

**THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND THE EMANCIPATORY
DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SUBJECTIVITY**

***A PEDAGOGIA HISTÓRICO-CRÍTICA E O DESENVOLVIMENTO EMANCIPATÓRIO
DA SUBJETIVIDADE HUMANA***

***LA PEDAGOGÍA HISTÓRICO-CRÍTICA Y EL DESARROLLO EMANCIPATORIO DE
LA SUBJETIVIDAD HUMANA***

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ABSTRACT: This article is a reflection on as the historical-critical pedagogy presents itself as one of the alternatives for the development of human subjectivity. By using bibliographical research, anchored in the dialectical method, we hope to show how this perspective fundamentally aims at the emancipatory realization of human beings and the construction of his identity as a social-historical being. It is a study that is justified because of its academic, professional, personal and social relevance with regard to the growing need to revisit modern models and projects for the formation of human subjectivity, especially those that claims the status of emancipatory (eg.: the illuminist project of knowledge, based on scientism). We will analyze the scientific paradigm of Modernity and discuss the education crisis based on its purposes. Then, we will analyze to what extent the historical-critical perspective presents itself as an alternative for the realization of an authentically emancipatory education.

KEYWORDS: Education. Historical-critical pedagogy. Subjectivity. Emancipation. Modernity.

RESUMO: *O presente artigo é uma reflexão sobre o modo como a pedagogia histórico-crítica apresenta-se enquanto uma das alternativas para o desenvolvimento da subjetividade humana. Ao utilizar a pesquisa bibliográfica, ancorada no método dialético, esperamos mostrar como essa perspectiva visa fundamentalmente a realização emancipatória do ser humano e a construção de sua identidade enquanto ser histórico-social. É um estudo que se justifica por conta da relevância acadêmica, profissional, pessoal e social no que diz respeito à crescente necessidade de se revisitar os modelos e projetos modernos de formação da subjetividade humana, sobretudo aqueles que reivindicam o status de emancipatórios (ex.: o projeto iluminista do conhecimento, pautado no cientificismo). Analisaremos o paradigma científico da Modernidade e discorreremos acerca da crise da educação fundamentada em seus propósitos. Em seguida, analisaremos em que medida a perspectiva histórico-crítica apresentar-se como alternativa para a realização de uma educação autenticamente emancipatória.*

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação. Pedagogia histórico-crítica. Subjetividade. Emancipação. Modernidade.

RESUMEN: Este artículo es una reflexión sobre cómo la pedagogía histórico-crítica se presenta como una de las alternativas para el desarrollo de la subjetividad humana. Mediante la investigación bibliográfica, anclada en el método dialéctico, esperamos mostrar cómo esta perspectiva apunta fundamentalmente a la realización emancipadora del ser humano y la construcción de su identidad como ser histórico-social. Se trata de un estudio que se justifica por su relevancia académica, profesional, personal y social frente a la creciente necesidad de revisar modelos y proyectos modernos para la formación de la subjetividad humana, especialmente aquellos que reclaman la condición de emancipatorios (ej.: el proyecto de conocimiento de la Ilustración, basado en el cientificismo). Analizaremos el paradigma científico de la Modernidad y discutiremos la crisis de la educación fundamentada en sus propósitos. Luego, analizaremos en qué medida la perspectiva histórico-crítica se presenta como una alternativa para la realización de una educación auténticamente emancipatoria.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación. Pedagogía histórico-crítica. Subjetividad. Emancipación. Modernidad.

Introdução

In Modernity³, the human being becomes more aware of his rational capabilities in the quest to discover the secrets of nature. By taking scientific rationality as the only reliable way to achieve knowledge, the thinkers of this historical period put all their chips on the idea of philosophical and scientific progress. The achievement of human emancipation would be secular, without the salvationist support of the Church, as had occurred in the medieval period.

