled to open this personal and intimate subject of against his or her will.

3. The counsellor does not challenge the beliefs or religious experiences of the client, especially if you he or she does not share these beliefs. The counsellor is humbly open to the belief system that professes his ward. Any attempt to “convert” or change the system of religious values (not to mention any mocking, speaking with irony or other forms of devaluation) is unacceptable.

4. The counsellor is careful in formulating any value judgements and assessments.

5. Conversation on the client’s faith is exploratory in nature and serves the client to enable a deeper understanding of himself in the spiritual dimension and to see how his faith is part of his psyche and how it is associated with his emotional problems. The task of the counsellor is channelling the counselling process, rather than interpreting the client's experience as part of their therapeutic doctrine [6, s. 11-12].

Proceedings of the counsellor, implementing the principle of complementary distinctiveness, is also a consequence of the anthropological assumptions [5, s. 5-14], [20, s. 17-24]. The pastoral counselling, in order to be able to carry out its tasks,

should be based on an integral and realistic conception of man. This concept to the fullest extent is presented by a biblical anthropology, showing man as a person who is in a relationship with God and others, forming a full *communio personarum*. Being such a person means to be someone aware of themselves and their vocation. This means to live freely and responsibly. This is deeper knowledge and more mature loving oneself and others: God and people, but at the same time accepting that being humanity is also a weakness and the ability to strikethrough one's development, as well as causing internal and external conflicts, narrowing desires and aspirations, distortion of the hierarchy of values, dependence on people, things or chemicals. A man being limited in his consciousness and freedom can make wrong decisions that harm him and those living with him in the relationships. In such a situation, in order to overcome its limitations and to live in greater freedom, love and holiness, he needs a Saviour.

This biblical anthropology is integral and realistic, because on the one hand, it shows the uniqueness and complexity of a man who experiences himself through his physicality and psyche, through moral and spiritual sensitivity, through the relationship with God, with himself and others. On the other hand, it reveals human frailty and sinfulness, internal injuries and conflicts. Thanks to its versatility and realistic exposure of the mystery of man existing always in relation, biblical anthropology gives one a full understanding of a man and of giving him adequate and effective assistance [7, s. 163-164]. The criterion of the value and effectiveness of the specific help offered to a man is focusing it on a mature attitude to physicality, thinking, emotions and religion [7, s. 163-164]. Awareness of pastoral counsellor based on biblical anthropology, allows him to remain an open person, understanding and supporting those who seek help in solving their problems in life.

In order to maintain complementary distinctiveness, pastoral counselling fulfilling the objectives of the pastoral care must use only natural methods and techniques offered by the specific course of psychotherapy. Remaining at the service of pastoral ministry, it prepares persons surviving all kinds of hardships, so they can become more active actors of the process of salvation. Working only on the natural

basis and using the natural tools (psychotherapeutic ones), it enables man to receive the grace of God which fulfils his sanctification. Therefore, pastoral counselling only in the broad sense is a part of the pastoral work. It involves performing only streamlines function. It should not be understood as a space for realization of complementary function, which comes from the power of the sacrament of the priesthood.

These considerations imply the following indications for pastoral counselling:

1) pastoral counsellors can be both lay people and clergymen; 2) clergymen, in order to maintain the integrity and quality of counselling, cannot conduct any other pastoral activities towards supported people, including sacramental ones; 3) in the conducted process of counselling, only psychotherapeutic and counselling models and techniques are used; 4) any deviations from these assumptions result in lowering of quality of support given to people in the counselling process and increase burdens imposed on the counsellor.

Pastoral counselling is performed in the context of the pastoral mission of the Church, which in its general approach involves helping people to grow in love for God and neighbour. One cannot, however, agree with the view presented by M. Szentmartoni that counselling is a part of this mission as a direct means of evangelization [22, s. 33]. Pastoral counselling is done only at the natural level and should not go to the supernatural level, which is the essence of pastoral care. The limit for the impact of pastoral counselling becomes the moment, in which a counselling person is experiencing personal encounter with God. At this point the role of pastoral counselling ends and spiritual guidance begins, which is part of the ordinary forms of apostolate. It can therefore be concluded that pastoral counselling could somehow lead to the pastoral guidance and other forms of ordinary pastoral interaction. However, for the sake of the counsellor, counselling person/people, process of counselling and successfully the dynamics of spiritual guidance, it is needed that a different person than the pastoral counsellor become the spiritual guide [15, s. 107]. Therefore, it becomes necessary to separate these two areas to support people in need. Acting so is an expression of the responsibility of people taking care

within the frames of pastoral counselling and spiritual guidance. Unambiguous separation of these two types of activities does not rule out the possibility of cooperation between the pastoral counsel or and spiritual director or minister. However, it must be carried out with the consent of the person seeking support and fully accepted by him or her.

