

Psychology with your coffee?

This is a coffee-table book by the distinguished American historian of psychology, Wade Pickren. Pickren is, among other things, a former historian and archivist of the American Psychological Association, a former president of its history of psychology and general psychology divisions and the current editor of the journal *History of Psychology*. He is also the co-author of a widely used textbook on the history of psychology, as well as the author of several other contributions to the field. As might be expected from the author's background, the book takes a historical approach and is centred on 250 'milestones' in the history of psychology. That may not be such a bad thing. There is a widely held view to the effect that in order to understand a subject, we need to become acquainted with its history.

The word *psychology* is interpreted in a liberal way, and the book includes topics like Shamanism, Buddha's Four Noble Truths and the Bhagavad Gita. It also includes topics like Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Cultural Relativism and the BRAIN initiative that are usually associated with other disciplines but of relevance to psychology. However, most of the entries belong unambiguously to psychology. The book has a foreword by the person responsible for one of the milestones, Philip Zimbardo, who conducted the famous Stanford Prison Experiment over 40 years ago. Other examples are Learned Helplessness, Obedience and Positive Psychology.

Some of the entries reflect the interests of the author. Pickren is unusual among American psychologists in advocating an international approach to psychology, and this is reflected in entries like *Modern Psychology in India*, *Sikolohiyang Pilipino [Philippine Psychology]* and *Latin American Liberation Psychology*. Having said that, most of the entries involve developments in the United States. This is to some extent understandable, given the prominent role that American psychology has played in

the history of the field. Pickren also has an interest in disadvantaged groups, and this is reflected in the entries on *Black Psychology*, how homosexuality ceased to be regarded as a mental illness, and women and gender, such as *The Feminine Mystique* and *Gender Identity*. The entries are given in chronological order, even though the author recognises that it is difficult to put a precise date on some of them. As might be expected from the genre, the book is lavishly illustrated with photographs, diagrams and reproductions of posters, book pages, sketches, engravings and paintings. The paintings in particular make the book a pleasure to read.

The book is aimed at the general reader, and it should help to correct some of the popular misunderstandings of psychology that exist. It could also be a useful teaching resource, most obviously in introductory psychology and history of psychology courses but also in other courses. It contains accessible introductions to topics that are usually covered in courses on areas such as neuropsychology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology and social psychology. The cross-references at the end of each entry and the section titled 'Notes and Further Reading' at the end of the book are particularly useful resources.

Finally, I was surprised to see that, in spite of having been a student and teacher of psychology for over 30 years, there was much in the book that was new to me. The sheer quantity of literature on psychology that is published makes it difficult for us to keep up with the literature outside our own specialities. The book will enable more experienced psychologists to reconnect with the discipline as a whole. It is a book that every library should have.

| Sterling; 2014; Hb £25.00

Reviewed by Adrian C. Brock who is an independent scholar based in Greater Manchester



Heard the one about...?

Ha! The Science of When We Laugh and Why
Scott Weems

American cognitive neuroscientist Dr Scott Weems aims to define the nature and purpose of humour and laughter in this new book. Split into three core parts, he seeks to answer three key questions: 'What is humour?', 'What is it for?' and finally 'So what?' – why do we care about humour anyway? Weems shows how complexities of the human brain make humour possible and how it can affect our health and social well-being in many ways.

This is definitely not a self-help guide to make you funnier! Weems draws on a range of research, comedian anecdotes and personal experiences to uncover the functions and history of humour. Highlights include discussion of different styles of laughter and humour, methods of humour experimentation and cultural differences in humour perception. Drawing on his neuroscience background, Weems also clearly and concisely introduces the importance of dopamine and the dopamine reward circuit in humour perception. Alongside cognitive and social psychology research, this book does provide an accessible overview to the complexities of humour, its causes and origins.

