

# GREEK UNIVERSAL CONCESSIVE CONDITIONALS

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## Abstract

Σκοπός αυτού του άρθρου είναι να εξετάσει τις σημασιολογικές διαφορές μεταξύ απλών και σύνθετων αοριστολογικών στοιχείων σε *ó-* της Νέας Ελληνικής. Υποστηρίζεται ότι η βασική διαφορά αυτών των δυο κατηγοριών είναι ότι τα δεύτερα είναι παραχωρητικά ενώ τα πρώτα δεν είναι. Αυτός ο διαχωρισμός εξηγεί την (αντι)γραμματικότητα των αοριστολογικών στις Καθολικές Παραχωρητικές Υποθετικές προτάσεις και την διαφορά μεταξύ αγγλικών σύνθετων αοριστολογικών στοιχείων σε *wh-* και στοιχείων του τύπου *any* τα οποία έχουν αναλυθεί ως Στοιχεία Ελεύθερης Επιλογής και κατ'επέκταση ως σημασιολογικά ισοδύναμα (Horn 2000a).<sup>1</sup>

## Keywords

bare and complex *wh*-items, concessivity, definiteness, Free Choice Items (FCIs), indiscriminative reading, Universal Concessive Conditionals (UCCs), universal quantification.

## 1. The issue

In the recent literature on indefinites it has been argued that there is a special class of items whose main semantic property is the expression of *free choice*.<sup>2</sup> They are therefore called Free Choice Items (FCIs) (Giannakidou 1997, 2001). As their name reveals, these items express the free choice of individuals, events or places denoted by the indefinite. These items belong to a more general class of items, the Polarity Items (PIs) in that they are sensitive to certain semantic properties of the context in which they appear (Giannakidou 2001).

In general, imperative and modal contexts are considered to be good licensors of FCIs. For instance, in (1) and (2), the speaker allows her addressee to choose arbitrarily an individual-card. In intuitive terms, two are the main characteristics of these contexts: 1) the identity of the individual in question is arbitrary and 2) the addressee can choose among *alternative* individuals. The English item *any* used in (1) and (2) has been analyzed as a typical FCI (see Dayal 1998 and references therein).

1. Take any card you like
2. You can take any card you like

As shown in (3) and (4) below, English complex *wh*-items are also licensed in imperative and modal contexts.<sup>3</sup> In view of the same distributional properties that English complex *wh*-items and *any*-like items exhibit, the first ones have been analyzed as FCIs and consequently semantically equivalent to the last ones (Dayal 1997, Horn 2000a, von Stechow 2000, Giannakidou 2001 *inter alia*).

3. Take whatever card you like

4. You can take whatever card you like

Based on the above conditions of grammaticality, Giannakidou (2001) successfully shows that FCIs are licensed whenever reference to i(dentity)-alternatives is possible (based on Dayal 1997):

5. i-alternatives

A word  $w_1$  is an i-alternative wrt  $a$  iff there exists some  $w_2$  such that  $[[a]]^{w_1} \neq [[a]]^{w_2}$

If we translate (3) and (4) in Greek, we come up with more than two possible translations of *any*-like and complex *wh*-items.

6.	a. Pare	opja	karta	su	aresi
	Take.2sg.imperat.perf. bare	wh-item	card	you	like.2sg.pres.
	b. Pare	opjadhypote	karta	su	aresi.
	Take.2sg.imper.perf. complex	wh-item	card	you	like.2sg.pres.
	c. Pare	opja	karta ki an	su	aresi
	Take.2sg.imper.perf. bare	wh-item	card and if	you	like.2sg.pres.
	d. Pare	opjadhypote	karta ki an su	aresi	
	Take.2sg.imper.perf. complex	wh-item	card and if	you	like.2sg.pres.
	e. Pare	opja	karta ke na	su	aresi
	Take.2sg.imper.perf. bare	wh-item	card and SUB	you	like.2sg.pres.
	f. Pare	opjadhypote	karta ke na	su	aresi
	Take.2sg.imper.perf. complex	wh-item	card and SUB	you	like.2sg.
	'Take any/ whatever card you like'				

