SOCIO-ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF ANCIENT RATIONALISM

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Annotation. The article explores current issues in philosophical and anthropological inquiry within ancient philosophy, focusing on the principles and priorities of the anthropological dimensions of classical and post-classical ancient spiritual culture.

The study outlines dialogical forms of philosophical, socio-ethical, and anthropological exploration, which display an extraordinary plurality of perspectives and ideas. This pluralism is evident both in the diversity of normative models of conduct and in attempts to define the ideal structure of the human being. The article emphasixes that during the era of the first ethical reflections, philosophy in antiquity had a profoundly pragmatic character. This pragmatism encompassed both moral rationality and the theoretical aspects of the philosophy of values. For the individual in antiquity, it was necessary to consolidate theoretical and empirical life-goal orientations, combining spiritual-ethical values with the pragmatism of transient social existence.

The analysis shows that, from an anthropological perspective, during the period of ancient classical philosophy, the observational approach to understanding the world gave way to an active, even transformative, approach to life, reflecting the productive, dynamic, and creative nature of human existence. The individual's active status is defined through practical engagement with the world, nature, and the self. It is noted that it was the Classical and Late Classical periods of antiquity (5th–4th centuries BC) that the philosophy of the human being developed most significantly, directing philosophical thought toward personal world-creation, the harmony of the inner spiritual world, and intellectual, rational cognition. The pragmatism of the early Greek philosophers, initially reinforced by their psychologically significant authoritarianism, gradually gave way to philosophical-gnoseological reflections on the problems of inner dialectics and harmony, socio-ethical life of a person of Ancient Rationalism.

Key words: antiquity, rationalism, social ethics, social culture, practical ethics, anthropic dimension, creativity, civil society, virtue.

1. Introduction.

The phenomenon of ancient culture, spanning from the 7th-6th centuries BC to the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, encompasses the emergence and conceptual formation of philosophy, literature, art, and science, along with their practical and socio-ethical dimensions. Since antiquity, this cultural heritage has attracted sustained scholarly attention within historical-philosophical, historical-cultural, and socio-philosophical research. The socio-cultural world of Greco-Roman civilization, shaped by principles of statehood and morality, laid the groundwork for the development of theories of personal perfection. These theories emphasized the cultivation of spiritual and moral values and the practical realization of transformative ideas and concepts directed toward the improvement and advancement of society.

Nevertheless, numerous facts, phenomena, and conceptual elements still lack a clear operational or logically consistent definition. One particularly complex issue concerns the social orientation of anthropological inquiry, which encompasses the earliest philosophical ideas about the human being; their evolution from mythological and cosmogonic explanations to the philosophical and ethical traditions of late Stoicism; the revival of these fundamental principles during the Renaissance; and their enduring influence on contemporary social and personal culture.

2. Analysis of the main studies of the topic.

The socio-ethical, cultural, and philosophical issues of antiquity have, at various times, been thoroughly examined in the foundational works of both former Soviet and international scholars, including V. Asmus, G. Alexandrov, O. Bogomolov, M. Dymnik, A. Losev, O. Makovelskii, A. Chanyshev, W. Wundt, W. Windelband, J.-P. Vernant, R. Wipper, and S. Lur'ye.

Ukrainian historians of philosophy and scholars of different periods, notably A. Pashuk, M. Kashuba, V. Horsky, I. Bychko, I. Zakhara, and V. Lytvynov, have addressed important questions concerning the formation and development of civic culture, social ethics, and the principles of virtuous living for individuals and citizens of the ancient polis.

The works of L. Batkin, A. Dzivelegov, L. Pinsky, B. Purishev, S. Skazkin, G. Baron, G. Gentile, L. Klages, B. Croce, N. Robb, and V. Tatarkevych are particularly valuable for the study of the philosophical legacy of ancient humanism. These studies illuminate the ideals of harmonious and holistic personal development, as well as how the principles of ancient rationalism were transformed and transmitted into the social and cultural discourse of the European Renaissance.

3. The purpose of this scientific article is to investigate, on the basis of historical, philosophical, literary, and cultural sources, the prerequisites for the emergence and development of the socio-ethical aspects of the philosophy of life of ancient people. In addition, the research aims to provide a brief logical and philosophical analysis of the forms and phenomena of pragmatic ethics within ancient rationalism.

