



A journal for restless minds

## PATENT INFRINGEMENT

*Leaving well-enough alone*

## ON WHOSE AUTHORITY?

*And a child shall lead them*

## SIX BOYS ON A HILL

*They stood for the flag*

Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

## Patent Infringement

*Leaving well-enough alone*

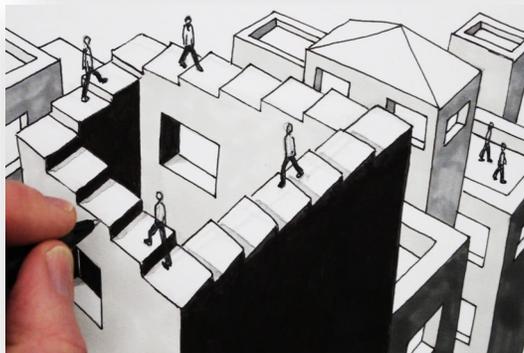
What might it be, that which could produce such undisguised psychoses among so many? How else are we to classify the overwhelming numbers who have so obviously lost touch with objective reality, who blithely subscribe to the notion that reality and truth are malleable, subject to the whimsy of their puerile minds?

Commonly defined as a mental health problem, those diagnosed with psychoses perceive or interpret things differently from those around them. In other words, their reality and truth are skewed and far afield, brewed by ill-tempered imaginings and uninhibited desires.

Too many live under the false conviction that what is real is what they be-

lieve to be real and that the truth is what they conceive it to be.

Reality and truth are not now and never have been subjects of personal choice, no matter how intense the desire. Yet, they live among us, adamantly demanding unquestioning acceptance of their reality and their truth; to object or demur only infuriates them, further warping what little sanity should remain; to suggest there is but one reality, one truth is calumny deserving only their utmost contempt and obloquy.



Why this is, this unreasoned antagonism toward others not of the same mind—that being obviously no one but their self—, rests on a peculiar but perverse preference for risk-

aversion. They dare entertain not the tiniest incomplete thought which could possibly cause a great disturbance in the force, disrupting the convulsions churning chaotically among the petrified neurons of their solidified psychoses.

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## On Whose Authority?

*And a child shall lead them*

**B**eing of an certain age, with far more miles now traveled than those which could possibly remain, what occupies the quiet moments are but tiny echoes, rippled reflections of long ago when life was everlasting and all things were possible. Somewhere along the way—when, I cannot recall—the exuberance and optimism of youthful charity met the sober temperance of adulthood and much, far too much was lost of the beauty, kindness, goodness, and innocence of childhood.

There is much we should remember of our childhood, yet too soon we leave childish things behind. We forget how often God chooses children and the young over adults to teach and lead his people.

In Isaiah 11:6 we read: *"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."* A little child shall lead them.

In 1 Samuel 3:3-10 we heard the Lord calling the youth Samuel in the temple. Later, in 1 Samuel 16:11–12 when he is an old man, Samuel is called by the Lord to choose his successor from the sons of Jesse and the one chosen was David, the youngest.

Even at the young age of 12, in Luke 2:46-47 we read how his parents found Jesus in the temple, *"sitting among the teachers, listening to them and*

*asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers."* And in Matthew 19:14, Jesus acknowledges the importance of children when he says to his disciples: *"Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."*

This week we celebrate Catholic Schools Week. We celebrate the precious gift we have received from God, our children. And while our children have much to learn from their parents and teachers, we adults can learn, and in many cases, relearn much from our children.



**I**n one of Aesop's fables an old Mother Crab says to her son, *"Why do you walk sidewise like that my son? You ought to walk straight."* The little crab responds by asking, *"Show me how, dear Mother, and I'll follow your example."* Though the Mother Crab tried in vain to walk straight she could only move sideways. She quickly saw how unreasonable was her advice to her son. The moral of the fable is obvious, it is easier to tell than to do, and an example is more authoritative than is a lesson.