The data above are very interesting for the following reasons. First, they indicate that English differs from Greek in that it possesses only two alternative forms of FCIs whereas Greek possesses six. This morphological variety has been partially predicted by the analyses on Greek bare *wh*-items. Alexiadou and Varkokosta (1996) have claimed that Greek bare *wh*-items are semantically equivalent to English complex *wh*-items.<sup>4</sup> Giannakidou (1997, 2001) has extensively analyzed Greek complex *wh*-items as FCIs and as such, as semantically equivalent to English complex *wh*-items and *any*-like items. To my knowledge, the *wh*-expressions (c-f) haven't received any analysis so far.<sup>5</sup>

Second, the data above present another very interesting property of Greek *wh*-items: they are grammatical in imperative contexts and have the semantics of the arbitrary choice of individuals-cards. This observation could lead us to the hypothesis that all kinds of Greek *wh*-items are semantically equivalent between each other. However, as it will be shown shortly, they don't have the same conditions of grammaticality. Let's examine their conditions of grammaticality in a context where reference to alternatives is denoted; a special type of English conditionals.

7. Whoever John chose, there will be a loss of confidence

This kind of conditional clauses has been called Universal Concessive Conditionals by Koenig (1986) and Gawron (2001). In very intuitive terms, what is very interesting for our discussion is that these conditionals have been analyzed as expressing *independence* between the universal set of values that the referent of the *wh*-word can take and the content of the main clause. In other words, (7) means that *no matter what the identity of the individual that John chose is, there will be a loss of confidence*. Obviously, (7) refers to arbitrary alternatives. Following what we have said previously, we expect that all Greek *wh*-items are grammatical in such a context. However, they are not.

8. \*Opjon/ opjondhipote /opjon ki an/opjondhipote ki an/  
 Bare *wh*-item/ complex *wh*-item /bare *wh*-item and if/complex *wh*-item and if  
 opjon ke na/ opjondhipote ke na dhialekse  
 bare *wh*-item and SUB/complex *wh*-item and SUB choose.3sg.perf.past  
 o Janis tha iparksi elispsi ebistosinis  
 the John FUT there.be.fut.perf. loss confidence  
 ‘Whoever John chose, there will be a loss of confidence’

From the data above, the following observations can be drawn. Greek bare *wh*-items, contrary to complex *wh*-items and *wh*-expressions, are ungrammatical in UCC constructions. Bare *wh*-items are ungrammatical in contexts which express independence between all the arbitrary values that the referent of the *wh*-item can take and the content of the apodosis. Denotation of the least likely entity which satisfies the predicative property is another semantic characteristic that, as Gawron claims, items which introduce UCCs possess. This means that for the case at hand (8), complex *wh*-items and *wh*-expressions refer to the least likely individual to be chosen by John for the apodosis *there will be a loss of confidence* to be true. Bare *wh*-items do not exhibit this property and are therefore ungrammatical in UCC constructions.

Last, but not least the data above are very interesting for the discussion on English FCIs. As mentioned previously, Dayal (1997), Horn (2000a), von Stechow (2000), Giannakidou (2001) analyze complex *wh*-items and *any*-like items as semantically equivalent. If they were semantically equivalent we would expect that both types of FCIs were grammatical in UCCs. The comparison between (7) and (9) shows otherwise.

9. \*Anyone John chose, there will be a loss of confidence

In view of the very interesting contrasts above, three very interesting questions for the semantics of FCIs are raised. First, there should be a semantic difference between bare *wh*-items and complex *wh*-items in Greek which causes ungrammaticality of the first and grammaticality of the second ones in UCCs. Second, there should be a semantic similarity between English complex *wh*-items and all kinds of Greek complex *wh*-items and *wh*-expressions. Third, there should be a semantic difference between complex *wh*-and *any*-like items which causes the different conditions of grammaticality that these items exhibit.

In this paper, I propose that all these items, although they express the Free Choice of an entity, they differ between each other in that not all of them are concessive. Concessivity will be claimed to be the main driving force which splits Greek *wh*-items into two main classes. This hypothesis will also lead us to the solution of the puzzle created by English FCIs. It will be argued that English complex *wh*-items differ from *any*-like items in that they are concessive.

The discussion is organized as follows. In section 2, the morphological paradigm of Greek *wh*-items and the previous analyses on them are given. In section 3, I focus on the semantic differences between bare *wh*-items and complex *wh*-items in Greek. I present the semantic properties of UCCs and conclude that concessivity is the semantic difference between Greek bare and complex *wh*-items. In section 4, further evidence for this hypothesis is given. In section 5, I present the main results of this paper and shed light on new promising areas of investigation.