4. The main material and substantiation of the research results.

The dissemination of the cosmogonical tradition in early Greek philosophy, together with the dynamic transformations in the Greek polis during the 6th–5th centuries BC, profoundly influenced the development of philosophical thought, emphasizing the emergence of free rationalism alongside ontological, anthropological, and socio-ethical traditions.

Concrete conflicts in socio-moral development – especially the tension between the interests of the collective (tribe, people, or social class) and the well-being of the individual – manifested in the expressive and dramatic character of Greek culture and became the focus of the earliest rational philosophical and ethical reflections.

As E. Frolov observes, "The microcosm of the Greek poleis – full of life, motion, and change – functioned as a unique living sociological laboratory, where society continuously experimented, testing diverse political ideas and forms. The ongoing clash between the old traditions, which had barely gained strength, and innovations stimulated thought, enriched it with observations, and naturally led to theoretical conclusions." [1;140].

At the same time, a defining feature of philosophical culture in antiquity – particularly in its efforts to rationalize the ethical and moral dimensions of human existence – was the very concept of the human being. A key distinction between ancient conceptions of humanity and earlier views found in Babylon, Egypt, India, and China during the period of proto-philosophy (15th–13th centuries BC) lay in the attempt to represent and justify human form, creativity, and sociality on an exclusively rational and intellectual basis. Throughout the history of ancient philosophy and culture, the ideals and norms of human thought preserved both individual ethical principles and moral frameworks for social organization. At their core, philosophical-ethical and anthropological inquiries exhibited remarkable pluralism of thought and perspective, manifesting in diverse normative models of behavior and in ongoing attempts to define the ideal structure of the human being.

The moral reflections found in the early Greek mythology and literature, dating back to the 8th-7th centuries BC, were limited in their philosophical reasoning and reflected generalized, standardized attempts to explore moral consciousness. Specifically, they represented only the initial manifestations of axiological interpretations of humanity in its abstract and distant aspects. The moral relationships

described by Homer preserved particular individuals in narrative form in the absence of a fully developed moral philosophy, and the concept of human creativity lacked a clear categorical definition. Intellectual progress was not regarded as an inherent feature of practical life; individuals were largely identified with the naturalness of existence itself or with their personal social concerns. Although Greek writers were beginning to move beyond the religious-mythological complex, their consciousness was still unable to uncover the deep origins of human thought or analytically reveal its nature.

However, the spatial and temporal transformations of early ancient culture gradually "materialized" human life in its subjective, personal, and social dimensions. This development was closely linked to the rise of literacy and the spread of knowledge, previously accessible only to scribes, through the establishment of writing as a medium of shared culture. The formerly secret, sacred aura surrounding the "perfectly wise", once confined to the closed circles of sects and priests, became increasingly accessible. Wise counsel, gnomic sayings, aphorisms, and maxims were highly esteemed and celebrated by Homer, Hesiod, and Theognis. In particular, Theognis in his Elegies articulated the moral principles of aristocratic society in gnomic form; by absolutizing these values, he criticized the socio-democratic transformations that threatened to alter the moral and spiritual code of his time.

Presented for broad public reflection – *es to meson*, the wisdom of great thinkers such as Solon, Cleobulus, and Pittacus – expressed in maxims, aphorisms, natural-scientific insights, and practical actions – gained both depth and substance and became increasingly open to practical and rational application in everyday life. Moreover, in the 6th–5th centuries BC, prominent figures of the ancient polis – Thales, Solon, Chilon, Bias, Periander, Socrates, and others – stood out precisely for their life philosophies, speeches, and aphorisms, which primarily concerned the moral, ethical, and legal foundations of human existence. Their socially recognized life-creativity lay in integrating practical experience with efforts to establish rational principles for human well-being.