The belief in the *post-mortem* salvation of the Middle Ages, which was still a proposal for emancipation (although very ambiguous), is replaced by the belief in the natural light of reason in the modern period. A new salvationist belief is developed, now through rationality. A new sense of "emancipation" arises, which considers the active participation of human beings and their independence from divine assistance. Medieval contemplation and passivity is

³ To understand Hegel's concepts of "Modernity" and "epoch", it is necessary to understand beforehand the historical context in which the philosopher uses them, that is, the "new times" are the "modern times". The major events that occurred in the 1500s, namely the discovery of the "New World," as well as the Renaissance and Reformation, drew the line between the modern and the medieval. The definitions of Modern Age, Middle Ages, and Antiquity make sense only after the expressions "new times" or "modern times" lose their chronological meaning and by taking for themselves the opposite meaning of a vehemently "new" time. Thus, the concept of modern time presents the idea that the future has already begun, as it points to the future-oriented epoch that is disposed to the new that will appear. Therefore, the cut-off in which the new appears shifts to the past, to the beginning of the Modern Age. However, the awareness that the period of 1500 marked the beginning of the Modern Age can only surface in the 18th century (HABERMAS, 2000, p. 9-10).

changed by modern rationality grounded in the physical and social world (GOERGEN, 2012, p. 152-153).

By becoming the fundamental precept of Modernity, subjectivity produces a profound epistemological turn. From speculative and little related to the practical issues of life, knowledge starts to congregate [...] the ways of knowing and relating to nature. Knowing finds its full meaning in transformation and mastery. This epistemological movement represents the paradigmatic turn that secularized the emancipatory expectations of the human being (GOERGEN, 2012, p. 153).

According to Gallo (2006, p. 556), the goal of Modernity was to develop a universal method for the production of knowledge. Therefore, it manifests itself in this context a desire to strengthen the fragmented disciplinary logic, a model of knowledge production and a rigid logic of research, which aims for an objective and universal knowledge (in terms of validity and veracity). This understanding has a profound influence on philosophy, science, and education.

For post-modern philosophers, if we take into account the complexity of the contemporary world, we will see that the emancipatory ideal of Modernity has failed. The fragmentation of knowledge, developed in and by Modernity, has not allowed us to achieve the so promised human emancipation.

Based on the scenario presented above, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: what are the challenges of contemporary education to achieve a new emancipatory project of human subjectivity? What are the alternatives to the fragmented disciplinary paradigm of Modernity, which cannot deal with the complex reality of the contemporary world? Is historical-critical pedagogy a viable proposal for the redefinition and re-signification of what is human in the contemporary scenario of so many uncertainties and uncertainties?

Development

Modernity's emancipatory project and fragmented scientific knowledge

Hegel defines the beginning of the present time through the cut that the contemporaries of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution made at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century. The understanding of this present time as being the most recent and current epoch has the duty to re-establish the break with the past by means of a continuous renewal. The expressions revolution, progress, emancipation, development, crisis, etc., used by Hegel, refer to the historical-social context from which the problem presents itself to Western culture.

It has to do with modern historical consciousness, which is that Modernity does not claim to base its criteria for orientation on the models of past epochs. From then on, the orientation becomes that of seeking the normativity of a historical time in itself. "Modernity is referred to itself, without the possibility of resorting to subterfuges. This explains the susceptibility of its self-understanding, the dynamics of its attempts to 'affirm' itself, which continue unabated to the present day" (HABERMAS, 2000, p. 12).

Self-understanding in Modernity is one of many aspects of freedom and subjectivity; an achievement of the new philosophy, the Cultural Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the ideals of the French Revolution. Hegel, for example, in developing the idea of the modern world, understands subjectivity basically through the ideas of freedom and reflection. Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of Modernity is precisely the recognition of the freedom of the human being. But, in this context of effervescence of ideas, the expressions freedom and subjectivity also bring, in their core, the characteristics of individualism, the right to criticism, the autonomy of action and idealistic philosophy. Individualism because the infinitely particular singularity has the power to assert its claims; right of criticism, because everything that has the duty to be recognized by all must also be presented to each one as something legitimate; autonomy of action, since we want to answer for what we do; idealistic philosophy because philosophy has the understanding that it knows itself (HABERMAS, 2000, p. 25-26).