## 2. The data and the literature

### 2.1. Greek *wh*-items

#### 10. Bare *wh*- items in Greek:

Opjos:	who
o,ti:	what
osos:	how much, as much as, while
opu:	where
opote:	whenever
opos:	how
otan:	when

#### 11. Complex *wh*-items in Greek (*Free Choice Items (FCIs)*) (modified from Giannakidou 2001)

opjosdhipote:	FC-person:	anyone, anybody, whoever
otidhipote:	FC-thing:	anything, whatever
ososdhipote:	FC-quantity:	any quantity, how much, as much as
opudhipote:	FC- place:	any place, wherever
opotedhipote:	FC-time:	any time, whenever
oposdhipote:	FC-way:	any way/at any rate, however
*otandhipote:	FC-time:	any time, whenever

#### 12. Bare *wh*-items combined with the concessive marker “and if” or “and SUB”

Opjos	ke an/ke na:	anyone, anybody, whoever
o,ti	ke an/ke na:	anything, whatever
osos	ke an/ke na:	any quantity, however,
opu	ke an/ke na:	any place, wherever
opote	ke an/ke na:	any time, whenever
opos	ke an/ke na:	any way/at any rate, however
*(otan	ke an/ke na):	any time, whenever

13. *Complex wh-items combined with the concessive marker of the form “and if” or “and SUB”*

opjosdhipote	ke an/ ke na:	anyone, anybody, whoever
otidhipote	ke an/ ke na:	anything, whatever
ososdhipote	ke an/ke na:	any quantity, however, as much as <sup>6</sup>
opudhipote	ke an/ke na:	any place, wherever
opotedhipote	(ke an)/ke na:	any time, whenever
*(oposdhipote	ke an)/ke na:	any way/at any rate, however
*(otandhipote	ke an)/ke na:	any time, whenever

At a first glance, the following observations can be made. Not all Greek bare *wh*-items have a corresponding complex *wh*-item. The bare *wh*-item *otan* (when) has no complex *wh*-item counterpart. On the contrary, Greek possesses a special bare *wh*-item, *opote* (whenever) which, as explained in Vlachou (2003a,b), although it belongs morphologically to the class of Greek bare *wh*-items, it belongs semantically to the class of Greek complex *wh*-items. Moreover, *otan* cannot be combined with *and if* or *and SUB*. Unfortunately, for reasons of space, I won't present the semantics of this *wh*-item (see Vlachou 2003a,b).

## 2.2. Previous analyses on Greek *wh*-items

After this short parenthesis on the morphological peculiarities that the Greek *wh*-items exhibit, let's return now to the analyses on these items which are extremely diverse, as it will be shortly shown.

More precisely, on the one hand Alexiadou & Varlokosta (1996) and Iatridou & Varlokosta (1998) claim that bare *wh*-items have universal force and are similar to complex *wh*- items of English. On the other hand, Alexiadou & Giannakidou (1998) analyze those items as denoting definite NPs and not as universal quantifiers (see Vlachou 2003a,b for an extensive overview).

Giannakidou (1997, 2001) presents a fresh and very interesting way of analyzing Greek complex *wh*-items and argues that these items are FCIs. She also argues that these items are part of the more general class of Polarity Items (PIs) for two basic reasons. First, they are grammatical only in the scope of nonveridical operators. As defined in (14), a nonveridical operator doesn't imply the truth of the clause *p* on which it operates. Second, as shown in (Giannakidou 2001), Greek complex *wh*-items are antiepisodic, namely ungrammatical in contexts which refer to a unique event which took place only once in the past (15).