True to the topic, this book is written with tales, jokes and puns aplenty, whilst maintaining a firm overview of scientific literature. The book in fact culminates in Weems taking to the stage himself as a comic for an evening: honestly admitting to 'bombing' and seeking audience critique of his failings. It seems that absorbing scientific literature alone doesn't make the comic! A well-researched and interesting read; this will definitely be of interest to any pop-science reader or indeed anyone with a sense of humour!

| Basic Books; 2014; Hb £17.99

Reviewed by Emma Norris who is a PhD student at University College London and Associate Editor for 'Reviews'



Insight into the struggles

My Last Summer
Channel 4

The reality of death isn't something we like to think about. *My Last Summer*, an emotionally charged documentary by Channel 4, follows the lives of five terminally ill individuals who are forced to face this reality. Over four episodes we journey through the lived experiences of Jayne, Junior, Lou, Ben and Andy. The group is brought together over four weekend residential and (along with the support of two palliative care experts) talk openly about their experience of living with a terminal illness. We also meet their families and carers bringing insight into the struggles that they face as they prepare for the death of their loved one.

The episodes provide a broad overview on issues around terminal illness. We hear Jayne



and Lou talk openly about wishing to take their own life before the end, enabling them to die with dignity. Suicide was also considered by Lou's son (15) as he honestly disclosed his struggles of coping with his mother's diagnosis to Andy's son (20). We learn of Andy and his wife's financial struggles as they attempt to plan for future financial security. For Lou, the thought that her young children

could possibly be raised by another woman in the future was a distressing consideration. We also see differences in approaches to discussing death with their children. The strain that terminal illness was placing on the relationship between Junior and his partner. For Ben, the reality of his isolation become more apparent after meeting the group, which highlighted his lack of support

compared with them.

Although somewhat sensationalised in parts *My Last Summer* provides insight into the subjective experience of terminally ill individuals. The knowledge gained can support psychologists in considering issues around terminal illness. Perhaps more focus could have been directed towards demonstrating the role of palliative care further. This documentary forced the viewer to think about the reality of death and subsequently grief and

loss. Junior's partner draws our attention to the fact that 'grief never goes away, the difference is you learn to live with it'. Our role as psychologists is to assist people through this process of readjustment to life without a loved one.

I Reviewed by Glenn Mason
who is a cognitive behaviour psychotherapist and counselling psychologist in doctoral training

Challenging a dominant mindset



Trying Not to Try: The Ancient Art of Effortlessness and the Surprising Power of Spontaneity
Edward Slingerland

Trying Not to Try, by Edward Slingerland, introduces an alternative approach to conceptualising success, shifting away from the 'cold and impoverished' Western approach of doing better by trying harder. Drawing from early Eastern schools of thought, and specifically the concept of *wu-wei* (meaning 'not trying'), this approach celebrates spontaneity and the encouragement of an effortless, unconscious state of mind to achieve greater engagement and success. *Wu-wei* is introduced through the detailed study of ancient Chinese parables. The concept is similar to what many athletes refer to as 'the zone', though Slingerland argues that whilst 'the zone' is often coveted and obsessively pursued, *wu-wei* lacks this dogged desire to achieve at any cost. These examinations are interspersed with simple neuroscientific insights, and relevant psychological theories.

The titular paradox of 'trying not to try' is discussed; the difficulties of effortfully encouraging an effortless state of mind are evaluated. However very few practical insights beyond simple mindfulness are drawn from this detailed breakdown. The author himself notes this central weakness to *wu-wei*-facilitated goal achievement. Despite this paradoxical barrier to a *wu-wei* perspective, the thoroughness and dedication to relating these ancient Chinese concepts to a contemporary culture is admirable. The balanced portrayal of strengths and weakness is honest and refreshing. Though lacking in practical applications, this text fulfils an important role by challenging a dominant cultural mindset and encouraging diversity in the schools of thought used to define effort and success. This deep examination is presented in an insightful and illuminating read.

I *Canongate; 2014; Pb £14.99*
Reviewed by Rory McDonald *who is a writer and student at the University of Central Lancashire*

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Pre-loaders



Dispatches: The Cost of Cheap Alcohol
Channel 4

As I write this, with the World Cup still in full swing, supermarkets are bursting with alcohol discounts and promotions to capture fans glued to their TV screens. The face of drinking culture has changed dramatically following the recession. Twice as much alcohol is now drunk in the home than anywhere else, as our nation of 'pre-loaders' consume cheap, high-volume alcohol on an evening or before a night out to reduce their total spend. This documentary charts the strategies of the drinks and supermarket industries in promoting alcohol sales, the fight from



public health campaigners to restrict these organisations and the £21 billion yearly NHS spend on alcohol-related illness.