The principle of subjectivity also manifested itself in modern culture through objectifying science, which culminated in the disenchantment of nature and the freedom of investigation of the cognizing subject. It also generated changes in the field of moral values, which began to take into account the subjective freedom of the subjects. Something similar occurred in the artistic field, since "expressive self-realization becomes the principle of an art that presents itself as a way of life" (HABERMAS, 2000, p. 27). Therefore, it is understood that, in Modernity, "religious life, the State, and society, as well as science, morality, and art, also become embodiments of the principle of subjectivity" (HABERMAS, 2000, p. 27-28).

It is with modern science, therefore, that the process of specialization and rigorous knowledge begins. A disciplinary knowledge, which stimulates increasing specialization in various fields of knowledge. A knowledge based on a rationality that controls the boundaries between disciplines and represses those that try to go beyond the imposed limits.

The exaggerated and limitless specialization of scientific disciplines, beginning especially in the nineteenth century, increasingly culminates in a growing fragmentation of the epistemological horizon. In the end, to use G. K. Chesterton's famous expression, the specialist has become this man who, by forcing himself to know more and more about a less and less extensive object, ends up knowing everything about nothing (JAPIASSU, 1976, p. 40-41).

Thus, specialized knowledge and its consequent arbitrary reductionism produced many evils over time. Even with certain attempts to develop measures to correct such errors, this procedure ended up culminating in the development of more specializations, more disciplinarity (SANTOS, 2008, p. 75-76).

Foucault points to the 18th century as being responsible for the political process of disciplining knowledge. Using technical/technological knowledge and medical knowledge as examples, the philosopher presents a certain type of 'struggle between different types of knowledge', which would have taken place in the underworld of the Enlightenment. Beyond the historical process of the conflict between knowledge and ignorance, Foucault reflects on the confrontation between a series of knowledge that began to oppose each other. In order to organize such knowledge, the State exercised its "disciplinary power" first by selecting knowledge through a process of disqualification and elimination of useless and irreducible knowledge. Another measure would be the normalization of knowledge, with the purpose of making it interchangeable and superficially communicable among them, by hierarchically classifying this knowledge, subordinating the more specific and material knowledge to the more formal and general knowledge. A pyramidal centralization of knowledge takes place, allowing control, selection, and general organization of knowledge (GALLO, 2006, p. 557).

This process of disciplinarization of knowledge begins to show symptoms of exhaustion already in the late nineteenth century, when Physics, considered one of the main exact sciences, begins to develop theories that speak about *indeterminacy*, *uncertainty* and *relativity* (GALLO, 2006, p. 557).

Crisis of education grounded in the modern science paradigm

For postmodern philosophers, the exaggerated confidence that Modernity placed in rationality as the main instrument of human emancipation resulted in frustration. Philosophers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Horkheimer, Adorno, Foucault, and Lyotard are unanimous in considering that modern reason, transformed into instrumental reason, is the villain of many disastrous events in contemporaneity; a rationality that is impotent, inoperative, and complicit

in the dilemmas generated by scientific and technological advances. The human emancipation so desired by Modernity would not have come true, because the contemporary world presents a scenario of wars, environmental destruction, hunger, misery, overcoming the human being to the technical-scientific logic and the economic and legal-institutional organization of the modern period (GOERGEN, 2012, p. 154-155).

As Goergen (2012) explains, although post-modernists, such as Lyotard, defend the failure of Modernity, other thinkers, such as Habermas, are optimistic about the possibility of rescuing part of the Modernity project if its deviations are corrected⁴. Therefore, in the Modernity/post-modernity debate, it is important that we understand that, if on the one hand we cannot so hastily declare the end of modern rationality (because we must take into consideration its scientific, cultural, political, moral advances), on the other hand we cannot ignore the problems that this same rationality has brought to humanity. Hence the challenge: how to educate the human being today so that he/she can deliberate well between the positive and negative aspects of the achievements of each historical period? This challenge makes us reflect about the difficulties and uncertainties present in every educational context. Obviously, it would be no different in the contemporary context. The emancipatory project of Modernity is, fortunately, still an open project, not completely exhausted. Thus, we have the possibility to learn from the mistakes of Modernity and understand that we will not achieve the emancipation proposed by the modern project if we do not understand that that project, with all its limitations, is still our project, since it continues to be historically and socially rewritten on new bases by all of us - the children of Modernity.