In a parallel and comparative perspective, it is worth noting that, unlike the philosophical quests of the Ancient East, the ideal of human self-development in Greek classical thought of the 5th–4th centuries BC depicted a real, consciously perceived individual – one who creates tangible products as the outcome of his or her life-creative activity. These "products" possessed several characteristics essential for understanding the concept. First, in terms of content, they could be theoretical and cognitive (as in Thales, Chilon, Solon), which, during the formative period of scientific knowledge, carried unquestionable authority for the intellectual and public consciousness of ancient Greeks; or they could be practical and transformative (as in Periander, Peisistratus). Yet both dimensions of sophia – the wisdom of perfection – were united by a common foundation in real knowledge and rational thinking, both in the sphere of social life and within the very essence of the human being as a rational, cosmic entity. However, for the Greek polis, the most significant traits of the perfectly wise individual were primarily socio-anthropomorphic – or, more precisely, socio-ethical: an individual's moral and ethical distinctiveness, and moral practice that found concrete expression in civic and social life.

Second, the object of dissemination and embodiment of knowledge and experience – that is, its practical outcome – was of great significance. A comparative analysis of the doxography of Diogenes Laërtius and the later works of Plutarch reveals the predominant role of legal and socio-moral aspects in the transmission of knowledge.

For instance, at Plutarch's Dinner of the Seven Wise Men, the sages engage in discussions on issues vital to state-building, the dialectic between the individual and society, and the principles of good governance. Thales, for example, maintained that "the best state is one in which there are neither poor citizens nor excessively rich ones," while Chilon asserted that "the best state is that in which people heed the laws more than the orators" [2, pp. 373–374].

At first glance, this emphasis may appear to be purely practical, yet it also carries a rational-gnoseological or theoretical-cognitive dimension. The same Seven Sages were among the first to articulate the conviction that morality is synonymous with wisdom, and that right and reasonable conduct arises from a true understanding of the world.

It is for this reason that the rationalism of ancient Greek wisdom came to be known precisely as "rationalism." On the one hand, it was distanced from mystical communities and religious-ideological dogmas (except the Pythagorean order); on the other, it rested upon theoretical and natural-scientific

foundations, with the human being, alongside their spiritual and social boundaries and societal functions, constituting an inseparable part of this framework. Most eminent figures of antiquity – Solon, Hippocrates, Seneca, Cicero, and others – were brilliant scholars, orators, politicians, and analysts of human nature. Yet their moral authority and social recognition stemmed not only from their philosophical attempts to explain human existence but also from their deep engagement with moral absolutes, their exploration of early humanistic questions, and their embodiment of a practical philosophy of freedom in everyday life.

One of the essential rational and anthropological features of philosophical reflection in ancient civilization was the grandeur of individual intellect, the capacity for personal world-creation, and a sense of individual distinctiveness – manifested not only in social recognition but also in a profound, practical engagement with the life of society. In Florida, Apuleius describes Thales of Miletus as "… undoubtedly the most outstanding among those famous Seven Sages (for he was the first to introduce geometry to the Greeks, a deep investigator of nature, and the most skilled observer of the stars), who with small lines revealed great things…" [3, p. 112]. For Thales (c. 624–546 BC), logical clarity, brilliant rhetoric, and philosophical depth, grounded in profound worldview principles, were characteristic traits. As one of his sayings goes:

"Many words do not yet testify to the presence of wise thought.

Seek one wisdom,

Choose one good –

Thus, you will silence the chatterers." [3, p. 103]

Three other historical figures – Solon, Pericles, and Peisistratus – who held a higher human status, were distinguished by their pragmatism and practically transformative activity. Through their legislative work, as each at different times was both a ruler and a public figure, they sought to mitigate civil discord arising from social conflicts and to develop normative principles that would help stabilize the organization of the polis. Solon (c. 640–560 BC) carried out reforms aimed at the radical transformation of the polis through the legal and political spheres. Peisistratus (c. 600–528 BC) implemented cultural, educational, and moral-legal reforms, including the codification of moral behavior and civic education. He also enhanced public spaces with inscribed tablets containing gnomic sayings, aphorisms, and maxims, designed to promote high moral culture and civic virtue. Pericles, whom Thucydides called "the first among the Athenians", was a talented and patriotic statesman, orator, and philosopher-logician who devoted his life to serving the people and advancing the prosperity of Athens. His practical and innovative political measures – such as expanding citizen participation in governance and introducing financial rewards for effective public service – embodied both rational foresight and social responsibility, earning him the lasting reputation of a wise statesman.