Presenter Antony Barnett interviews some students to assess their typical 'pre-loading' purchasing strategies. Unsurprisingly, cheap pricing and volume is

prioritised over quality and taste. Conversation with police officers shows double the number of staff are now required on weekend evenings than in previous years due to increases in 'pre-loading' drinking. Both the police and public health professionals call on supermarkets to demonstrate and morality and consciousness of the effects on British health. One key debate in this programme is the proposed introduction of 'Minimum Unit Pricing' (MUP) of alcohol. Although found to have highly beneficial effects in Canada and being recommended by the Home Secretary in recent years; progress on MUP introduction has stalled. This is discussed as due to the power of drinks companies and associated vendors, despite a range of modelled evidence from epidemiologists on the impact of MUP on health.

Although providing thoughtful discussion as to the barriers health researchers face from financial powerhouses in modern society, the programme ended without offering any real solutions. The question remains: How can we compete to improve the lives of others against the global, financial powerhouses of modern society?

I Reviewed by Emma Norris *who is a PhD student, University College London, and Associate Editor for 'Reviews'*



Valuable critique... but what about change?

Clinical Psychology: A Critical Examination
Craig Newnes



The central argument of Newnes's engaging examination of clinical psychology is that the 'Psy' disciplines, as members of the helping professions, are not always as benign or helpful as we might think. Newnes dissects a number of problem areas within clinical psychology, including theory and research, assessment, practice, the pathologising of childhood and adults, and the profession itself. Newnes also presents his own story (or confession) and career path as a clinical psychologist, weaving this biographical material in with different aspects of the profession; this adds a welcome dimension to the critique as it helps make the topic less abstract and detached.

The book offers interesting insights into the history and development of clinical psychology and how it has evolved from its origins as the psychometric servant of psychiatry to becoming its competitor. The problem with this power struggle, Newnes argues, is that in order to maintain power within the distress industry there is potential for abuse, whether through theoretical claims (such as over-medicalising the human condition) or through practice (such as the imposition of a particular therapeutic model on the person). According to Newnes, these are areas that clinical psychologists have generally shown little interest in examining, and have thus failed to question their own role in maintaining the status quo.

Although Newnes takes aim at clinical psychology, it becomes evident throughout the book that it is impossible to separate clinical psychology from its parent discipline psychology, and indeed other Psy disciplines, which at times leaves the narrative slightly unfocused as it moves between them. There is also a tendency to jump between topics within chapters, which sometimes jars. Nevertheless, Newnes succeeds in demonstrating how the assumptions within psychology are flawed but still used in clinical psychology praxis for political ends. It is a shame, however, that Newnes declares towards the end of the book that the volume is not intended to instigate change. Newnes does offer examples of some alternative ways of practice, whereby clinicians are more aware of their own political positions and therefore offer interventions which are socially informed rather than focused on the medicalisation of the individual, but he unfortunately seems rather pessimistic about the ability to address the problems outlined, believing they are too big for the individual. This might be the case – but if there is no chance of change, then why bother with critique?

I PCCS Books; 2014; Pb £18.00

Reviewed by Patrick Larsson *who is a counselling psychologist working in the NHS*



Catch 'em all

The Men Who Made Us Spend
BBC Two

When I was younger, I made what felt like a fortune selling Pokémon cards to schoolmates. I even snaffled £50 for an Ivysaur. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but my ruthless exploitation of a gullible child's urgent need to 'catch 'em all' was something of a microcosm for the treatment of society at large by big brands.

In the third episode of the BBC's *The Men Who Made Us Spend*, presenter Jacques Peretti investigated the role of childhood and childishness in

consumerism in this well-constructed, thought-provoking programme.

Beginning with the phenomenal success of *Star Wars* merchandising, brands began to appreciate the awesome purchasing power of children. Accompanied by the rise of colour TV, this trend manifested itself in children's programming morphing into advertising for toys, such as *He-Man*, *Transformers* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* – with these shows joining like autobots in the form of

Nickelodeon.

With video games, comic books and co-play came the realisation that adults are equally susceptible to children's merchandising. Brands began to see how to reach the child in us all – the id, or the reptilian brain – through gamification techniques and instant gratification. Psychological game mechanics like status, scarcity and commitment and consistency are being used to make products 'sticky' – that is, to encourage us to buy and use them compulsively.

