

## Tolerance as the Moral and Value Basis of Humanisation in Modern Society<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*The global migration of the population in Europe and the social economic consequences of this process are one of the most current phenomena of the contemporary world. Europe is extending the interrelations and interdependence of different countries and peoples, transforming monocultural countries into polyethnic communities.*

*Changes in moral values, rejection of a different opinion or viewpoint demonstrate expression of intolerance, and its result can reveal itself in a wide range: from simple impoliteness, disdainful attitude towards other people and anger to ethnic cleansing and genocide.*

*The relevance of examination of tolerance as an aspect of humanisation is determined by the society's demand for the development of relations of a new type, which would be grounded on a humanistic base, where every person is regarded as the highest value, where there is a priority of general human values against ethnic values, where the basic principle of people's relations are: benevolence, humanity, mercy and respect.*

*The aim of the research is to examine the problem of tolerance theoretically as an aspect of humanisation of the modern society and to discover their interconnection.*

*The methods of the research are the following: a scientifically theoretical analysis of the problem: philosophical conceptions of humanism (Confucius; M. Cicero; I. Kant; M. Gulen; A. Schopenhauer), the humanistic paradigm (Z. Chehlova), psychological analysis, affecting various aspects of tolerance as a complicated socially psychological phenomenon (Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, UNESCO; G. W. Allport; G. Soldatova), empirical research the level of tolerance of teenagers in Latvia (M. Marchenoka).*

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## Keywords

Humanism, Humanisation, Tolerance/Intolerance, Teenagers', Modern Society

## Humanism as a moral category

“Live with other people so that your friends would not become your adversaries, but your adversaries would become your friends” (Pythagoras, 570 - 490 BC). The famous ancient Greek philosopher’s words are also current in the modern society, while human beings are moving along fast scientific and technological progress, at the same time they are short of respect, kindness, and mutual understanding of this global process. Modern scientific and technological progress leaves behind the moral or ethical progress by stimulating emergence of new forms of spiritual impoverishment, cruelty, violence and hostility. The best humanistic principles, which are based on mutual aid and sympathy, are depreciating; thus, blurring the very concept of morality. The situation gives evidence of the process of dehumanisation of society, when the person’s value becomes lower than other values.

The word *humanism* derived from the Latin concept “*humanitas*”, meaning “humanity”, *humanus*– “humane”, *homo*–“human being”, meaning worldview, based on the principles of equality, justice, humanity of people’s relations, enriched with love to people, respect to human dignity, care about people’s welfare (Философский энциклопедический словарь, 2009).

Humanism as a historical property of human beings is impossible without humanity, which appeared as a need in opposition to evil, as a regulator of people’s relations, and contains all norms and rules of person’s behaviour in the society, which have formed over many centuries (Васильев, 2011).

In order to answer the question “What kind of a person must you be to be a human being?”, the Chinese philosopher and thinker Confucius (551-479 BC) developed humanistic theses, grounded on ancient moral traditions, emphasizing such important ethic rules as respect to parents and ancestors, history and traditions of a country. There is a legend saying that when Confucius was asked by his apprentices “Is it possible to use one word for definition of people’s moral actions, that is to say how to behave in different life situations to be a person of worth of ancestors”, Confucius replied: “There is the word “*ren*”, meaning the ideal principle of people’s relations: benevolence, humanity, kind-heartedness and respect” (Васильев, 2006).

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC the concept “humanism” was used by the famous Roman philosopher and orator Marcus Tullio Cicero (106-43 BC), who envisaged it together with such valuable personal characteristics as piety (*pietas*), worship of gods (*religio*), constancy (*constantia*), honesty (*fides*) and understanding other

people (*intellectus*) (Cicero, 2000:91). During the Renaissance (XIV – XVII), *humanism* was regarded as a set of opinions and ideas based on respect towards others, developing characteristics of morality in people, and spiritual values as philosophy, literature, art (T. More, T. Campanella, F. Rabelais, etc.). The moral basis of humanism was also elaborated by English philosophers (e.g., F. Bacon, T. Hobbes, J. Locke), French writers and philosophers (e.g., D. Diderot, J.-J. Rousseau), German philosophers (e.g., G. Leibniz, I. Kant, L. Feuerbach) and others. Their main thesis is that during a crisis in a society, the world of people's interrelations collapses, which is accompanied by demolition of peoples' traditional morals and spiritual foundations (Васильев, 2011).