**T**oday, we heard that the people were astonished at Jesus teaching, *"for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes."* They were astonished because Jesus was acting totally out of line with his inherited status. He was the son of a carpenter, an artisan from Nazareth who dared to teach *"as one having authority."* Who gave him the authority to teach?

Authority is a major problem for Jesus' contemporaries. No one denies the mighty deeds of power that Jesus performs. What troubles them is the source of his authority. Is it God? Or is it the world of the other, lesser gods and spirits?

The people in the synagogue at Capernaum have not yet decided. The fact, however, is very clear. Jesus the artisan from Nazareth has authority and effective power to do what he does. He behaves not shamefully, out of alignment with his status, but rather quite honorably. And this is why all the people were so amazed at his teaching and

why, as Mark tells us, *"His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee."*

We heard also, that as Jesus was teaching in the synagogue he was confronted by a man with an unclean spirit. The holiness of the synagogue has been violated; the sanctuary has been defiled. We know well, from the recent vandalism and desecration of our church, that unclean spirits are among us still.

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**E**vil exists in this world and no matter how much we wish it did not, it remains. Albert Einstein once said that *"The real problem is in the hearts and minds of men. It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man."* We are, as human beings, sinners, both by inclination and in fact. We are all born with the stain of original sin on our soul, a legacy inherited from our first parents. Fortunately, baptism cleanses our souls; unfortunately, the inclination to sin remains.

We tend to overdramatize this incident in the Gospel, to imagine a scene like that in *The Exorcist* with spinning heads and shrieking utterances in strange tongues. Our imaginations run wild and we conjure up demonic possession; or we suspect some form of physical disability like epilepsy or perhaps a mental problem like schizophrenia.

The reality is, I suspect, far more mundane and unfortunately, all too common. In a very real sense, each of us has within us unclean spirits, spirits that for the most part are kept under control and hidden from others. Within us, we have a soul, an immortal spirit; it is what defines us as human beings, what makes us creatures made in the image and likeness of God. When we sin, and we all sin, we defile our souls and in doing so we become, like the man in the Gospel, a person with an unclean spirit.

What caused the man to confront Jesus, why did he cry out, *"What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?"* Somewhere deep inside he must have

realized that Jesus could save him, could rid him of his unclean spirits, could make him whole and clean again. Jesus knew his heart, saw within his soul, and cleaned away the darkness that he kept hidden away. Jesus saw the unclean spirit of the man and commanded *"Quiet! Come out of him!"*

We all have secrets, thoughts and experiences that we don't wish to share with anyone, things that we fervently hope will never be revealed. We all have our indiscretions, faults, and failures and we file them away, put them in boxes in the forgotten recesses of our minds, believing that once forgotten they will never be found again.

The problem is that what we so desperately wish to keep hidden, safe from all around us cannot be kept from God; he already knows, he has always known; and he knows where you stored them

And then there is another problem ... we know. We cannot simply forget what we have done or failed to do. Over time, our secrets, our sins, our failings overshadow the good that is within. Like monsters hiding under the bed or the closet, that terrify in the darkness, we begin to believe that we are so failed and broken that nothing can ever save us. We stumble through life believing that we are unforgivable, unworthy, total failures. We become so ashamed of who we are and what we have done that we find ourselves, like Adam and Eve, hiding from God, hiding our nakedness.

**W**hen we keep unclean spirits around, no matter how well we attempt to

hide them, it clutters our soul, dampens our spirit and builds walls that restrict our personal relationship with God.

Instead of holding onto our secrets, our unclean spirits, Jesus asks us to give our sins over to him, to let him clean our souls and make us whole again.

But that requires us to recognize that He is in control and that we are vulnerable. And that is often very difficult to accept. For most of us, we like being in control, we feel uncomfortable when we are not behind the wheel, when we are dependent on another. The thought of handing control over to someone else can be frightening, to say the least.

**T**o be vulnerable to Christ is like a new born infant held in the loving arms of his or her mother. The child is entirely dependent on another, completely vulnerable, unable to exert any control, to make any decisions. And yet, the infant intuitively understands that he or she is safe and loved.