If I had one criticism it would be that Peretti was too soft on the Men [and



Before and after

Royal Victoria Hospital
BBC World War One at Home series

Royal Victoria Hospital is author Philip Hoare's moving, personal and occasionally shocking documentary about the military hospital Netley, in Southampton. Originally built to treat soldiers returning from Crimea, it later became a centre to treat wounded men during the world wars, and was almost a town in its own right, with its own railway station and chapel.

Hoare, who wrote the book *Spike Island* about the hospital's history, tells the story of Arthur Hurst, a doctor and Pathé filmmaker who worked with shell-shocked patients. As Hoare explains in the 30-minute documentary, Hurst set out to prove that shell shock could be treated. But it emerges the film he created, *War Neuroses*, acted in part as propaganda

and shows some patients faking ailments.

Professor Edgar Jones of the Institute of Psychiatry at King's College explains that some patients who had been cured later faked their



neuroses for 'before' shots in the films (see his paper at tinyurl.com/mg7nkbfb). For example one Sergeant Bissett is shown, according to the caption in September 1917, bent over, only capable of hobbling with the help of two sticks. In the next scene he is shown walking almost normally when filmed in

November 1917. However, the background to both shots showed an identical group of nurses and column of smoke coming out of the chimneys of the distant huts. This deception was used to show future patients that their illnesses were treatable.

Another fascinating insight into life at Netley concerns the infamous D-Block, a place for soldiers with mental health issues who were under the care of the insensitive and old-fashioned Captain Clendenning, before being sent home, back to the front, or to an asylum.

An excellent, if all too brief, exploration into the varied history of a vast institution.

I *The film is due to air on BBC Four in the autumn.*
Reviewed by Ella Rhodes who is journalist for *The Psychologist*

Women] Who Made Us Spend, who really revealed themselves as ruthless, callous and hypocritical. They gleefully explained how shows like *Transformers* trained children to think, 'There must be a toy', or how *Nickelodeon* presented an 'opportunity to message to [children] regularly, before they went to school, after they came home from school, and before they went to bed'.

There was a fantastic moment when the former Executive Vice President of Nickelodeon derided Brits because we 'thought that "watch with mother time" was very sacrosanct'; this came not long after lawyer

Fred Furth (who quashed the original backlash against children's advertising in the US) said that it was 'up to parents' to monitor what their kids are watching!

The people Peretti interviewed ought to be held to account. There are several case studies of a number of children who, having been 'raised by wolves', so to speak, fully exhibit the characteristics of animals instead of those of humans. The brain is a sponge that moulds to the environment in which it develops, and the Men Who Made Us Spend have constructed a reality in which consumerism dominates and brands

are the shared language. One might even hold them responsible for Kardashian Culture – so get them to The Hague! Peretti let them off far too easily.

Overall though, this was a thoughtful programme, and, while there was perhaps little that psychologists wouldn't be familiar with, it made me wonder how the Men Who Made Us Spend have shaped our culture, and how life might have been without them.

I **Reviewed by Dr Dimitrios Tsvirikos** who is a *Chartered Psychologist and Associate Fellow of the BPS, University College London*

The coming together of psychology and neuroscience



Start the Week: The Science of the Mind,
BBC Radio 4

Andrew Marr presents a philosophical and wide-ranging discussion with three psychologists and neuroscientist Heidi Johansen-Berg (Oxford University) about the science of the mind and how far our understanding of the separation between the mind and the self has come in recent years.

The fascinating discussion touches on a vast array of subjects including input from Professor Johansen-Berg on brain plasticity and morality. Marr, who recently suffered a stroke himself, speaks to her about the brain's incredible ability to change and adapt following major brain damage caused by stroke. They also touch on the increasingly blurred lines between modern psychology and neuroscience. Ben Shephard, a historian who has recently released a book, *Headhunters – The Search for a Science of the Mind*, speaks about attempts at the turn of the 20th century by William Rivers, Grafton Elliot Smith, Charles Myers and William McDougall, to refute Kant's claim that psychology could never be a true science. He suggested that mathematics could not be applied to the workings of the human mind.