The principal philosophical issue of Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) was the human being and his behaviour. In his work “Conjectural Beginning of Human History,” I. Kant concluded that civilisation gave humans the opportunity to become human. “The man becomes the man, when he overcomes his animal nature, establishes the rules of people's life and behaviour. Civilisation taught people to respect other people, to take into account other people's interests, needs and rights” (Kant, 1993). The philosopher believes that despite multiple deviations in people's behaviour in the historical past and in the present, the tendency to strengthen and develop humanity must be the main tendency in history. In this regard, I. Kant distinguishes two basic components of humanity in society. Firstly, the man makes himself the man, respecting the man in himself, and secondly the man makes himself the man respecting the man in the other person. Nothing good is possible without good will, while talents, possibilities and virtues a person possesses are not important. Good will is the basic personal feature and it is irreplaceable for a moral action (Kant, 1993).

These ideas are one of the deepest and most significant in humanist Kant's philosophy.

Turkish writer, philosopher and thinker M. Fethullah Gulen (1941), carrying on I. Kant's ideas, affirmed:

Any person – a man or a woman, a youngster or an old man, white or black – is a respected, protected and untouchable creature. Their honour and dignity must not be desecrated, no one can exclude them from their native land, and their independence cannot be ruined. Furthermore, it is forbidden for them to commit such crimes against others. In truth, love is a rose in our beliefs, the peace of the heart, which will never wither. This love transforms into basic humanism while people grow love towards other people and towards the entire creation and show this love to those who support the world and render services to it (Gulen, 2004).

When systemising various concepts of the word *humanism*, it is possible to distinguish three main groups of its meaning. Humanism is:

1. Progressive study of the époque of Renaissance (e.g., free development of the person on the basis of such spiritual values as philosophy, literature, art);

2. World outlook with its basic principles (e.g., equality, freedom, creative life, happiness without regard to national, religious, age-related, social and other specific features);
3. Attitude to people, expressed in respect, benevolence and sympathy.

Analysing the content of the concept *humanism* gives the possibility to define the content of the concept *humanisation*. As a derivation of the word 'humanism', the given concept is the social value-related and morally psychological basis of the society and people's relations.

### **Tolerance as the basis for humanisation of society**

Research and our daily routine show that one of the specific features of modern society is the fast growth of aggressiveness, rejection of other people's different opinion, judgement and needs. The development of modern humane society is impossible without the development and increase of the level of tolerance, because "humanisation is harmonisation of the man's personality' relations with his essence and people around him" (Chehlova, 2014).

The urgency to develop of tolerance is grounded in the fact that "mutual understanding" stands out as a social and personal value, since it ensures interaction between people for the development of society. Absence of mutual understanding leads to destruction of the integrity of social interrelations, and consequently to the self-destruction of one's personality and to aggression. Presence of interaction, based on mutual understanding, on the contrary, contributes to the development of the individual's feeling of safety, confidence in his actions and consequently to development of a person's values.

The problem of tolerance is rather new in research both in Latvia and abroad. Research on this topic appeared only in the middle 90s (e.g., Gordon Willard Allport, Borba Michele, Kamungeremu David, Vogt W. Paul, Wandberg Robert). The important factor of world acceptance of the necessity to study the given problem became the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance approved by Resolution 5.61 of the UNESCO General Conference on November 16, 1995. The Declaration provides the international definition of the meaning of tolerance and the opposite concept (i.e., intolerance).

Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace. Consistent with respect for human rights, the practice of tolerance does not mean tolerating social injustice, abandoning, or weakening one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accept that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, who are naturally diverse in their appearance, situation,

speech, behaviour and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others. Intolerance is rejection of other people, unavailability to co-exist with other (different) people. It is expressed through destructive, conflict and aggressive behaviour (Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, UNESCO, 1995).

In connection with the above, it is necessary to delineate the features of tolerant and intolerant personalities. One of the first scientists who offered general characteristics of tolerant and intolerant personalities was a representative of humanistic psychology Gordon Willard Allport. In his work "The Nature of Prejudice" (1954), he laid the methodological foundation of studying tolerance as a psychological phenomenon, outlining the following parameters of tolerant and intolerant personalities: (see Table 1).

Table 1. Parameters of tolerant and intolerant personalities (Allport, 1979)

Parameters	Tolerant personality	Intolerant personality
Self-orientation	More self-oriented in work, creative process, theoretical reflection. In problematic situations, this person usually blames himself/herself, but not the surrounding people. Such people seek personal independence more than belonging to external institutes and authorities, because they do not need anyone to hide behind anything.	In problematic situations, this person blames other people more than himself/ herself. He/she seeks to belong to external institutes and authorities.
Responsibility	Does not deflect responsibility and is ready to assume responsibility for his/her actions.	Believes that events happening around do not depend on him/her. Tries to deflect responsibility for everything that is going on around. This peculiarity leads to development of prejudice towards other people. The position is the following: I don't hate people and I don't harm other people, but they hate and hurt me.
Need in distinctness	Sees the world in its variety.	Divides the world into two parts: black and white. There are only two kinds of people: bad and good. Emphasises differences between "our" and "foreign", has a difficulty to accept events neutrally. This person accepts or does not accept them.