The argument in favour of a clear and inviolable boundary between pastoral counselling and other typical pastoral activities is also the motivation of those seeking help and their image of God. It is very common for a person experiencing various difficulties to lack mature religiosity. Then all the problems experienced are related indiscriminately to the will of God and Providence, leading to false motivation to take various forms of piety and “escape” to prayer [23, s. 160]. This model reduces the internal tensions of the person concerned and in his or her relations with loved ones, but also prevents the introduction of constructive changes, which would function at a higher level of maturity. Diagnosing such motivation to the increased spiritual life and their reformulation is possible on the basis of pastoral counselling process, and is more difficult in the way of ordinary pastoral actions. The perspective of system approach in pastoral counselling allow then to take a look at this type of behaviour of a client/clients as being the symptom by which it is possible to divert attention from the essential problems, not confronting them and rationalization of what went wrong in relationships with others, explaining this to be the will of God and the need to humbly accept any negative experiences as a form of compensation for the sins and connecting with the sufferings of Jesus on the cross. Thus, the separation between these two areas of human support towards God and his salvation is to prevent the use of religious motivations for manipulation purposes, the strategies of which a lot of people who choose to seek the assistance of pastoral counsellor, not in secular therapist, apply more or less consciously.

4. Pastoral counselling in systemic terms as an example of updating the idea of complementary distinctiveness

An important direction for pastoral counselling becomes a systemic approach, which because of its interpersonal character may serve to help support marriages and

families. Pastoral marriage counselling, due to systemic recognition, privileges and highlights the importance of the relationship between spouses, seeing in it a force capable to revamp the functioning of the entire system and to bring it to a higher level of maturity. By borrowing the therapeutic techniques and introducing them to pastoral activity, it strives to ensure supporting marriages on their way to vocation towards holiness as efficiently as possible. We must therefore see that the aim of pastoral marriage counselling in systemic terms is to strengthen, to renew the marriage relationship, to allow the spouses to more independently and fully carry out the tasks that have been written by God in the sacramental communion of marriage as a “domestic Church”, whose aim is mutual salvation and own salvation.

Such an approach to pastoral counselling demands, however, to define its activities only on the natural basis, which is intended to be a preparation for the supernatural action of God's grace. Therefore, it is required to clearly determine the scope of advisory activities only at the level of interpersonal relations. Renewal and improvement of the relations between the spouses through counselling actions will from its very essence result in strengthening the function of salvation. For it is included among the spouses in their mutual giving of the sacrament of marriage. What is protected in this way is the improving function of pastoral counselling, while the subjectivity the spouses and the implementation of complementary functions, embodied in ordinary pastoral actions remain not threatened.

Pastoral marriage counselling, using the systemic psychological theories regarding relationships in marriage and the family and techniques developed by their therapeutic practice, seeks to strengthen marriage references. As such, therefore, it does not use any supernatural means. If they can be described as “pastoral”, it is because they support marriage in the process of becoming more efficient subject and object of ordinary pastoral interactions.

From the above reason, people undertaking the work in pastoral marriage counselling should have formed awareness that they are entered in the broader process of saving, experienced by sacramental marriages and to which they have been appointed by God. And although they do not directly benefit from any supernatural

methods of pastoral ministry, by a process of advising spouses they give a chance to the proper use of the saving potentials contained in all sacramental marriage relationships. This awareness blatantly distinguishes pastoral counsellors from systemic secular therapists.

It must also be clearly emphasized that the pastoral swing of this approach can in no way be reflected in the distortion of neutrality of the counsellor working with a married couple. Awareness of the counsellor of his participation in the process of saving is connected with the structure of values, which cannot directly translate into discussions undertaken with spouses, and it can never shape his assessing attitude. This is therefore all about the naturalness of counsellor in a positive sense, that is assumed for the sake of the process of counselling, and is not seen as a necessity to supplant one's own hierarchy of values.

The self-limitation adopted by pastoral marriage counselling in terms of the system becomes important from the point of view of its identity and the ability to integral impact that by supporting spouses on the natural level, allows for their self-contained, and therefore more conscious and mature, fulfilling saving role by being a "domestic Church". Without clear delineation of boundaries and respecting them, a confusion of the natural and supernatural could occur, which ultimately would not be beneficial for the spouses seeking support.

This new perspective for the pastoral marriage counselling strongly emphasizes the value of relationship between husband and wife. It recognizes the importance of preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitation significance. Marriage relationships are seen as the source and guarantee for the smooth running of all mental processes, leading to full maturity of the partnership, through the mechanism of feedback and reciprocity, but at the same time their value is visible in the saving and sanctifying perspective – modelled on Persons of the Trinity.

The principle of complementary distinctiveness is a part of the actions taken by pastoral marriage counselling in terms of the system on the border between the unambiguously pastoral activities, which through evangelization directly lead to salvation, and clearly therapeutic ones. For using the methods and techniques of

different directions of systemic therapy, it sees its goals in improving the marital relationship, so that it became a real “place” to meet God and mutual sanctification. As a result, the pastoral marriage counselling in terms of the system becomes a kind of synthesis, implemented under certain pastoral and therapeutic conditions. In this context, this activity is a specialized activity of the Church, which is intended to help spouses in a better and fuller experience of their relationship that with its sacramental gift of Jesus’ presence and the inclusion in the life of the Holy Trinity contributes to the sanctification of the spouses and their families.

Thus emerging complexity of pastoral marriage counselling approach in terms of the system is one of its most important strengths, which works in practice when helping the spouses. Help in building or renewing a strong, healthy marriage relationship is a central assumption of this approach of counselling, which is consistent with the widespread belief about the leading role of marriage in the creation of happiness-generating and self-redeeming family communities. The result is that marriage is not abstracted from the context of the family, but deeply inscribed in the whole multi-generational relationship of the communication.

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