Charles Fernyhough, a psychologist and author, puts forward his opinion that some findings in neuroscience are 'troubling' – his new novel *A Box of Birds* features a neuroscientist as its central character who is unsure she has a stable personality. He gives an interesting view that some findings in the field have the potential to alter our perception of self and speaks about the conflict between neurological determinists, who believe our brains control our actions, and people who believe that we have free will and experience consequently changes the structure of our brains. Clinical psychologist and advocate of mindfulness, Mark Williams (University of Oxford), also features. His book about suicide, *Cry of Pain*, explores the theories of suicide ranging from Freud's theory of melancholia and biologists looking at the lack of serotonin in the brain. He discusses mindfulness and the ways in which depression affects memory.

The programme poses some interesting questions: Where does our society get its sense of identity? What can we learn from our knowledge of brain plasticity? And does neuroscience have any bearing on our sense of self?

I **Reviewed by Ella Rhodes**

Bedtime reading



Hardwiring Happiness: The Practical Science of Reshaping Your Brain – and Your Life
Rick Hanson

Rick Hanson's newest book draws on neuropsychology and popular evolutionary psychology theory, creating an easy-to-read self-help book, written in accessible language suitable for a wide range of audiences.

The durability of the brain's structure is explored, and the survival instincts that cause human beings to have a negativity bias is normalised. Negative experiences during childhood it is explained, are relevant for our very survival. The human brain is designed to hyper-learn during childhood, creating a bias towards remembering negative experiences and sensitivity to criticism, whilst easily forgetting the positive experiences and compliments; an experience that many of us can freely relate to.

Whilst normalising these negativity biases, Hanson positively explores the ability to change our brain structure in adult life, allowing for remodelling by experience, in ways that last. The experiences that we have in adult life are also capable of continually changing the very structure of the brain, and it is possible to take charge of those changes, and to be in the driver's seat, hardwiring your own happiness.

Hanson's book overflows with compassion for the human condition, and focuses on teaching his readers how to take in the good, and to allow healing to take place. By learning to deliberately internalise positive experiences, in implicit memory, we are better able to focus on our strengths for meeting challenges and surviving our vulnerabilities, rather than being continually held back by the negatives.

The strengths created simply by being human are drawn upon, to allow readers to see the number of hidden internal reserve, and to make these visible for the rewiring process. Strengths drawn upon include inner strengths, positive mood, common sense, integrity, inner peace, determination, warm heart and self-compassion, secure attachment, distress-tolerance, emotional intelligence and, above all, the power of love.

A fantastic bedtime read.

| *Rider Books; 2013; Pb £12.99*

Reviewed by Kirsten Nokling who is a trainee clinical psychologist for South Wales and Vale NHS Trust, Cardiff University

Seductively straightforward



Boot Camp Therapy: Brief, Action-oriented Clinical Approaches to Anxiety, Anger, and Depression
Robert Taibbi

I expected to hate this book. I wanted to hate this book. I anticipated writing a review that decried the culture of quick-fix, time-pressured reductionism and the increasing medicalisation of the human condition. (Taibbi frequently refers to the therapists-as-physician model.)

The book covers a lot of ground and covers it quickly. The constructs are not new, placing the persecutor-victim-rescuer triangle at the centre of the approach and offering meditation as a means of brain 're-wiring'. However, it presents a model of brief intervention that is highly structured, satisfyingly process-driven and action-oriented. Taibbi is excellent at guiding the reader in how this might look in the therapy room, and there are clear and comprehensive 'Treatment Maps' for anger, anxiety and depression.

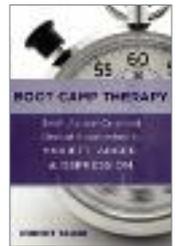
I was sold on the idea of effective three-session therapy by the end of the first

chapter. (Taibbi also subscribes to the therapist-as-salesperson model. It shows.) However, once he had outlined those who were not suitable for such an approach – that is, people with severe mental illnesses or histories of severe trauma, or who self-harm – I was struggling to identify which of my unsuspecting clients I could try his approach out on. His final chapter on integrating boot camp principles into other therapies saved the day. More thoughtful and reflective in tone than the other chapters, he outlined techniques, ideas, suggestions that many therapists could put into use immediately.

In summary, compelling, seductively straightforward and easy to read. Just be careful who you invite to boot camp.