Table 1. cont'd

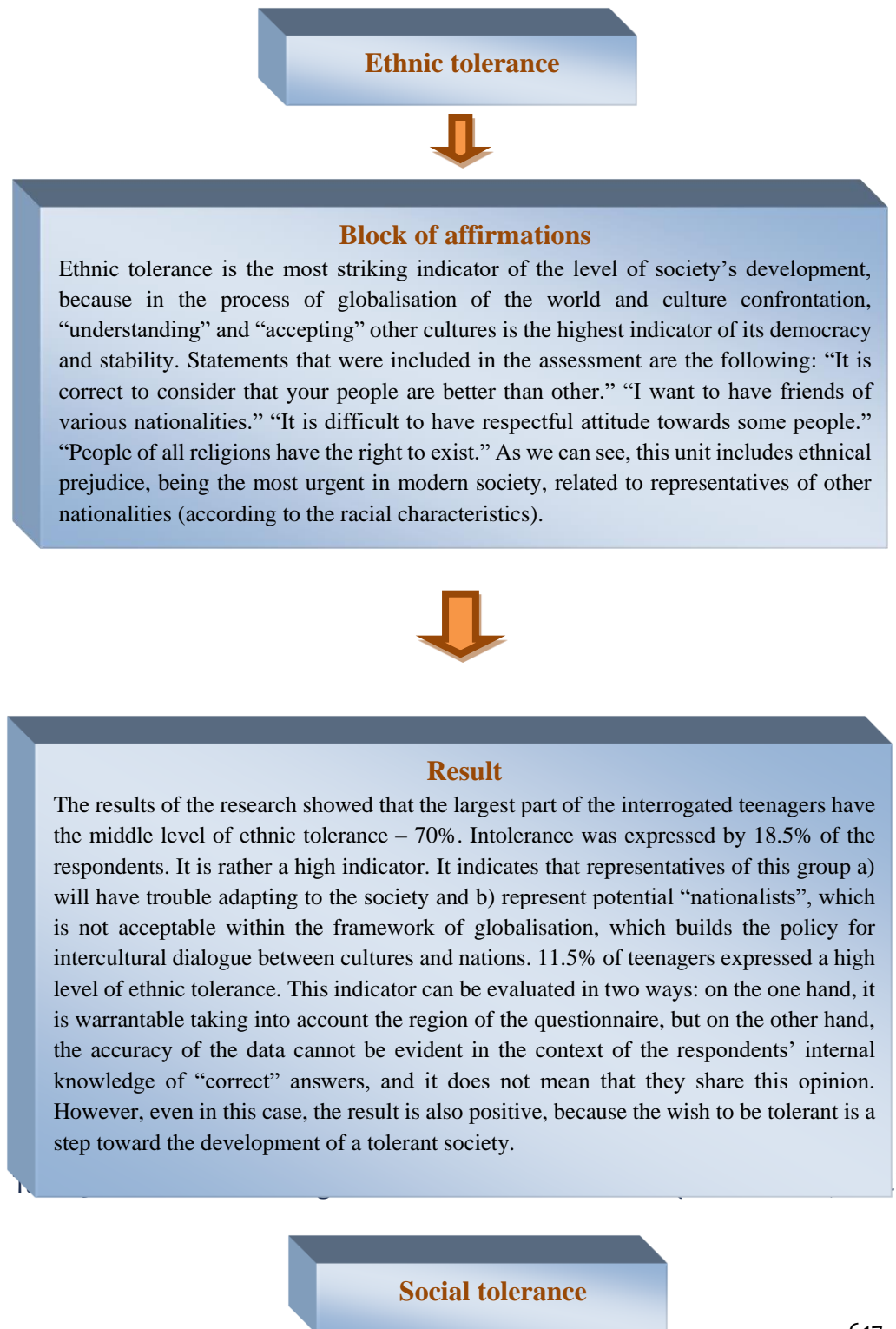
Empathy ability	Ability is defined as social sensitivity, ability to formulate more adequate judgments about other people, i.e., these people assess adequately both tolerant and intolerant people.	Assesses his/her partners in his/her own image.
Knowledge about oneself	Tries to understand his/her merits and demerits. Has a critical attitude towards himself/herself and restrains from blaming other people in all his/her troubles.	Sees more merits in himself/herself than demerits. Is inclined to blame other people for his/her troubles.
Immunity	Usually feels safe, and therefore does not need to be protected from other people. Absence of threat and confidence is an important precondition of a tolerant person.	Has difficulties in living both with others and with himself/herself. Is afraid of the social environment and of himself/herself: is afraid of instincts, feelings, lives with a constant feeling of threat.
Freedom and democracy preference	Does not pay attention to hierarchy in society, prefers living in a free, democratic society.	For this person social hierarchy is extremely important because it regulates his/her life in the authoritarian society with strong power. This person believes that strong discipline is very important.
Sense of humour	Has a sense of humour, is able to laugh at himself/herself, his /her demerits, and does not strive to dominate others.	Does not have a sense of humour and is not able to laugh at his/her demerits.

The optimal age for the development of tolerant cognition and tolerance settings is adolescence, because it is the age of development of mental processes and formation of one's personality. It is the stage of development, which gives the best possibilities for purposeful formation of physical, mental and sociocultural characteristics. This age bracket is characterised by the child's transition to other social conditions, when he/she starts living according to the laws of the adult society, he/she is actively developing as a subject of social relations and starts bearing responsibility for his/her actions. During this period, you can trace the polarity of mind: purposefulness, perseverance – impetuosity, instability; increased self-confidence, refusal to compromise judgements – vulnerability and uncertainty of oneself; need for communication – wish to seclude oneself; aggressive behaviour – timidity; romantic appeal – cynicism, prudence; tenderness – cruelty. This age is ready for the development of motives and values, views, beliefs, ability to react to the remarks of others, true and incorrect criticism, the ability to stand up for one's own opinion without disgracing other people.