Like an infant, we should intuitively know that we are safe in God's hands. God loves us and wants us to love him in return. No matter how many times we fall He will always forgive us as long as we ask for His forgiveness. With Jesus, unclean spirits don't stand a chance and good always wins out over evil. Amen.

Homily for the  
The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)  
Deuteronomy 18:15-20  
1 Cor 7:32-35  
Mark 1:21-28

This irrational belief that reality and truth are personal, subject to the vagaries of thought concocted by mere whim and fancy compels us to question the sanity of those who espouse such codswallop and tommyrot. Their bald effrontery apparently knows no bounds as they force feed their gibberish upon any and all who should come within close proximity to their caterwauling mewling voices. And to our disgust and dismay, too often their calumnies find traction within the hallowed halls of academe as well as the darkened corridors of the fourth estate.

To illustrate how pervasive subjective realities and variable truths have infiltrated our social consciousness, one only has to observe the hallelujah chorus reverberating throughout the media immediately following Oprah Winfrey's acceptance speech on receiving the Golden Globes' annual Cecil B. DeMille award for lifetime achievement. Calls for her to jump into the race for the presidency were immediate and garrulously promoted. Media called her remarks inspirational and uplifting.

While I applaud Oprah Winfrey's success (she is a multi-billionaire like others we could name) her speech was a clarion call for those residing in their own make-believe fantasies where "their truth" reigns supreme. Here is a portion of what she said: "*what I know for sure is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have.*"

She goes on to recall the tragic, unspeakable horror that befell Recy Taylor in 1944 and the justice denied

her, thru her recent death at 98. Oprah then offered this bit of wishful-thinking: "*I just hope that Recy Taylor died knowing that her truth, like the truth of so many other women who were tormented in those years, and even now tormented, goes marching on.*"

The heinous crimes committed against Recy Taylor were and are ugly, vile, cruel, inhumane, and evil. No one should ever suffer such abuse, **no one**. And that is "*the truth,*" not just "*her truth, like the truth of so many other women*" or "*your truth*" or "*my truth.*" The truth belongs not to a person but to all; truth is of necessity objective, universal and binary; there is no partiality with truth, it either is or it is not truth. There is no such thing as a little white lie; a lie—no matter how big or how small, insignificant or monumental, "*harmless*" or hurtful, well-intended or deceptive—remains but an illusion, a prevarication, a falsehood, a lie.

Pilate asked "*What is truth?*" which serves to illustrate our weakness, our desire to avoid unpleasantness and pain, our unwillingness to accept objective reality and the truth which bears witness to its objectivity. Reality can neither be denied nor subjectively adjusted to suit one's personal whimsy. Reality is what is, not what we might wish it to be.

The 16th century English proverb, "*If wishes were horses, beggars would ride*" is as apropos today as it was five centuries ago. Simply wishing—or conjuring up—one's own subjective reality won't make it real, any more than any reality based upon one's personal, subjective "*truth*".

And then there is the matter of sex and gender. Like truth, gender is of necessity and by design: objective, universal and binary. "*27So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it;...' (Genesis 2:27-28).* God created binary man: **male and female**; he created them so, for the express purpose of procreating—to be fruitful and multiply—to have children, to populate and fill the earth.

Here I draw much of the remainder of this essay from an essay<sup>1</sup> written by Hans Boersma, Professor of Theology at Regent College.

Boersma proffers eight theses concerning sex:

"*First, sex is searching for God.*" As St. Paul writes: "*He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body*" (Eph 5:28-30). And as Boersma then observes, "*So you cannot think about sex in its fullest sense without thinking of union with Christ. If sexual union is sacramental in character, you can't treat it like it's something dirty or weird, something to avoid. ...*

*Sexual union derives its meaning ultimately from union with Christ. That is, our spiritual union with Christ is the great reality in the physical union between husband and wife. When we ignore union with Christ as the final purpose of sex, sexual union loses its truth, goodness, and beauty.*"

**B**oersma's next thesis is especially interesting and timely. He writes, "Second, God invents sex." Beyond the novelty of the thought, all one need do is return to Genesis 2:27 to grok the truth of it.