According to Goergen (2012, p. 166-167), one aspect of the crisis in contemporary education is the loss of confidence in a model of rationality that is too weak to respond to new demands. We experience the abandonment of metanarratives, of grand and traditional epistemological theories, and of the idea of a history in permanent progress. Postmodernists envision a reality in constant transformation; a reality in which education also participates in an intense and critical way. This means questioning, according to Gallo (2006, p. 564), whether education aims at maintaining or transforming reality. The new educational proposal must

⁴ Habermas (1992, p. 118) believes that "we should learn from the mistakes that accompanied the project of Modernity, from the errors of the ambitious programs of overcoming it, instead of considering Modernity itself and its project as lost. For example, the idea that an artistic production should be analyzed only objectively by specialists fails from the moment the aesthetic experience is embraced in an individual life story or inserted in a collective form of life. Thus, by appropriating the culture of the specialists through the point of view of the lifeworld, Habermas understands that something is saved from the intentionality of the innocuous surrealist revolt. The same analysis can be performed at the levels of science and morality, by understanding that these are not completely separated from action-oriented knowledge (HABERMAS, 1992, p. 119-120).

analyze the epistemological foundations of Modernity and post-modernity, in order to accept what meets their demands.

We are experiencing rapid and profound changes in contemporary society, such as globalization, environmental degradation, ethical and political dilemmas, ethnic wars, religious intolerance, and the breakdown of human relationships. All of this raises the alarm about the urgency of a continuous renewal of education. An education that aims at the emancipated citizen, committed to facing the new challenges that lie ahead.

We are, then, in a time of crisis and new problems. We have a strong feeling of the insufficiency of the old scientific methods based on compartmentalization, fragmentation, and reduction to the simple and logical-mathematical. We have the feeling that something has grown old in the methods that have known success, but that today can no longer respond to the global challenge of complexity (HENRIQUE, 2005, p. 14).

It seems more prudent not to destroy the entire building of Modernity and its consequent scientific advancement, but the clear perception of the need to develop a scientific knowledge that connects, contextualizes and globalizes knowledge, articulating the disciplines that are still worked in a fragmented and compartmentalized way (HENRIQUE, 2005, p. 14).

As Sousa and Pinho (2017, p. 94) argue, modern education was based on the epistemological paradigm and on the pedagogical model of knowledge fragmentation, on the rationality that excludes and marginalizes the subject. The emergence of new epistemologies that understand reality in its complex logic inevitably clashes with old expectations. The new paradigm starts by questioning the old model, hegemonic until then, showing why it can no longer explain the constant mutations present in the contemporary world. From this critical analysis, it presents the dawn of a new pedagogical action, in line with the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives. The new educational paradigm suggests, therefore, the exchange of compartmentalization for integration, competition for understanding, simple for complex, quantitative for qualitative, economic for human. Finally, it is configured as a true emancipatory project for the development of a new human subjectivity.

In the following pages we will evaluate to what extent historical-critical pedagogy, based on renewed epistemological foundations, can respond to the demands of the still unfinished project of Modernity, and how it effectively prepares us to face the uncertainties of the contemporary world.

Critical historical pedagogy and human development

In an interesting study entitled "The historical-social constitution of human subjectivity: contributions to teacher education", Lígia Márcia Martins (2014, p. 97) inquires about the historical-social constitution of human subjectivity in general, focusing on the subjectivity of the teacher and its relations with academic training and professional practice. For this, the author makes a critical analysis of the treatment given to the concept of subjectivity by traditional psychology, using the methodology of cultural-historical psychology, namely, the historical-dialectical materialism. Martins highlights the role of the teacher's academic background in the institution of his subjectivity, especially in his professional practice. In this way, the author believes to contribute to the overcoming of abstract visions of human subjectivity, reallocating school education as a central feature for the humanization of human beings, including the formation of a complex psychism as the foundation of subjectivity materialized in people's way of being.

With this, it is possible to understand the meaning of the notions of subjectivity and human emancipation present in Modernity. The moderns had in mind an idea of emancipation that today we understand to be totally detached from its historical-social context. They bet on an emancipatory knowledge that was abstract and alien to the historical, social, economic, and cultural fabric of human beings. It was also not perceived that the notion of subjectivity is based on the connection of the human being with its context and that this is extremely important for a satisfactorily emancipatory realization of its development.