According to the empirical research on the level of tolerance amongst teenagers

in Latvia (Marchenoka, 2014), the following conclusions were drawn: (see Table 2-4).

Table 2. The level of teenagers' ethnic tolerance in Latvia (Marchenoka, 2014)





### **Block of affirmations**

Social tolerance allowed for the examining of the expression of tolerance and intolerance from various social groups and the investigation of an individual's attitude towards certain social processes. This unit included the following statements for assessment: "In the mass media, any opinion may be displayed." "If panhandlers and vagabonds have problems, it's their own fault." "It is unpleasant to communicate with untidy people." "All mentally diseased must be isolated from society." "We can't help refugees more than any other people – local people have no less problems." "Newcomers must have equal rights with the local people."

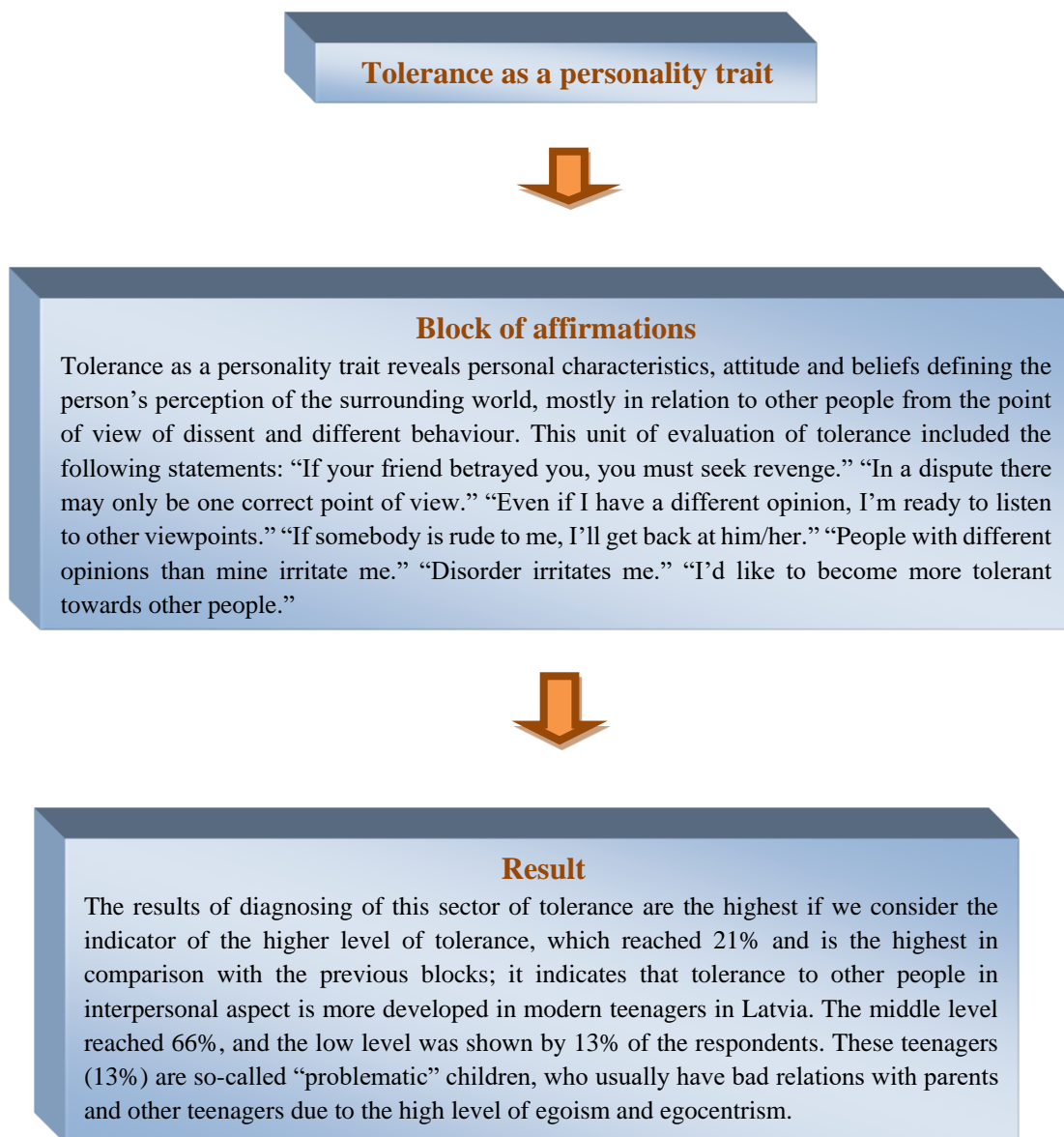


### **Result**

The research showed the following results. The high level of tolerance was expressed by 6% of the respondents, the middle level – 75% and the low level – 19%. The high level is as 6% as lower than the high level of ethnic tolerance. It indicates that the social situation in Latvia is more critical regarding the attitude towards various social groups. It is necessary to comment that adolescents are more categorical and aggressive. The teenagers expressed particular aversion to such social groups as tramps and ill people. Almost 100% of the respondents replied that they do not want to communicate with untidy people. The statement that newcomers must have equal rights with the local people also received positive assessment.



Table 4. The level of teenagers' tolerance as a personality trait in Latvia (Marchenoka, 2014)



Values of tolerance – self-respect, justice, absence of violence, cooperation – obtain personal sense only when students make themselves out, assesses their actions, their motives and when the moral self-control and the readiness for self-perfection of one's personality are developed. Tolerance is always internal freedom. These are relations on equal terms. It is always the dialogical level of interaction (Soldatova, 2003).

In A. Schopenhauer's philosophy, a man's life is a constant battle between powers of egoism and malevolence. Egotistic individuals are not able to accept counteractions. They express their "discontent, anger, hatred: it sees its enemy