However, it was during the Classical and Late Classical periods of antiquity (5th–4th centuries BC) that the philosophy of the human being developed most significantly, directing philosophical thought toward personal world-creation, the harmony of the inner spiritual world, and intellectual, rational cognition. The pragmatism of the early Greek philosophers, initially reinforced by their psychologically significant authoritarianism, gradually gave way to philosophical-gnoseological reflections on the problems of inner dialectics and harmony.

Indeed, Heraclitus (c. 554–483 BC) openly proclaimed that a person who comprehends the cosmic laws of existence through their own reason is an internally unified, harmonious individual, whose defining trait is rational-inductive thinking. As he observed: "Learning many things does not teach the mind; otherwise, it would have taught Hesiod, Pythagoras, and Xenophanes with Hecataeus" [4, p. 74]. Nevertheless, Heraclitus's ethical views cannot be regarded as a fully developed moral rationalism; rather, they represent a theoretically idealized expression of the original material grounding of the idea of intellectual awakening in the ancient thinker.

The paradox lies in the fact that, by elevating intellect and reason to a universal principle, Heraclitus simultaneously rendered them practically inaccessible to ordinary people, since the only truly wise entity is "…the Reason that governs all through all" [4, p. 75]. By asserting the manifestation of reason in true things and actions, in accordance with nature, Heraclitus revealed truth through concrete-rational knowledge and the apprehension of the surrounding world. From this perspective arises a

distinctive socio-philosophical interpretation of intellectual activity. Superficial knowledge, which society relies upon according to Heraclitus, becomes a source of disorder and conflict. Moreover, human vices – bodily pleasures, greed, flattery – prevent individuals from acting in accordance with the Logos and from achieving the intended state of wisdom and harmony.

Similar positions were characteristic of the Eleatics, a school founded by Xenophanes around 540 BC in the city of Elea. While they emphasized the necessity of truth in knowledge, the Eleatics did not develop a fully integrated methodology for apprehending the rational path or attaining true knowledge, and they still described intellectual growth as something largely beyond ordinary human consciousness.

In particular, according to Sextus Empiricus, Xenophanes (c. 570–480 BC) maintained that there has never been, and never will be, a person who truly knows the truth about the gods and the cosmos. Even if someone were to express perfect knowledge, they would not themselves be aware of it, for merely holding an opinion is the fate of all [5, p. 260].

A major contribution to the public recognition of the rights of human reason, the right to freedom of thought and life, as well as their logical-philosophical justification, and transformation into a moral-practical framework, belongs to Socrates (470–399 BC) and, subsequently, to the Cynics, Cyrenaics, and Plato. During the era of Socratic maieutics, the idea of human freedom of thought, the self-expression of intellectual individuality, and the right to personal convictions emerged as a distinctive symbol of ancient rationalism.

Attention was focused on the value-laden content of life, addressing questions of goodness, virtue, happiness, utility, and logical measure. According to Xenophon (Socratic Works), Socrates saw little distinction between human reason and morality. He recognized a person as both rational and morally upright if they, understanding what is beautiful and good, act according to it, and, conversely, if they know what is morally vile, avoid it [6, p. 119].

The principles and dimensions of human life underwent complex transformations and parametric interpretations. Particularly original and thought-provoking were the concepts of the Skeptics, Eclectics, and Stoics (up to the early 2nd century AD). Nevertheless, the culture of Classical antiquity laid the fundamental foundations of the philosophy of human life. Celebrated by literary figures and tragedians (Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides), historians (Herodotus, Thucydides), sculptors (Polykleitos, Myron), and scientists (Archimedes, Democritus, Hippocrates), the human being was elevated into the realm of conscious world-orientation, portraying and emphasizing the ideal of virtue and morality. One can conquer with the renowned classical scholar B. Snell, who argued that the ideal of intellectual and life-oriented morality exerted a stronger influence on historical processes than either the ideal of piety, personified in the saint, or the ideal of courage, personified in the hero [7, p. 27].

The ancient philosophy of the human being, which developed through moral-behavioral concepts, also advanced a system of social motivation (determinants) for the idea of rational and purposeful human development. This system provided a general framework for addressing the content, style, and form of an individual's life path, the nature of abstract and concrete good and evil, the dialectic of morality and law, creativity, freedom, and related questions. Within the broader scheme of philosophical-ethical reflection on the human being, two main moral-philosophical directions can be distinguished. The first is rational-practical ethics, incorporating elements of sensualism, primarily oriented toward the social dimension and emphasizing the welfare of the whole (Socrates, Aristippus, Aristotle, Epicurus). The second is subjective-spiritual morality, focusing on the cultivation of individual virtues and oriented toward the deeper foundations of the person (Pythagoras, Antisthenes, Zeno of Citium).