14. *Nonveridical operators*

An operator Op is nonveridical iff Op *p*-/ ->*p*

15. \*Xthes idha opjondhipote

Yesterday saw anyone/whoever

'Yesterday, I saw anyone/ whoever'

FCIs become grammatical whenever “we insert an operator including plurality of events or situations” (Giannakidou 2001). Nonveridical operators possess this property and therefore license these items. Remember that modal and imperative contexts license these items (see Giannakidou 2001 for an extensive analysis of other contexts which license Greek complex *wh*-items/ FCIs). This is due to the nonveridical character that modal and imperative contexts possess.<sup>7</sup>

Apart from these distributional constraints, Giannakidou (1997, 2001) analyzes FCIs in terms of variation. Based on Greek complex *wh*-items, she successfully demonstrates that the FCI variable must be assigned distinct values in each world or situation we consider: FCIs are licensed whenever reference to i(dentity)-alternatives is possible as defined above (5). Two i-alternatives are worlds  $w_1$  and  $w_2$  agreeing on everything but the value assigned to the FCI. I-alternatives are epistemic alternatives and the worlds that the nonveridical Q-operator quantifies over serve as i-alternatives:

16. *Free Choice Items (from Giannakidou 2001)*

Let  $W_1$  be a non-empty set of possible worlds. A sentence with a free choice item  $[[OP \text{ DET}_{FC}(P,Q)]]$  is true in  $w_0$  with respect to  $W_1$  iff:

(where OP is a nonveridical operator; P is the descriptive content of the FC-phrase; Q is the nucleus of the tripartite structure;  $w_0$  is the actual world):

(a) Presupposition:  $\forall w_1, w_2 \in W_1: [[a]]^{w_1} \neq [[a]]^{w_2}$  where  $a$  is the free choice phrase.

(b) Assertion:  $[[OPw, x [Px, w]]] = 1$  where  $x, w$  are the variables contributed by  $a$ .

Following Giannakidou’s account, whenever a context presupposes the existence of i-alternatives, FCIs are expected to be grammatical in this context. If this is the case, then why couldn’t we analyze bare *wh*-items also as FCIs since these items are grammatical both in imperative contexts (see above) and in modal contexts (17) which refer, as analyzed in Giannakidou (2001) to i-alternatives?<sup>8</sup>

17. Boris            na    paris                            opja karta thelis  
 Can.2sg.pres. SUB take.2sg.pres.perf. bare *wh*- want.2sg.imperf.  
 ‘You can take what\*(ever)/ any card you want’

Another interesting question which arises is the following. If only complex *wh*-items had the property of Free Choiceness, then how could we account for the fact that the Greek bare *wh*-item *opote* (18) is semantically equivalent to Greek complex *wh*-items, being grammatical in UCCs (Vlachou 2003b)?

18. Opote            stilis            ta xartja su,    tha se    dhexton  
 Bare *wh*-item send.2d.perf. the papers your will you accept.3pl.perf.  
 ‘Whenever you send in you papers, you will get accepted’

### 3. The semantic properties of Universal Concessive Conditionals (UCCs) and the analysis of Greek *wh*-items

In this section, I present some of the basic semantic properties of UCCs which will appear to be very helpful for the whole discussion on the semantics of Greek *wh*-items which constitutes the ultimate goal of the present study.

Morphologically, UCCs are either clauses or NPs and can be introduced either by an English complex *wh*-item or by some other form as shown below. Syntactically, they can be placed either clause initially or not.

19. No matter who you are, I will kill you
20. The classier the paint job, the more you need alloy wheels
21. Either way, the electorate will be swindled
22. Whether John ate creampuffs or napoleons is not an issue
23. John would accept whatever salary they offered

English UCCs are a special kind of conditionals whose basic semantic property is the assertion of independence between the protasis and the apodosis. More precisely, as explained in Gawron (2001), UCCs assert that for all values of  $x$ ,  $g$  is true. In other words, when the variable occurs both in the protasis and the apodosis as in (24), the UCC expresses (25). If the variable occurs only in the protasis, as in (7), the UCC expresses (26):

24. Whoever John chooses, the committee will approve him (from Gawron 2001)
25.  $\forall x f(x) \Rightarrow g(x)$
26.  $\forall x f(x) \Rightarrow g$

As explained in Gawron (2001), the items which introduce these constructions are semantically different from universal quantifiers. This becomes immediately obvious if for instance in the example (23) we replace the complex *wh*-item with a universal quantifier: #*John would accept every salary they offered*. The result is of course pragmatically odd (# indicates pragmatic oddity). As Gawron points out, this difference is due to the fact that UCCs invoke a pragmatic scale and denote an entity which takes a minimum on that scale. Quantificational readings arise by scalar implicature. *Ever* invokes a pragmatic scale. This means that the items which introduce UCCs denote reference to a pragmatic scale and refer to a set of alternatives. These alternatives can take the form of individuals as in (7), events or places as in (27):