*"The reason God talks about his relationship with us as one of bridegroom and bride is that God invented weddings. God patterned human love on his love for us. Sex, therefore, is God's idea, not ours."* And then he adds this delicious *bon mot*: "That means that God has a patent on sex. We can't invent or make up ways of doing sex. We don't create reality; we try to follow reality. That's a liberating thought. We don't have the burden of constructing our own realities; we don't have to invent our own sense of how sex functions; we may simply enter the realities God has already created for us."

*Sexual attraction itself, therefore, does not determine what is right and wrong. Just because something feels right does not necessarily make it right. Sexual 'inventiveness' is a sign that things have gone awry. Our sexual lives are properly ordered when they follow the patent that God has on sex."*

His second thesis speaks powerfully and correctly to the swelling tide of misguided ideologies currently in vogue with respect to sexual identity and sexual preference. God alone holds the patents on sex—most importantly human sexuality—and for all of his creation; God has not granted man—nor will he ever likely do so—permission to infringe.

With his third thesis, "sex is not God," Boersma points to the obvious:

everything we see, feel, touch, or taste screams of our elevated treatment of sex as our god. He writes, "If sexual union is only a sacrament of a greater union, namely, a union with Christ, then we must stop treating sex as though it were our God."

*Sex is only one aspect of human life, and not the decisive one. ... Put bluntly: You don't need to have sex to be fully human. To be fully human, what you need is Christ."*

*"Fourth, God is chastity. Sex may not be God, but the way we treat sex says a great deal about how we think about God."* He adds, "Sex is a good, a sacramental good. It symbolizes our union with Christ. But it's not just sex that symbolizes union with Christ. It's also the absence of sex that denotes our union with him. The word chastity simply means purity. God is pure, which is to say, chaste, and he wants us to share in his chastity."

Next, Boersma points to what should be perfectly obvious to anyone living in a state of objective reality: "Fifth, sex is temporary. Sex is meant for this life only, not for the hereafter. ... Sex and marriage are for this world only; they're not for the next. Marriage doesn't exist for its own sake: **Marriage is instrumental**. It is a sacrament, and sacraments are means to a greater end. Once you've arrived at the greater end, you no longer need them."

**C**ontinuing, Boersma writes, "Sixth, disordered desire makes for disordered sex. ... The first thing to observe here is that God made the body in the beginning, that God assumed a body in the Incarnation, and that God will renew the body in the resurrection. That must mean that the body is good. So the problems we experience in terms of sexual

*desire are not problems that result from the simple fact that we have bodies. Problems related to sex are primarily problems of the mind. It's our disordered desires that lead us astray. The erotic pictures we conjure up in our imagination result from the mind not functioning properly (our psychoses). Our desires are misdirected. Our will ignores the sacrament character of sexual union; it brackets the reality of union with Christ and focuses on sexual desire for its own sake."*

**T**hesis seven says that "fallen bodies make for fallen sex." As Boersma points out, our bodies are fallen because of the fall of Adam and Eve. Simply put, our bodies no longer function exactly as God designed or intended. Our disordered bodies will have to wait until Christ's return to be fully restored. "This means that we cannot take our bodily impulses as the final norms, as so often happens today. Some people feel that they are imprisoned in a body of the wrong gender; others are attracted to people of the same sex. What the Christian doctrine of the Fall tells us is this: Your struggles will not last forever. Your fallen natural body is going to be transformed into a resurrected body that is spiritual."

Finally, Boersma's eighth thesis posits that "sex leads to kids. If we follow God's patent on sex, kids are the outcome."

*When we deliberately separate sex from having kids, we deny the most basic things about sexual union: that it is sacramental and that God has a patent on it. ... This is one of the great joys to be found in God's patent on sex."* Amen. Amen. Amen.

1. Hans Boersma, J.I. Packer Professor of Theology at Regent College, *Eight Theses on Sex*, for *First Things* magazine, February 2018, p. 13-14.