According to Martins, consciousness is developed by man when the hands, the brain, and language, in conjugated and culturally mediated action, lead to the formation of new psychic properties. In turn, the formation of consciousness is presented as a fundamental condition for the development of subjectivity as a set of social relations. In this way, existence shared socially and historically with other individuals is responsible for the formation of each person's psychism and subjectivity. The development of the human psychism is linked to the historical-social acquis external to the individual. Therefore, the analysis of human subjectivity will be, thus, the analysis of a concrete and objective historical-social phenomenon. Although produced in the particular history of each individual, the formation of subjectivity follows the same historical-social process of development as other processes. It is a fundamentally social phenomenon, but one that assumes particular psychological existence (MARTINS, 2014, p. 100-103).

The psychism is the wake of subjectivity, because it is through the development of consciousness that the human being can achieve the intelligibility of the real. But in order for this to be realized, the development of the ability to think is necessary. Therefore, it is the role of school education to follow this path, realizing that the foundation of this process, from a psychological point of view, is present in the formation of higher functional processes, to lead to the self-control of behavior. School education must organize teaching with the objective of promoting a development that does not result from any model of education, but that is characterized by being an intentional action in the formation and transformation of the subjective system of references. It must promote, thus, the philosophical, scientific and ethical analysis of the precepts that guide the actions of people in the world (MARTINS, 2014, p. 107).

The formation of the teacher's subjectivity, from the point of view of the historical-dialectical materialist analysis, emphasizes the meaning of the teacher's work in the constitution of individuals, since it is through this activity that its product materializes in promoting the development of other people. Educational work is, thus, an interpersonal and intersubjective process. The teacher's education is founded on the appropriation of knowledge through which he or she can teach other individuals, transmitting to new generations the cultural and scientific legacy. We can say that there is only effective educational action if it is permeated by the subjectivity of those involved. Thus, school education recognizes its main role in the formation and transformation of the subjectivity of teachers and students when it promotes qualitatively superior appropriations and transmits the historically systematized knowledge (MARTINS, 2014, p. 108-109).

Man does not become man naturally; he is not born knowing how to be man, that is, he is not born knowing how to feel, think, evaluate, act. In order to know how to think and feel, to know how to want, to act or to evaluate, one must learn, which implies educational work. Thus, the knowledge that directly interests education is that which emerges as the result of the learning process, as the result of the educational work. However, to achieve this result, education must start from, must take as a reference, as raw material of its activity, the objective knowledge historically produced (SAVIANI, 2011, p. 7).

However, numerous inhuman phenomena indicate a dominant tendency to discredit considerations or studies about humanization and/or human development. Therefore, in order to address the issue of human formation and development, Padilha and Barros (2019, p. 29) start from the assumption that what makes human beings qualitatively different from other animals is the fact that they are crossed by a history that interlinks and connects them to a continuous working, creating, and renewing of things and themselves. They believe that there

is a great material and intellectual wealth produced by human beings in their historical and social relationships, which we understand as culture.

Alienated labor, according to Marx, arising from the capitalist mode of production, presents man as a "human commodity", a dehumanized being both spiritually and corporally (MARX, 2008). In the context of school education, there is a set of determined knowledge that is a condition for the development process of the human being's senses. But this does not determine the direction of his thoughts or define what should be thought by his own consciousness (PADILHA; BARROS, 2019, p. 31-32).

Many studies on the human psyche contribute to the planning of the work of training and human development. One of these studies is that of Vygotsky, who presents a sequence of four stages for the development of language, and concludes as essential the understanding of the reason that leads a human being to emit a thought. Thus, it is in the aspect of motivation, as the generation or interruption of multiform movements, that Padilha and Barros (2019, p. 33-34) present the prominence of motive, in the sense of the bearer of determinations for consciousness, through which the human being develops.

According to Marx, circumstances are changed by human beings. The educator himself must be educated, since the formation of human beings goes beyond the formation of workers or capitalists. More than developing intellectual men, with higher education, it is necessary to ask: what development is this about? This question is also present in Saviani's concerns, who questions the educator's training, the values and the goals of education through the rise of common sense to philosophical consciousness. Therefore, how to organize and systematize the relations between educator and student to create the conditions for human development? The studies conducted by Marx, when grounded by historical-cultural psychology and historical-critical pedagogy, present themselves as an interesting source for educator training (PADILHA; BARROS, 2019, p. 39-40).