27. Whenever/wherever you sent (in) your papers, you got accepted

I propose that Greek *wh*-items in Greek can be distinguished in concessive and non-concessive *wh*-items, namely in items which denote reference to an exhaustive set of alternatives and those which do not. More precisely, Greek bare *wh*-items differ from complex *wh*-items in the following respect: although these items denote alternatives, they do not refer to the least likely

entity. On the contrary, complex *wh*-items refer to the least likely individual and/ or event that the *wh*-word expresses. I call this property *concessivity*. Whenever a *wh*-item is not concessive, it cannot denote the least likely entity. As shown in Vlachou (2003b), the item *opote* has also this property. I propose therefore that Greek complex *wh*-items and the item *opote* in Greek differ from bare *wh*-items in that they are concessive.

Another argument towards the concessivity hypothesis, is the ungrammaticality of bare *wh*-items in negative contexts with an indiscriminative reading. As Horn (2000b) points out, under this interpretation, the character of the entity denoted by the *wh*-word is of no importance for the speaker. Interestingly, as demonstrated by the examples below, *any*-like items do not give rise to indiscriminative readings if they are not preceded by the focus particle *just*:

28. Bob didn't see (\*just) anyone/ whoever...He saw Stan Papi (example with *anyone* from Horn 2000b)

Moreover, in the examples below the Greek bare *wh*-items *otan* (when) and *opu* (where) cannot refer to the least likely event/ place and therefore yield ungrammaticality. The substitution of *otan* by *opote* or by a complex *wh*-item (29b) and the substitution of *opu* by a complex *wh*-item (30b) results to grammaticality (see also Vlachou 2003b).

29. a. Dhen borume na erxomaste stin taksi otan thelume, iparxun kanones.  
'\*We cannot come in class when we want, there are rules'  
b. Dhen borume na erxomaste stin taksi opote/ optedhipote thelume, iparxun kanones.  
'We cannot come in class whenever we want, there are certain rules'<sup>9</sup>
30. a. \*Ston polemo dhen borusame na pijume opu thelame, ipirxan kanones  
'\*During the War, we couldn't go where we wanted, there were rules'  
b. Ston polemo dhen borusame na pijume opudhipote thelame, ipirxan kanones  
'During the War, we couldn't go wherever we wanted, there were rules'

For all these reasons, I propose that the whole class of Greek *wh*-items should be split into two big semantic subclasses, the concessive and nonconcessive *wh*-items.

#### 4. Evidence from English *wh*-items

At this stage, the concessivity hypothesis remains rather descriptive and many points need to be refined (see also Vlachou 2003c). However, it constitutes a rather promising way to proceed for the whole discussion on the semantic properties of bare and complex *wh*-items in Greek and English for the following reasons.

First of all, as explained in the beginning of this paper, scholars have analyzed English complex *wh*-items as semantically equivalent to *any*-like items, as being FCIs. However, as it has

been shown in (9), the last ones are not grammatical in UCCs which, as explained previously, refer to an exhaustive set of alternatives. I propose that complex *wh*-items differ from *any*-like items in that they are concessive and can therefore refer to the least likely entity.

Secondly, this hypothesis solves the puzzle created in the English literature concerning the semantic properties of bare *wh*-items and their differences from complex *wh*-items and accounts for the ungrammaticality of (31). It shows that bare *wh*-items in English do not only differ from complex *wh*-items in that the last ones give rise to a “don’t know” reading, as proposed by Jacobson (1995) but also in that bare *wh*-items are not concessive.