However, both within the system of value orientations and in the realm of morality, the priority questions reflected the characteristic pragmatism of antiquity: What is the moral function of the highest human well-being? What does the idea of absolute human development entail? What ethical and legal limits regulate the process of self-perfection? The meaning-forming basis of these questions was shaped within the ethical-philosophical pragmatics of the ancient worldview. Firstly, ethical-philosophical theories provided the theoretical foundation for the flourishing of ancient culture. Secondly, in the context of an almost complete rejection of interpreting the highest forms of intellectual and spiritual human development through ascetic withdrawal and solitude (except the

Cynics and, partly, the Pythagoreans), it was through social ethics – specifically culture, education, sociality, practical activity, and morality – that the personal-subjective and social "rationality" and "pragmatism" of humans could be realized. A particularly illustrative example of this integration is found in Plato's philosophy, where questions of statecraft, morality, and law are explored alongside the highest spiritual and absolute values. Plato argued, in particular, that the human race would not be free from poverty and suffering until philosophers rule in the states, or until those who now rule genuinely strive for philosophy (wisdom). Finally, the ideas of the highest good constituted the immanent foundation and axiological purpose of the entire life-practical, rational Greek-Roman philosophical tradition.

During the era of the first ethical reflections, philosophy in antiquity had a profoundly pragmatic character. This pragmatism encompassed both moral rationality and the theoretical aspects of the philosophy of values. For instance, the concepts of "perfection" and "well-being" in ancient philosophy were never set in opposition; rather, their ontological and ethical dimensions emphasized the dialectic of their functionality.

At the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd centuries BC, on the eve of the introduction into Greco-Roman culture of the philosophical model of the "Stoic sage" and its corresponding ethical-normative doctrines, amid political and state instability, the life motto of a significant segment of society became the Epicurean principle lathe biasas – "live unnoticed".

According to Epicurus (342–270 BC), political life is fundamentally unnatural and, therefore, leads to endless turmoil, creating obstacles to attaining aponia (the absence of pain and suffering) and ataraxia (tranquility and unshakable calm), and consequently, happiness. Political engagement does not enrich a person but rather disorients them; hence, the Epicurean ideally seeks to live in seclusion and withdraw from the crowd. Moral life is guided by practical wisdom, which leads to aponia and ataraxia, that is, to freedom from bodily suffering and steadiness of the soul. Happiness can be achieved practically only through knowledge and self-improvement, while refraining from active political involvement. The ideas of a rationally structured life, the attainment of the good, and, correspondingly, social autonomy – a "social deviation from the line of necessity" – through ethical pragmatism, together with the philosophy of human liberation from the fear of death and fate, are most clearly synthesized at the beginning of Hellenistic philosophy in the thought of Epicurus. As Lucretius remarks:

"He was a god, great Memmius –

Oh yes, a god, the first of all of us

To find the reasoned plan of life, we call

Wisdom and out of such tempestuous squall

And darkness settled in light so clear.

Compare discoveries of yesteryear" [8; p.122]

The model of human life in Epicurus' philosophy is modest and simple, consisting of a deviation from the line of necessity and a withdrawal from discomfort and dissatisfaction. At the same time, a person's vocation is to live happily and joyfully, which to some extent necessitates the creation of conditions for a happy life. The elimination of suffering – such as hunger, thirst, and pain – already embodies the principle of pleasure, which, according to Epicurus, is revealed in the purposive impulse of development.

Self-knowledge, introspection, self-improvement, and mastery of a true system of philosophical understanding of the world provide the impulse for the logic of beneficial action for the Epicurean individual. Its incomparable advantage lies in the joy derived from the continuous process of learning. Everyday and material needs, due to the absence of corresponding value-oriented guidance, direct the philosophical image of the person toward the internal consolidation of the subjective relation to the socio-cultural world. The ideal – symbolizing the ideal subject in the characteristics and validations of the Epicureans – is no longer identified with a literary image or personified in a hero. Rather, it incorporates an essential substantive position: the objective dependence of the ideal image, i.e., its adherence and conformity to the criteria of the real epoch, time, and events.