## Six Boys On A Hill

*They stood for the flag*

Last week I received an email from an Army buddy. In it was a story, author unknown, which tells of an eighth grade class trip to our nation's capital. It matters little the truth of its occurrence, for the tale it tells is more than truth enough. Anyone who has ever stood in harm's way, stared down death and walked away, looked evil in the eye and sneered, will understand the depth of meaning in the tale. For all the rest, find comfort in knowing the price so few have paid for the freedom so many now enjoy.

### Six Boys and Thirteen Hands

Each year I am hired to go to a Washington, DC, with the eighth grade class from Clinton, WI, where I grew up, to videotape their trip. I greatly enjoy visiting our Nation's Capital, and each year I take some special memories back with me.

This fall's trip was especially memorable. On the last night of our trip, we stopped at the Iwo Jima Memorial. This memorial is the largest bronze statue in the world and depicts one of the most famous photographs in history—that of the six brave soldiers raising the American Flag at the top of a rocky hill on the island of Iwo Jima, Japan, during World War II.

Over one hundred students and chaperones piled off the buses and headed towards the memorial. I noticed a solitary figure at the base of the

statue, and as I got closer he asked, "Where are you guys from?"

I told him that we were from Wisconsin. "Hey, I'm a cheese head, too! Come gather around, Cheese heads, and I will tell you a story." (It was James Bradley who just happened to be in Washington, DC, to speak at the memorial the following day. He was there that night to say good night to his dad, who had passed away.



He was just about to leave when he saw the buses pull up. I videotaped him as he spoke to us, and received his permission to share what he said from my videotape. It is one thing to tour the incredible monuments filled with history in Washington, but it is quite another to get the kind of insight we received that night.

When all had gathered around, he reverently began speaking. "My name is James Bradley and I'm from Antigo, Wisconsin. My dad is on that statue, and I wrote a book called 'Flags of Our Fathers'. It is the story of the six boys you see behind me.

"Six boys raised the flag. The first guy putting the pole in the ground is

Harlon Block. Harlon was an all-state football player. He enlisted in the Marine Corps with all the senior members of his football team. They were off to play another type of game. A game called 'War.' But it didn't turn out to be a game. Harlon, at the age of 21, died with his intestines in his hands.

I don't say that to gross you out, I say that because there are people who stand in front of this statue and talk about the glory of war. You guys need to know that most of the boys in Iwo Jima were 17, 18, and 19 years old—and it was so hard that the ones who did make it home never even would talk to their families about it

(He pointed to the statue) "You see this next guy? That's Rene Gagnon from New Hampshire. If you took Rene's helmet off at the moment this photo was taken and looked in the webbing of that helmet, you would find a photograph... a photograph of his girlfriend Rene put that in there for protection because he was scared. He was 18 years old. It was just boys who won the battle of Iwo Jima. Boys, not old men.

"The next guy here, the third guy in this tableau, was Sergeant Mike Strank. Mike is my hero. He was the hero of all these guys. They called him the 'old man' because he was so old. He was already 24.

When Mike would motivate his boys in training camp, he didn't say, 'Let's go kill some Japanese' or 'let's die

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for our country'. He knew he was talking to little boys. Instead he would say, 'You do what I say, and I'll get you home to your mothers.'

"The last guy on this side of the statue is Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian from Arizona. Ira Hayes was one of them who lived to walk off Iwo Jima. He went into the White House with my dad. President Truman told him, 'You're a hero'. He told reporters, 'How can I feel like a hero when 250 of my buddies hit the island with me and only 27 of us walked off alive?' So you take your class at school, 250 of you spending a year together having fun, doing everything together. Then all 250 of you hit the beach, but only 27 of your classmates walk off alive. That was Ira Hayes. He had images of horror in his mind. Ira Hayes carried the pain home with him and eventually died dead drunk, face down, drowned in a very shallow puddle, at the age of 32 (ten years after this picture was taken).