Norton; 2014; Hb £18.99

| **Reviewed by Grace Tantom** who is a clinical psychologist at Healthcare South West and www.theessentialscience.com



A brief encounter

Meet the Mormons
Channel 4

Despite sounding like the premise for a comedy starring Adam Sandler, *Meet the Mormons* is anything but funny. Instead, Lynn Allenway's documentary follows its protagonist on a journey from optimistic, pious young man to a dead-eyed, exhausted missionary, stripped of all home and human comforts, and even his first name.

Allenway follows Josh Field, as he embarks on his role as missionary for the prescriptive and secretive Church of the Latter Day Saints, whose followers are commonly known as Mormons. The documentary takes a show-don't-tell approach, though what it actually shows is very little, given that every contact the director has with her subject is overseen by the ostensibly benign but rather shadowy presence of Richard; a chaperone of the Church, whose role is to control what we see and hear. His hand peeking around the door frame reminds us that he is continually there, like something out of a Pink Panther film.

The aim of the missionaries is to spread the word of God and convert people to the Church. In doing so Josh, or as we now know him, Elder Field, must move away from his family for two years, with no physical contact with them, and only a phone call twice a year. He is paired with a companion, another missionary, of whom he must always be in sight (except to go to the bathroom) lest he be tempted to stray from the strict path dictated by God, via founder of the Church, Joseph Smith. Allenway tries, on various occasions, to talk to Elder Field on his own, but she cannot get past the invisible shackles that bind him with his companion, and the ever-lurking Richard. She rightly shows concern for his mental well-being, but in her probing gets no further than perfunctory comments and wan smiles. While we are shown the constraining nature of the companionship, there is no exploration of any nurturing or supportive aspect that may be involved.

The closest we get to any psychological insight is the reassurance of the president of the missionary centre that he is a trained counsellor and, to prevent the 'random thoughts that turn into random emotions and cause chaos in the mind', he has taught Elder Field some quiet mind techniques. One suspects that the thoughts and emotions of Field are anything but random. When the documentary abruptly ends we feel we've left at just the start of Elder Field's journey, and there is an unsatisfying lack of closure or real insight. We met the Mormons, but we barely got to know them.

| **Reviewed by Kathryn Coster** who is a distance learning MSc student, Coventry University



Menagerie manners

The Human Zoo
Radio 4

The brand new series of *The Human Zoo* on BBC Radio 4 features queries and questions about everyday human behaviour in an accessible and engaging style.

Professor Nick Charter of Warwick University and Michael Blastland tackle the 'Psychology of Inequality' in the first episode of the fourth series, contemplating a variety of explanations as to why inequality, large or small, niggles us so much.

The 30-minute programme focuses on the comparative nature of the human mind, discussing how opinions of worth are relative to prior experience. It also touches upon the neuronal basis to our

perceptions of equality; how we tend to attend to the superiority of others due to the change in our habituated state, a possible evolutionary protection against sudden changes in environment. It is stated that the idea that competition for equality (and more likely superiority!) comes from the state of mind that 'whatever you do is not good enough'; I must admit, a few dissatisfied people spring to mind!

The show also features current research in the field, breaking up the programme nicely. This illustrates how we jump to conclusions quickly, and use this first set of information we encounter for future comparisons. Online links to

experiments bring research right to listeners' fingertips.

The second episode looks at competition in the 21st century, deliberating that competition is no longer the survival of the fittest, but rather a method of deciphering between our aims and choices in life. Presenters discuss the competition we face everyday and the conflict within ourselves, which dictates daily decisions. I find myself contemplating a recent stint of car hunting – the internal debate of finding the right car, and the external struggle to purchase it before another buyer snaps it up.

Interestingly, Timandra Harkness explores how we might not need to pursue

activities just because we want to excel, but how actually, we can partake just for fun.

The programme deviates by asking a non-psychologist their take on the topic; an insightful and refreshing feature, from the eyes of someone who isn't concerned with the ins and outs of science.

All in all, *The Human Zoo* is well worth a listen. I will certainly be using catch-up to mull over the previous three series and attempt to discuss these questions with my own human zoo over the dinner table.

Reviewed by Bethany

Dimmock who is a psychology undergraduate at the University of York

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