Martins (2016, p. 13-14), presents the main elements that support the stages of human development from the standpoint of historical-dialectical materialism, based on historical-cultural psychology and historical-critical pedagogy. The author focuses on the theoretical-methodological unity between cultural-historical psychology and critical historical pedagogy concerning the cultural-historical understanding of human development. It supports the idea that both assert the role of the teaching of scientific concepts in fostering human development. It also shows the relevance of the organization of school education insofar as it aims at such development, by means of schooling that has the possibility of being fully realized in the lives of all individuals and at all ages.

Knowing that historical-dialectical materialism is the methodological foundation proposed by Martins (2016, p. 14), we can say that historical-cultural psychology and historical-critical pedagogy show man as a social being, whose development is conditioned by the activity that links him to nature. This, at first, does not assure man the conquest of that which defines him as a human being. That is why what is not guaranteed by nature must be produced historically by men, including men themselves. In this way, the process of obtaining complex, culturally formed behaviors requires the appropriation of the legacy objectified by social-historical practice. Moreover, the internalization processes are formed based on the universe of human objectifications, which are available to each individual through the mediation of other individuals, that is, through the educational processes.

Martins (2016, p. 17) presents, then, an analysis of the function of the sign/word in Vygotsky's psychic image, which led to the investigation of the conversion of the word into an act of thought, that is, the elaboration of the word in its meaning. Vygotsky defined the development of speech as a decisive qualitative leap in the humanization of the psychism. This process results from the intersection of thought and language, even though in their origins such functions for development are distinct and independent. Thus, the internalization of signs is in the intermediation between cultural-historical psychology and critical historical pedagogy, since both determine the socialization/transmission of the culturally formed symbolic universe at the core of the panorama regarding human development.

Critical historical pedagogy, by establishing the nature, object, and purposes of school education, presents the objective conditions required for the development of more complex human capacities, which is based on the rooting of the higher psychic functions. Thus, the recognition of the function of school education in the development of individuals requires the analysis of the contents transmitted by such education, which must then privilege the teaching of historically systematized knowledge⁵, that is, of classical knowledge (MARTINS, 2016, p. 18).

⁵ "Human nature is not given to man, but is produced by him on the basis of biophysical nature. Consequently, educational work is the act of producing, directly and intentionally, in each singular individual, the humanity that is produced historically and collectively by all men" (SAVIANI, 2011, p. 6).

Final considerations

The school affirms itself, more and more, as an institution that has the function of socializing systematized knowledge and not of transmitting fragmented knowledge. The contemporary school aims at knowledge in process, in constant elaboration and always socially realized. A knowledge that, despite its openness and plasticity, continues to be rigorous, systematic and well-founded; one that manages to overcome fragmentation, spontaneity and unthinking.

The current school is the place of philosophical, scientific, artistic and technological problems, of rigorous, methodical and systematized knowledge. Hence the need for the educator, as an organic intellectual, to be not only aware of the scientific and philosophical content, but above all conscious of its importance in the socialization of knowledge that promotes the formation of critical, participatory, and emancipated students.

Thus, the fragmented and specialized rationality, which presents knowledge that is closed in itself, no longer serves the current purposes. Today we know that the rigid rationality of Modernity did not take into consideration the richness of the cultural, historical and social milieu of individuals in the production of knowledge. That is why it also fails to develop an emancipatory education, since the historical-social processes are fundamental for the full development of human beings.

We understand that the human development process is inseparable from the historical-cultural and social teaching-learning process. In the same way, the elaboration of scientific and philosophical concepts should be developed in a way that transcends (without devaluing) everyday knowledge, that is, understanding that human development occurs through the dialectical perspective of social practice.

But all this problematic leaves us with a restlessness and opens paths for further studies: in what way will contemporary education, based on a critical-historical pedagogy, manage to get rid of the fragmented rationality of modern science, still deeply rooted in the core of current school education? How can the school promote a work that characterizes it as fully liberating and emancipatory?

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