According to W. Windelband: "…its egoistic immersion in personal life made Epicureanism a practical philosophy within the universal Roman monarchy; for the strongest foundation of despotism was that passion for pleasures, through which everyone sought to preserve as much personal enjoyment as possible amid the general confusion, in the quiet of their private life" [9, p.271].

The pragmatic ethics of the Epicureans, to some extent, served as a stimulus for the subsequent philosophy of Stoicism. Philosophical-ethical and anthropological categories and concepts such as virtue, the good, and happiness (in all possible combinations) were interpreted and applied as the fundamental basis for the idea of the primacy of human life. In particular, in Seneca L.A. (c. 4 BC–65 AD), On the Happy Life: "Live in accordance with the nature of things. Do not deviate from it; to be guided by its law, to take example from it – that is wisdom. Accordingly, life is happy if it is in harmony with its nature. Such a life is possible only if, first, a person thinks soberly and consistently; second, if their spirit is courageous and energetic, noble, resilient, and prepared for various circumstances; if they do not succumb to anxious suspicion, nor are overly concerned with the satisfaction of physical needs… Instead of pleasures, instead of petty, fleeting, and not only repulsive but also harmful gratifications, comes a strong, unclouded, and constant joy, peace, and harmony of the spirit, greatness united with humility" [10, I, pp.510–511].

For the individual in antiquity, it was necessary to consolidate theoretical and empirical life-goal orientations, combining spiritual-ethical values with the pragmatism of transient social existence. Philosophical responses to the socio-psychological demands of the emerging Greco-Roman world were, to a large extent, expressed in the Stoic philosophical-moral theories of life success and rational existence.

In an idealized and generalized framework, the Stoic sage consistently maintains a moderate and joyful state of mind, demonstrating foresight and an unwavering volitional drive to act. Yet, in Stoic ethics, the social, political, and institutional foundations of an individual's worldview are not entirely dismissed. Consequently, the philosophy of human life as a pursuit of inner peace and joy rests both on the recognition of the absolute cosmos (logos, nature) and on adherence to the moral practices of a virtuous citizen. Theoretically, a person who has achieved a morally virtuous disposition – the Stoic ideal – performs all actions correctly, even those that might appear illogical or unnatural from a conventional perspective, because they are guided by full knowledge, sound ethical motivation, and inner conviction. The defining element of the human soul is reason, as well as its participation in the higher, divine soul. To live in pursuit of the absolute is to strive for true good, attainable through the transformation and cultivation of the mind.

5. Conclusions.

Overall, the philosophy of man in Greco-Roman culture, from the 5th–4th centuries BC to the 1st–3rd centuries AD, was dynamic and evolving. From Socratic moral intellectualism and the Socratic schools to eclecticism, Epicureanism, and late Stoicism, the principles and parameters defining the multidimensionality of human life gradually acquired increasingly practical and pragmatic features, emphasizing ideals of goodness, happiness, virtue, and moral excellence.

The socio-cultural world of antiquity, through its principles of statehood and morality, provided the impetus for theories of ideal human development, emphasizing mastery of spiritual and moral goods and the practical realization of a transformative philosophy of life.

Summarizing the socio-philosophical analysis of anthropic principles in ancient spiritual culture, it is clear that human life, when detached from its social foundation and functioning social system, and considered solely through subjective epistemology, was already regarded in the ethical-philosophical systems of the classical, late-classical, and Greco-Roman periods as artificial and unnatural. The observational mode of understanding the world gradually gave way to an active, even transformative life, reflecting the fertile, lively, and dynamic character of the human being. A person's active status is determined by their engagement with the world, nature, and their own "self." The questions of creating good, self-improvement, and individual virtue increasingly became subject to the criteria of social evaluation.

At the same time, the enduring concerns regarding personal happiness, the good, and freedom – generalized through the concepts of virtue, perfection, and social creativity – constitute a distinctive

legacy of ancient culture. Efforts to unite spiritual principles with material structures, to inject the materiality of social existence into the transcendent realm of absolute values, highlighted the necessity of further developing the foundational principles of the philosophy of human life.

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