31. \*Who John chose, there will be a loss of confidence

Last but not least, the concessive versus non concessive character of *wh*-items can also account for a very interesting phenomenon related to the whole discussion on FCIs. As explained in the beginning, English *wh*-items have been analyzed as semantically equivalent to *any*-like items, being FCIs. Apart from their ungrammaticality in UCCs, these two classes of FCIs differ in another point as well; episodicity. More precisely, remember that FCIs have been analyzed as antiepisodic by Giannakidou (1997, 2001). However, as shown in (28) above and in the example below, complex *wh*-items are not antiepisodic, contrary to *any*-like items (notice that here *anything* is not preceded by *just*):

32. Mary said whatever/(*\*anything*) and then left

In the first context, characterized as indiscriminative by Horn (2000b), *anyone* is not grammatical if it is not preceded by the focus particle *just*. *Whoever* is grammatical by itself without being preceded by this particle. In the second example, the complex *wh*-item *whatever* is grammatical in an episodic assertive context whereas the FCI *anything* is not. Both of these cases show that *any*-like items and complex *wh*-items are not semantically equivalent although they are both FCIs. I propose that this is due again to the concessive character of complex *wh*-items. Concessivity permits reference to an exhaustive set of alternatives even in episodic contexts.<sup>10</sup>

## 5. Concluding remarks

In this paper, a semantic analysis of Greek *wh*-items has been proposed. It has been claimed that Greek bare *wh*-items differ from complex *wh*-items in that they are not concessive. This hypothesis explains the differences in grammaticality of Greek bare and complex *wh*-items and between English complex *wh*-items and *any*. This proposal constitutes the first step towards a cross-item/linguistic analysis of *wh*-items and sheds light on issues related for instance to the interesting semantic properties that Greek bare *wh*-items like *opote* possess.

Many interesting questions are left open in this paper and they appeal for further research in the future. First of all, it would be interesting investigate whether complex *wh*-item are semantically equivalent to *wh*-expressions formed by the Greek concessive markers *and if* or *and SUB*. We should also study how this relates to the whole discussion on FCIs. Secondly, a

separate study needs to be made on the semantic properties of complex *wh*-items depending on whether they denote events, places or individuals.

## Notes

1. I am grateful to Cleo Condoravdi, Anastasia Giannakidou, Sabine Iatridou and Henriette de Swart for their comments on various issues raised in this paper. All errors are mine.
2. The term “indefinite” refers to the grammatical category of indefinites and not to the semantic category.
3. The terms “bare *wh*-item” and “complex *wh*-item” serve to distinguish between *wh*-items which do not possess the particle *-ever*, (*opjos/who*) and those which possess it (*opjosdhipote/whoever*). The term “any-like item” refers to pronominal and adjectival uses of *any* (*anyone, any friend*).
4. However in (Vlachou 2003b) it has been shown that this hypothesis doesn’t hold for all of them at least not for the item *opote* (*whenever*) which has been analyzed as semantically equivalent to Greek complex *wh*-items. We will come back to that in the following sections.
5. With the term “*wh*-expressions” I refer to all kinds of Greek *wh*-items (bare or complex) combined with one of the following Greek concessive markers: *and if* (*ke an*) and *and SUB* (*ke na*). For reasons of space, I don’t analyze in this paper the semantic properties of these expressions. In the sections that follow, I focus on the pair bare *wh*-item vs. complex *wh*-item.
6. The forms *opjos(dhipote)*, *osos(dhipote)* are inflected for case, number and gender. Here, I cite only the masculine nominative singular.
7.
  - i. Boris        na    paris        opjadhipe        karta (su    aresi)  
       Can.2sg.pres.SUB take.2sg.perf. complex *wh*-item card    you like.2sg.pres.  
       ‘You can take any/ whatever card you like’  
       -/ -> You took a card (you like)
  - ii. Pare        opjadhipe        karta (su    aresi)  
       Take.2sg.perf. complex *wh*-item card    you like.2sg.pres.  
       ‘Take any/ whatever card (you like)’  
       -/ -> You took a card (you like)
8. Greek bare *wh*-items differ syntactically from “typical” (complex *wh*-items) FCIs analyzed in Giannakidou (2001) in that they cannot stand alone in a clause without introducing a Free Relative (relative without overt head) construction (iii). Cases in which bare *wh*-items are duplicated constitute exceptions to this (*opjos ki opjos/who and who*).
  - iii. \*Pare        o,ti  
       Take.2sg.perf. what  
       ‘\*Take what’
9. The difference between the bare *wh*-item *opote* and the complex *wh*-item *opotedhipote* remains open for future research.
10. English complex *wh*-items which express events and places are not grammatical in episodic contexts at all: \**I went whenever/wherever*. There should be a difference in the semantics of *wh*-items depending on whether these items refer to events, individuals or places. In the future, this could be implemented along the lines of Szabolsci and Zwarts (1993).

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