"The next guy, going around the statue, is Franklin Sousley from Hilltop, Kentucky. A fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. His best friend, who is now 70, told me, 'Yeah, you know, we took two cows up on the porch of the Hilltop General Store. Then we strung wire across the stairs so the cows couldn't get down. Then we fed them Epsom salts. Those cows crapped all night. 'Yes, he was a fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. Franklin died on Iwo Jima at the age of 19. When the telegram came to tell his mother that he was dead, it went to the Hilltop General Store. A barefoot boy ran that telegram up to his mother's farm. The neighbors could hear her

scream all night and into the morning. Those neighbors lived a quarter of a mile away.

"The next guy, as we continue to go around the statue, is my dad, John Bradley, from Antigo, Wisconsin, where I was raised. My dad lived until 1994, but he would never give interviews.

**W**hen Walter Cronkite's producers or the New York Times would call, we were trained as little kids to say 'No, I'm sorry, sir, my dad's not here. He is in Canada fishing. No, there is no phone there, sir. No, we don't know when he is coming back.' My dad never fished or even went to Canada. Usually, he was sitting there right at the table eating his Campbell's soup. But we had to tell the press that he was out fishing. He didn't want to talk to the press.

"You see, like Ira Hayes, my dad didn't see himself as a hero. Everyone thinks these guys are heroes, 'cause they are in a photo and on a monument.

My dad knew better. He was a medic. John Bradley from Wisconsin was a combat caregiver. On Iwo Jima he probably held over 200 boys as they died. And when boys died on Iwo Jima, they writhed and screamed, without any medication or help with the pain.

"When I was a little boy, my third grade teacher told me that my dad was a hero. When I went home and told my dad that, he looked at me and said, 'I want you always to remember that the heroes of Iwo Jima are the guys

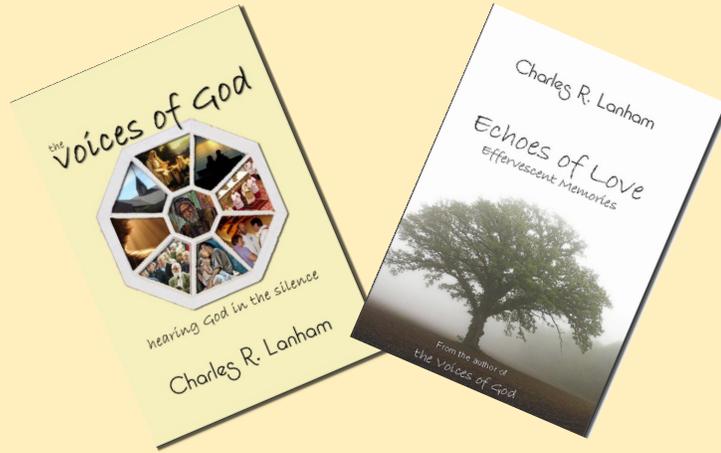
who did not come back. Did NOT come back.'

"So that's the story about six nice young boys. Three died on Iwo Jima, and three came back as national heroes. Overall, 7,000 boys died on Iwo Jima in the worst battle in the history of the Marine Corps. My voice is giving out, so I will end here. Thank you for your time."

Suddenly, the monument wasn't just a big old piece of metal with a flag sticking out of the top. It came to life before our eyes with the heartfelt words of a son who did indeed have a father who was a hero. Maybe not a hero for the reasons most people would believe, but a hero nonetheless.

Let us never forget, from the Revolutionary War to the current War on Terrorism and all the wars in-between that sacrifice was made for our freedom. Please pray for our troops. Remember to pray praises for this great country of ours and also, please pray for our troops still in murderous places around the world.

**E**very day that you can wake up free, it's going to be a great day. One thing I learned while on tour with my 8th grade students in DC that is not mentioned here is that if you look at the statue very closely and count the number of 'hands' raising the flag, there are 13. When the man who made the statue was asked why there were 13, he simply said the 13th hand was the hand of God. Great story—worth your time—worth every American's time.



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**deaconscorner.org**

**Deacon Chuck Lanham** is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

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