here who is to be eliminated” (Schopenhauer, 1992). Modern life creates challenges for people every day, causing new problems, and their solutions “require much wisdom: in order not to make a mistake you need tolerance, for understanding and accepting you need humanism” (Schopenhauer, 1992).

## Conclusions

- The scientifically theoretical analysis of the concept *humanism* gives the possibility to define it as a progressive study of the époque of the Renaissance (as a world outlook with its basic principles) as well as an attitude towards people expressed through respect, mercy and sympathy.
- On the basis of the analysis of the content of the concept *humanism* the content of the concept *humanisation* was also defined, which is regarded as a socially value-related and morally psychological basis of the society and relations between people.
- The concept “tolerance” is regarded as the harmonisation of relations with other people, when any individual has the right to have his/her own opinion and respect the same right of other people.
- The concepts *humanism* – *humanisation* and *tolerance*, which are examined above, are interrelated, and, thus, tolerance leads to humanisation. Both concepts are a morally value-related basis of the society, where one of the values is the personality, a person’s dignity, respect, freedom of views and judgements and relations between people.
- The results of the research of ethnic tolerance showed that the largest part of the interrogated teenagers (70%) has the middle level of tolerance, 11.5% expressed the high level of ethnic tolerance and intolerance was expressed by 18.5%. Despite the fact that the society in Latvia has always been multicultural and the research group was ethnically heterogeneous, the level of ethnic intolerance was rather high indicating that if the respondents do not change their standpoint in the future, they will have difficulties in adapting to the society and they can be considered potential “nationalists”, which is not acceptable in the process of globalisation of the world which builds the policy of intercultural dialogue between nations and cultures.
- Any society’s future is in the hands of the younger generation, which should strive for solidarity instead of dominance over others. Relations must be developed on the principles of tolerance and humanism. Understanding the nature of humanity and harmonisation of relations with other people is the basis for more efficient interaction with the society. Its absence makes an individual’s development impossible. Only under these conditions, it is possible to overcome moral crisis and existing contradictions.

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